



September 14, 2007

Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program is working – message delivered on Thursday

Describing it as a “critical first step” in an effective program for managing water quality in irrigated agriculture, the chairperson of the State Water Resources Control Board reiterated the irrigated on-farm waiver program is not a blanket exemption from following water quality regulations as some would think.

Tam M. Doduc, chair of the State Water Board, set the tone of a five-hour-plus joint workshop with the State Board and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to discuss the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) at a standing-room-only packed Clovis City Hall on Thursday.

Doduc called on those in attendance to focus on “how we can improve the program” and how agencies can work effectively to improve water quality in the region. State Board staff also emphasized the regulatory aspect of the ILRP waiver program. “A waiver does not waive water quality protection. The regulations must still be followed,” said Ken Landau, of the State Board.

Under the regulations, agricultural water users must join a coalition group and apply for a group waiver, apply for an individual discharger waiver, or submit a complete application for a waste discharge permit. Most farmers and ranchers have joined watershed coalition groups, which now total nine coalitions roughly encompassing the Sacramento Valley, Delta, northern San Joaquin Valley and southern San Joaquin Valley. The ILRP covers more than 7 million acres and involves 21,000 farmers.

The coalitions develop best management practices to prevent run-off into water ways, conduct monitoring of rivers and creeks, apply for grants, and work cooperatively toward improving water quality. Since 2003, the nine coalitions have spent more than \$9.5 million to sample and analyze surface water quality in the Sacramento/San Joaquin Valleys and Delta.

Before Thursday’s workshop, coalition representatives discussed the effectiveness of the ILRP at a news conference. With Fresno State’s

Center for Irrigation Technology serving as a backdrop, coalition representatives urged the Regional Water Board to maintain a consistent program that will ensure continued success.

Water monitoring data collected from the first three years of the program (2003-2007) serves as baseline information that is already helping agriculture focus on the locations and farm inputs impacting water quality. When elevated levels of farm inputs are identified, the coalitions immediately take steps to remedy any problems, said Parry Klassen, board chairman of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition and Selma-area farmer.

“Already, the coalitions in these areas are focusing outreach and education efforts on farm practices to protect and improve water quality and we are beginning to see results,” Klassen added.

Water and sediment sampling data has been collected and analyzed from 313 sites in the Central Valley. Over 10,000 tests have been completed and thousands more measurements collected. The results are directing coalition’s efforts to reduce impacts of farm impacts and identify future monitoring needs.

Also participating in the news conference were Mark McKean, president of the board of directors of the Kings River Conservation District, a Fresno County Farm Bureau director, and a Riverdale area diversified farmer; Chris Kapheim, general manager of Alta Irrigation District, Dinuba; David F. Zoldoske, Ph.D, director, Center for Irrigation Technology, Fresno State; Jerry Prieto, Jr., Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner; and other coalition representatives.

FCFB president delivers overview of agriculture at State of County breakfast

Fresno County Farm Bureau President Russel Efirid provided an overview of Fresno County agriculture at this week’s State of the County breakfast meeting co-sponsored by the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce and FCFB.

With the need for a reliable labor supply and water for irrigation, Efirid emphasized the need for a federal temporary worker program, like AgJOBS, and the need to build additional water storage and conveyance facilities.

"Agricultural employers are operating with great uncertainty and too many employees face hardships. We need an approach to immigration issues where worker dignity is preserved and employers are able to farm," said Efir. "A legalized immigration system will allow foreign workers to perform jobs that U.S. citizens are unwilling to accept and then return to their home countries when the work is done."

Efir also discussed the need for a reliable water supply to sustain the county's number one industry. Weather-related uncertainty and concerns with recent environmental protections that limit water imports into western Fresno County raise many questions as to next year's water supply. The inability to supply an adequate work force and the water to grow the crops will leave American consumers more dependent on imported food – and vulnerable, said Efir.

"We've already learned that lesson of vulnerability from our dependence on foreign oil, and from the quality control--food safety concerns with imported products," he said.

Planning Commission to hear proposed dairy-confined animal ordinance

A proposed ordinance that calls for changes to the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance will go before the Fresno County Planning Commission next week.

The proposal would include provisions to review and regulate new dairy cattle and feedlot facilities and the expansion of existing dairy/feedlot facilities through a land use permit process. FCFB and the dairy industry has been working with county staff and policy makers to urge them to develop an ordinance that focuses on land use decisions and does not duplicate extensive existing air and water quality regulations.

The hearing before the Planning Commission will be on Sept. 20 at 10 a.m. in Room 301, Hall of Records, Tulare and M streets, downtown. A hearing also has been set before the Fresno County Board of Supervisors at 2 p.m. on Oct. 23. For details on the ordinance, call FCFB Executive Director Ryan Jacobsen at (559) 237-0263 or email: info@fcfb.org.

Sept. 25 is Cotton Harvest Safety Program

Fresno County Farm Bureau and State Compensation Insurance Fund will host their annual Cotton Harvest Safety Program on Tuesday, Sept. 25 at the Westside Field Station, located at Lassen and

Oakland avenues near Five Points. The free program begins with registration at 7:30 a.m. and concludes with lunch at noon.

