

*Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition***Landowner Outreach and Management Practices (MP)
Implementation Communications Process for Monitoring
Results**

The Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (Coalition) on May 10, 2005 sent a letter to the Chairs of the Water Boards outlining a “Management Practices Action Plan” for the Sacramento Valley. Building on both the Coalition’s “Management Practices Action Plan,” and the “Regional Plan for Action,” submitted June 2003, the plan below describes a more aggressive approach for the Coalition and its subwatersheds to follow when there are exceedances of water quality objectives formally adopted by the Regional Board.

The refined plan provides a detailed approach the Coalition and its subwatersheds will take when notifying the affected subwatershed landowners, farm operators and/or wetland managers about the cause(s) of toxicity or exceedance of water quality standards. Depending on the causes of toxicity or exceedances, solutions will include a targeted outreach program with landowners and operators. The outreach program will encourage the adoption of known management practices or modifying the uses of specific farm and wetland inputs to prevent movement of the constituent of concern into the surface water.

I. Implementation Process for Subwatersheds*Landowner Identification in Subwatersheds*

In subwatersheds where water quality exceedances occur, the Coalition first identifies landowners or tenants with properties that have the potential to contribute to the water quality exceedance.

- Fields are identified through GIS mapping of the waterways and agricultural parcels. Fields with higher potential to impact water quality include those fields directly adjacent to waterways or with drains that discharge into the monitored water way.
- Coalition obtains landowner information from the county tax assessor that includes Agricultural Parcel Numbers (APNs) and contact information on landowners in those specific areas.
- A data base list is created that contains both coalition and non coalition members.
- For counties without GIS based APN information, alternative approaches using pesticide use report information and other sources will be used to develop landowner lists.

The Coalition evaluates results from its monitoring program on an event and seasonal basis. Based upon the sampling results, the Coalition submits exceedances to the Regional Board in the form of an Exceedance Report, and within 45 days a Communications Reports that outline short-term actions. Depending upon the type of runoff potentially contributing to a surface water quality problem, local experts help review data and evaluate relevant land-use and cultural practices that can help explain the results and focus outreach efforts. The coalition also has an

active Management Practices Outreach Committee, with participation by local County Agricultural Commissioners, commodity groups and others, that assist in developing and implementing the activities described in Communications Reports.

Three approaches are used by the Coalition and Subwatershed Groups to communicate exceedances of water quality standards and information on MPs to landowners/growers and wetland managers:

- Advisory Notice (Direct mail)
- Outreach workshops
- General Communications (independent of exceedances)

Advisory Notice (Direct Mail)

When an exceedance occurs that can be directly linked to the Irrigated Lands Program, the Subwatershed distributes an Advisory Notice targeted at landowners/growers or wetland managers in priority drainage areas upstream of a monitoring site where problem(s) are found (using GIS data base approach described above).

The Advisory Notice describes:

1. Constituent with exceedance detected and summary of monitoring results;
2. Potential sources of the constituent;
3. Potential MPs to address the water quality problem;
4. MP survey of management practices used on the farm¹;
5. A map showing the Subwatershed's irrigated land upstream of the sample site.
6. An invitation to outreach workshops where applicable.

The Advisory Notice also explains the responsibilities of the landowner or wetland manager for solving a water quality problem as part of a watershed coalition effort. The communications will clearly explain the incentives for participation, including the cost-effectiveness of managing water quality problems using a watershed-based approach and the consequences for failing to improve water quality through timely implementation of management practices.

Advisories are mailed to landowners based on the timetable outlined in the Coalition Communications Report.

Outreach Workshops

Workshops will be held within or near the drainage area where an exceedance occurs. Most of these workshops will be scheduled in the fall or winter months after harvest or in early spring.

¹ A MP survey distributed with the Advisory Notices or in workshops will help to establish which practices are being implemented by landowners/managers to protect water quality. The results are compiled for use in grower outreach and reports to the Regional Board. The Subwatershed and its collaborators also perform follow-up to mailings to ensure that a significant percentage of landowners complete and return the MP survey. The Coalition will develop geographic information to depict both baseline and potential management practices implementation and develop drainage-level maps to depict this information. Analysis of the information will provide direction to the Subwatersheds on which MPs may need further promotion, research or installation.

The workshops cover:

- Monitoring results including exceedances;
- MPs to address water quality problems;
- Distribution of MP publications;
- Distribution of Subwatershed map showing the area upstream of the sample site.

Coalition workshops are organized with the assistance of county Farm Bureaus, commodity group representatives, agricultural chemical representatives, County Agricultural Commissioners, Ducks Unlimited, Coalition for Urban Rural Environmental Stewardship and/or other collaborators.

II. General Communications

Since being established, the Coalition published booklets explaining its role and the role of the Subwatershed Groups and their collaborators. These booklets continue to be distributed throughout the Sacramento Valley at outreach workshops and through mailings.

III. Evaluate Effectiveness of Management Practices

The Coalition will work with both water quality and agronomic experts, as well as growers and wetlands managers, to develop a management practices evaluation framework with reasonable assumptions regarding the scope of potential impacts from a specific constituent, the ability to correlate specific practices to water quality improvements and the time horizon required to display improvements related to implementation of these practices. The Coalition coordinated efforts for submission of a Management Plan to the Regional Board for purposes of meeting the diazinon Total Maximum Daily Load requirements for the Sacramento and Feather Rivers. Lessons learned from this TMDL process can be utilized on a smaller scale to address priority issues at the drainage level. While effectiveness evaluations will likely require a focused sampling program, there will be opportunities to closely coordinate results with the broader Coalition sampling program to ensure results are understood in the context of the larger watershed.