Introduction

The Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority (KRWCA) is a joint powers authority, established to serve as the coordinator and coalition (third-party) group under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) in the Kern River Watershed portion of Kern County. On February 4, 2014 the State of California’s Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB/Regional Board) issued a Notice of Applicability (NOA) to the KRWCA, approving the KRWCA to represent member owners/growers of irrigated agricultural lands within the KRWCA boundary area under the ILRP.

The Tulare Lake Basin General Order (Order R5-2013-0120) (General Order) requires that any irrigated land having the potential to discharge to surface water or groundwater must comply with the requirements set forth by the Regional Board.

The intent of the Regional Board’s ILRP is for growers to implement practices to protect water quality. The new program applies to discharges to both surface water and groundwater. The groundwater component addresses waste (e.g. salt, nitrate, pesticides, etc.) transported by irrigation water, percolating past the root zone into groundwater.

2014 Initial Membership Enrollment Summary

A significant level of effort was made to notify, educate and enroll growers by the August 4, 2014 deadline. The first grower membership enrollment period for the KRWCA resulted in a vast majority of parcels complying within the deadline. A summary (as of December 2014) is provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KRWCA Approved as Third-Party (Coalition)</td>
<td>February 4, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member ILRP Signup Due Date</td>
<td>August 4, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Members</td>
<td>858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Large Farm Members (&gt;=60 ac)</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Small Farm Members (&lt;60 ac)</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Parcels Enrolled</td>
<td>7,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Enrolled</td>
<td>522,833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice of Intent Enrollment Process

The deadline to apply directly to the Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority (KRWCA) to obtain membership was August 4, 2014. Beginning August 5, 2014, growers in the KRWCA boundary must apply directly to the CVRWQCB for coverage under a third-party through the Notice of Intent (NOI) process, which has multiple steps. Growers must pay an administrative fee to the CVRWQCB as well as pay increased acreage fees to the Coalition. The NOI process and instructions can be found at www.krwca.org.
• If you know of growers within the KRWCA boundary who have not signed up, please direct them to our website at www.krwca.org or provide them with our KRWCA contact information.

• If you (as an existing member) have additional parcels that need to be enrolled, please contact the KRWCA as soon as possible.

Regional Board Begins Field Inspections of Farm Parcels

The KRWCA has been informed that the CVRWQCB will soon begin field inspecting farm parcels which were not enrolled with the KRWCA. The CVRWQCB will be issuing Notices of Violation (NOVs) to the owners of these parcels as the next step prior to issuing potential fines. Please be aware that an NOV is public information and your name and farm information would be made available to the public by the CVRWQCB.

• If you (as a member of the KRWCA) receive an NOV letter from the CVRWQCB, please contact us immediately so the parcel(s) can be properly enrolled and the NOV can be dismissed.

• If you have parcels within the KRWCA boundary area that you did not include with your 2014 enrollment, then please contact us immediately to avoid receiving a NOV letter.

• If you enrolled all of your irrigated parcels within the KRWCA boundary in 2014, then you are in compliance with the enrollment deadline and no further enrollment action is required. You should not receive a NOV letter.

Regional Board Fines Growers Who Did Not Sign-Up

On December 5, 2014 the Regional Board issued fines for two growers in Madera and Merced Counties who received multiple certified Notice of Violation (NOV) letters and Administrative Civil Liability (penalty) letters for not enrolling with their coalition or securing individual coverage. One of these growers with 108 acres was fined $32,032 for not complying. Detailed public information of this fine can be found on the Water Board website: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/tentative_orders/index.shtml.

2015 Membership Assessment to be Billed in April

Membership fees are developed each year from a budget based on a detailed cost analysis of the General Order requirements. There are significant costs for the preparation of the required technical reports and water quality monitoring. All funds remaining at the end of the year are carried over into the next fiscal year to defray costs. It is anticipated that 2015 membership invoices will be provided to KRWCA members in early April 2015.