Reservations can be made by calling the FCFB office at (559) 237-0263 or via email at info@fcfb.org.

DPR Proposes Field Fumigation Regulations

Growers who use fumigants for soil field fumigation prior to planting crops will be subject to new restrictions on the use of these pesticides. The proposed regulatory action would adopt regulations to reduce ozone-producing emissions from field fumigant use to try to meet court-ordered state air quality objectives for pesticides.

In 2006, a federal court ordered the Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR) to adopt regulations by Jan. 1, 2008 to achieve a 20 percent reduction of pesticide volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions. The court order stems from a lawsuit that claimed California failed to meet its obligations under the federal Clean Air Act.

In the proposed regulations, DPR will set an overall fumigant use allocation (or "cap") for each non-attainment area from May 1 to Oct. 31, based on the court-ordered goal. From May to October, fumigants account for 35 percent of VOCs in the San Joaquin Valley NAA, according to the DPR. Growers will have to choose from approved application method types (low-emission methods) that reduce the amount of VOC's that escape into the ambient air, and may have to reduce the amount of product that they planned on using during this time frame.

Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner Jerry Prieto, Jr. said the Fresno County Agriculture Department is in the process of identifying the types of fumigant applications that occur during the May to October period. Prieto said, "We will be working with growers to determine if their cultural practices can be amended to avoid fumigations during the May through October period." Direct questions to the Agricultural Commissioner's office at (559) 456-7510.

CattleWomen fundraiser is Sept. 22

The Fresno-Kings County Cattlewomen Association will host the 11th annual scholarship fundraiser on Saturday, Sept. 22 at Annadale Gardens, 16265 E. Annadale, Sanger.

The event begins at 5 p.m. with a social hour, followed by a deep-pit beef dinner at 6 p.m., raffles,

children's games, silent and live auctions. The cost is \$15 for adults; children are \$8 per child; children under four are free.

This fundraising event provides scholarship monies to students who will major in agriculture. The proceeds from last year's event allowed FKCCW to give \$4,500 in agricultural scholarships. FKCCW was formed in 1956, and has awarded in excess of \$40,000 in scholarships to local area students.

For ticket information, contact Susan Johnson, (559) 332-9660, or Terrie Valdero, (559) 438-7600; or Suzanne Ward, (559) 876-3544.

No-Match SS seminar set for Oct. 5 at FCFB

A seminar on the new procedures to comply with the no-match Social Security number rule will be held on Friday, Oct. 5 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Fresno County Farm Bureau office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave., Fresno.

The seminar is designed for agricultural employers and will discuss the most updated details of the new Department of Homeland Security procedures for employers to follow upon receipt of a "no-match" letter from Social Security or DHS. This seminar will review the new procedures employers should implement to help avoid fines, and even criminal prosecution, for knowingly employing undocumented workers. It will offer suggestions and tips for complying with the "safe harbor" afforded by the new procedures. Ronald H. Barsamian and Patrick S. Moody, of the law firm Barsamian and Moody, will present the information.

The seminar is sponsored by the Agricultural Personnel Management Association, California Grape and Tree Fruit League, Farm Employers Labor Service, Madera County Farm Bureau, Western Growers Association, Nisei Farmers League and Fresno County Farm Bureau.

To register or for additional details, contact Sylvia Medina at: (831) 238-0770 or email: apma20@pacbell.net.

A smile a day...

Recognizing that Larry the Cable Guy, of the Blue Collar Comedy Group, will be making an appearance in the Valley on Sept. 28, here are a few of his gems – ones that are safe to repeat here, of course:

1. A day without sunshine is like night.

2. 42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.

4. Remember, half the people you know are below average.

5. He who laughs last thinks the slowest.

6. Support bacteria. They're the only culture some people have.

8. A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

9. If you think nobody cares, try missing a couple of payments.

10. OK, so what's the speed of dark?

11. When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

12. How much deeper would the ocean be without sponges?

13. Inside every older person is a younger person wondering, "What the heck happened?"

15. Light travels faster than sound. That's why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

Next Week's Calendar

Sept. 18 FCFB Executive Committee meeting, noon, FCFB office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave.; Fresno Fair Education Program, noon, Fairgrounds; FCFB Ag Education Committee meeting, 3 p.m., FCFB office

Sept. 19 Fresno Chamber of Commerce Ag of the Year awards announcement, 10 a.m. Chamber office.

Sept. 20 FARMS Program Ice Cream Social, 5 p.m., FCFB office

Sept. 21 Ag Center Site planning meeting, 2 p.m., Ag Commissioner's office

This Week's Calendar

Sept. 9 Ag Boosters BBQ, Borba Ranch

Sept. 10 Regional Food System focus group meeting

Sept. 11 Common Threads Committee meeting

Sept. 12 Ag Alert advertisers tour; Chamber State of the County Address; Centerville School (Sanger) Fabulous Food Machine presentation; Operation Clean Air Board meeting.

Sept. 13 State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards workshop on Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program

Sept. 14 Chamber Ag, Water and Environment Committee

Visit www.fcfb.org

Fresno County
Farm Bureau

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