

REGIONAL WATER BOARD IS STILL DRAFTING A NEW IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE DISCHARGE ORDER

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Although the media reported that the Regional Water Board had renewed the current irrigated ag. discharge waiver through March 2011, they forgot to tell you that the staff continues to work on the draft order.

With the July 8 workshop in Watsonville, it appears that the staff may be looking at focusing more attention on growers in significantly impaired watershed and growers with tailwater. This does not mean that they are giving up on individual farm monitoring, and the staff is still firmly behind 50, 75 or 100 riparian setbacks along streams, regardless of the taking of farmable land.

Of equal, or maybe even greater concern to those of us in Watsonville, was an off-site meeting that was held by the Regional Water Quality Control Board on July 7 in Watsonville. At this meeting, the staff presented a report for amending the region's basin plan. This is the plan that gives the regulatory authority for permits, waivers and enforcement as well as direction to the Water Board.

In this plan the staff's objective is stated as follows (bold type is author's emphasis):

"We look forward to **increasing our authority** and ability to improve resource protection, **require changes in land use planning and land use practices** and enforce new policies and regulations."

The Regional Water staff wants to tell us what we can plant and how we grow and harvest it. This falls right in line with a staff comment that they would like to prohibit certain crops from being grown in the region. This is completely outside of the Water Board's legislative authority and we will be looking into this.

To read more of this report, log on to www.swrcb/rwqcb3/board_info/agendas/2010/jul_offsite/item3/item3.pdf

Back to the Discharge Order. We will continue to work to make the final November 2010 draft irrigated agriculture discharge order one that we will be able to live and work with. We encourage you to keep up to date on the drafting of the order, and please plan to speak at the February 2011 hearing before the Regional Water Board.