We understand that membership fees for regulatory compliance are a concern amongst KRWCA members. Our main purpose is to provide you with cost-effective compliance with the Tulare Lake Basin ILRP General Order requirements. We will continue to work diligently to represent the members of the KRWCA, and will do our best to keep the fees as minimal as possible as the program moves forward with the implementation of these new water quality requirements.

Groundwater Quality Assessment Report

The KRWCA is preparing the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR), which is due to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB) on February 4, 2015. It is a significant effort to produce this technical report in a manner that is scientifically defendable, yet relevant to the needs of the KRWCA members. The primary goal of the GAR is to identify areas of high and low vulnerability due to potential groundwater degradation from nitrogen and pesticides within the KRWCA’s boundaries. The CVRWQCB will approve the final GAR for the identified high and low vulnerability areas, which impacts the timelines for submittal of the Farm Evaluation and the Nitrogen Management Plan by growers.

The goal of the GAR is to identify areas of high and low vulnerability due to potential groundwater degradation from nitrogen and pesticides within the KRWCA’s boundaries.
The GAR is also the baseline document to formulate the Management Practices Evaluation Program (MPEP), the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program, the Management Practices Evaluation Workplan, and the Trend Monitoring Workplan. All of these documents ultimately will lead to groundwater quality monitoring (implementation estimated to begin in a couple of years), which the KRWCA will work to make as cost effective as possible.

- Members will be notified of their high or low vulnerability status.
- Members will then be required to complete their Farm Evaluation and Nitrogen Management Plan based on vulnerability designation and farm size. Please see the newly updated Member Required Reports table on the following page.

Sediment Discharge & Erosion Assessment Report

The KRWCA is preparing a Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report (SDEAR), which is due on February 4, 2015. Once completed, the SDEAR will identify the parcels within the KRWCA that are susceptible to potential erosion and the discharge of sediment that could impact surface water quality.

Erosion and sediment discharge from agricultural fields to surface waters can be caused by a number of factors including: soil erodibility, rainfall, slope, vegetative cover, and the presence/absence of best management practices.

- A small portion of the KRWCA area is likely to be determined to be susceptible.
- Impacted members will be notified of their status and will be required to prepare, with KRWCA assistance, a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan (SECP) likely due in 2016. Please see additional information in this newsletter regarding the SECP requirements.

KRWCA Surface Water Monitoring Program Update

The KRWCA’s surface water monitoring program is in place to determine water quality of surface water bodies that can be affected by irrigation and/or storm runoff. Originally the effort was focused on identifying nitrates, but the program now samples for pathogens, metals, pesticides, and toxicity along with general water quality parameters.

The previous surface water monitoring program has been in effect for the past 10+ years under the Kern River Sub-Watershed (part of the former South San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition). The KRWCA has been successfully monitoring surface water quality since 2012. Due to the recent dry years, there has been very little surface water in the Kern creeks and streams. Past surface water monitoring results have showed that some sites have surface water quality issues, primarily with E. coli. However, in the future when storm events occur, the KRWCA expects future monitoring to show that management practices and operations of KRWCA growers are protective of surface water quality.

Currently, the KRWCA is working on updating the Surface Water Monitoring Plan (SWMP) with Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB) Staff. The CVRWQCB is requesting the KRWCA implement more monitoring sites. The KRWCA is aiming to keep growers in compliance with the General Order while also keeping costs manageable. As the SWMP is finalized and implemented new sites and recommendations for avoiding parameter exceedances will be shared.

The 2014/15 rainfall season has begun with much needed storms to help alleviate the drought, however with these storms, sampling and monitoring efforts will be greater than those from recent years. Important items to remember with regards to the surface water monitoring in the KRWCA are:

- Surface water monitoring will continue for the foreseeable future in order to comply with the ILRP requirements.
- Growers should implement practices which contain all irrigation waters on their property.
- Exceedances of water quality parameters linked to specific grower dischargers can lead to disciplinary actions by the CVRWQCB.

Member Required Reports

After significant negotiations and effort, the KRWCA and other partnering Tulare Lake Basin ILRP Coalitions (Kings, Tule, & Kaweah) were granted on December 4, 2014 by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB), the following changes to the Member Required Reports:

- **Farm Evaluations** – The due date for high vulnerability farms of all sizes is extended one year to 1 March 2016.
- **Sediment & Erosion Control Plans (SECP)** – No changes. KRWCA will notify, assist, and provide a template to identified farms.
Nitrogen Management Plans (NMP) – The due date for high vulnerability large farms is now 90 days after the CVRWQCB provides an approved template to the KRWCA. The CVRWQCB approved the NMP template on December 23, 2014, therefore growers MUST have a NMP on farm by March 23, 2015. Additionally, high vulnerability large farms will NOT be required to certify their Nitrogen Management Plan in 2015. Certification will be required by March 1, 2016.

The following table summarizes documents and respective deadlines to be completed by members complying with the General Order. Small farming operations have less than 60 total acres of irrigated land. Land that is designated as high vulnerability will be identified by the KRWCA in the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) and members will be notified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Report</th>
<th>Vulnerability</th>
<th>Farm Size</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Evaluations</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 March 2015/2016</td>
<td>Extended one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Large (&gt; 60 ac)</td>
<td>1 March 2016</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small (&lt;60 ac)</td>
<td>1 March 2018</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sediment &amp; Erosion Control Plans</td>
<td>All farms identified in the SDEAR</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>180 days from approval of SDEAR</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>1 year from approval of SDEAR</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrogen Management Plans</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>1 March 2015</td>
<td>90 days after approved template to third-party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>1 March 2017</td>
<td>Must be certified &amp; Summary Report required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 March 2017</td>
<td>Certification &amp; Summary Report not required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Farm Evaluations – Management Practices to Protect Water Quality

Farm Evaluations will describe management practices implemented to protect surface water and groundwater quality. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB) finalized and approved the Farm Evaluation Template under General Order R5-2013-0120. This template will be used by members of the KRWCA. The purpose of the template is to collect consistent information across irrigated agricultural areas and commodities, while minimizing costs for growers to provide the information. Overall the evaluation will include five parts: a whole farm evaluation, field specific evaluation, irrigation well information, sediment and erosion control practices, and a farm map identifying the location of wells.

- As previously noted, the first Farm Evaluation due date has been extended one year to March 1, 2016.
- KRWCA will hold workshops to assist members in complying with the Farm Evaluation requirements.
- The Farm Evaluation template and instructions will be posted on our website in the near future.
- Completed Farm Evaluations must be submitted to the KRWCA but not to the CVRWQCB, however members are required to keep an on-farm copy to be made available to the CVRWQCB upon their request.

Sediment and Erosion Control Plans

Parcels identified in the SDEAR as having the potential for erosion and sediment discharge that may degrade surface waters will need to prepare a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan (SECP). The SECP will outline practices to be implemented to control erosion and/or sediment run-off from irrigation or storm events.

- The first SECPs for large farms identified in the SDEAR could be due as early as August 2015.
- The preparation of the SECP is limited to qualified SECP developers (e.g. a professional registered civil engineer or geologist).
• The KRWCA is available to assist as necessary but it is expected that a majority of the costs to prepare a SECP will be borne by the member.

• More SECP details are forthcoming.

Nitrogen Management Plans

The KRWCA Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) identified fields within the KRWCA primary boundary that have been impacted by nitrate and/or pesticide exceedances, and/or agricultural and physical conditions that make nitrate more prone to leaching beneath the root zone. All parcels enrolled in the KRWCA will eventually be required to prepare Nitrogen Management Plans (NMP) as specified in the table above.

• The CVRWQCB approved the NMP Template on December 23, 2014.

• Growers with large farms with designated high vulnerability parcels MUST have a NMP on farm by March 23, 2015. Additionally, high vulnerability large farms will NOT be required to certify their NMP in 2015.

• Grower workshops to assist with the NMP have been scheduled; see Education/Outreach Events section below.

• The NMP template and instructions can be found at www.krwca.org.

• Eventually, all members will be required to prepare and implement a Nitrogen Management Plan for planned nitrogen applications to their crops for the upcoming crop year.

• Beginning March 1, 2016, NMPs for large farms in high vulnerability areas will need to be certified, which can be accomplished through: self certification by a member who attends a California Department of Food and Agriculture-approved training program for nitrogen plan certification; self-certification through the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or University of California Cooperative Extension; or from a specialist such as a professional soil scientist, agronomist, crop advisor, or NRCS Technical Service Provider certified in nutrient management.

• All farms in high vulnerability areas will need to submit to the KRWCA an annual Nitrogen Management Summary Report of what was actually done the previous crop year; documenting removal of nitrogen via crop uptake and during harvest and how much is left on the field that could potentially contribute to surface and groundwater quality.

• By March 1, 2017 all farms in low vulnerability areas must prepare a NMP but do not need to certify the plans or provide summary reports to the KRWCA.

• Growers will need to update their NMP annually.

Meeting Attendance Required Annually

As stated in the General Order, each Coalition member shall participate in third-party outreach events, at least annually, if any of the member’s parcels are in a designated “high vulnerability” area or governed by a Surface Water Quality Management Plan (SQMP) or Groundwater Quality Management Plan (GQMP). The member shall review outreach materials to become informed of any water quality problems to address and the management practices that are available to address those issues. The member shall provide annual confirmation to the Coalition that the member has attended an outreach event during the previous year and reviewed the applicable outreach materials.

Education/Outreach Events Have Been Scheduled

Grower outreach meetings to provide a KRWCA update and to review the Nitrogen Management Plan (NMP) Template, which is due to be completed by growers by March 23, 2015, are scheduled for:

• Tuesday, February 17, 2015, 4 p.m., McFarland Veteran’s Hall (Community Center), 103 W. Sherwood Avenue, McFarland

• Wednesday, February 18, 2015, 4 p.m., Wasco Elk’s Lodge, 16694 Wasco Avenue, Wasco

• Wednesday, February 25, 2014, 4 p.m., Kern Ag Pavilion, 3300 East Belle Terrace, Bakersfield
KRWCA will continue to schedule meetings for members to go over preparation deadlines, details for completing the specific plan, and any other information that will help members navigate this process. Notifications for all educational outreach dates, times and locations will be posted at www.krwca.org and meeting notices will be distributed via email and/or mail.

Email Address Required of ALL Members

All KRWCA members MUST have an email address on file with the Coalition. This will ensure that our members receive up to date information in a timely fashion as well as keep outreach and notification costs down. KRWCA will provide information regarding compliance with the ILRP and member requirements through email. It is ultimately the members responsibility to be aware of member requirements and to meet reporting deadlines as a condition of membership within a coalition. If you have not received an email from the KRWCA you do not have an email on file and MUST contact KRWCA to provide an email address. If you do not currently have an email account, accounts can be arranged for free through various service providers. Please provide us with an email address for your membership. You do not want to miss important information that may affect your membership and ultimately leave you out of compliance with the ILRP General Order requirements.

Contact the KRWCA

For questions, concerns, or additional information, please feel free to contact the KRWCA at (661) 616-6500, email admin@krwca.org or visit our website at www.krwca.org.

Mark Your Calendars!! Grower Education Outreach Meetings are scheduled for:
- Tuesday, February 17, 2015, 4 p.m., McFarland Veteran’s Hall (Community Center), 103 W. Sherwood Avenue, McFarland
- Wednesday, February 18, 2015, 4 p.m., Wasco Elk’s Lodge, 16694 Wasco Avenue, Wasco
- Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 4 p.m., Kern Ag Pavilion, 3300 East Belle Terrace, Bakersfield