



# COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

*Established in 1918 as a public agency*

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August 24, 2020

VIA E-MAIL [JENNIE.SNYDER@WATERBOARDS.CA.GOV](mailto:JENNIE.SNYDER@WATERBOARDS.CA.GOV)

Jennie Snyder  
Regional Water Quality Control Board,  
Colorado River Basin Region  
73-720 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 100  
Palm Desert, CA 92260

Dear Ms. Snyder:

Subject: Tentative Order R7-2020-0026, General Waste Discharge Requirements  
for Discharges of Waste from Irrigated Lands for Dischargers that are  
Members of a Coalition Group in the Coachella Valley

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) submits these written comments on the subject Tentative Order R7-2020-0026 (Tentative Order). CVWD is an independent California special district, formed in 1918, to protect and conserve local water sources in the Coachella Valley. Since then, CVWD has grown into a multi-faceted agency that delivers irrigation and domestic water, collects and recycles wastewater, provides regional storm water protection, replenishes the groundwater basin and promotes water conservation throughout the Coachella Valley. CVWD services supporting agriculture lands in the Coachella Valley include irrigation water facilities serving over 78,000 acres and drainage facilities serving over 37,000 acres.

CVWD is writing in support of the written comments submitted by the Coachella Valley Irrigated Lands Coalition (CVILC). CVILC is the only existing coalition authorized to represent members under the Tentative Order. The Tentative Order greatly expands CVILC's role and responsibilities in administering the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) to assist growers in the Coachella Valley. Providing the greatest degree of flexibility with the enrollment process and monitoring and reporting provisions, as requested by CVILC, is critical to ensure broad and timely participation by growers, large and small, and the success of the program.

CVWD supports the following requests made by CVILC which will help maintain an uninterrupted and high level of participation needed for a viable coalition, allow for greater flexibility to phase in the many substantial new provisions of the Tentative Order, and address concerns about deadlines for items that require in person meetings or outreach that may not be possible under COVID-19 restrictions.

- Rather than requiring CVILC members to apply for enrollment under the Draft Order, current coalition members should be automatically enrolled in the Tentative Order.

- Allow for modest delays to the Farm Plan, Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring, and Education Outreach requirements, recognizing that these provisions are new to the Coachella Valley, and will require procuring additional staffing resources and time to educate the growers. Due to the challenges presented by COVID-19, even the foundational outreach that will be needed to implement these provisions will present considerable challenges for the foreseeable future.

Finally, CVWD agrees with CVILC that fish tissue analysis for pesticides that have been banned for decades and banned PCBs that are not linked to agriculture are not the responsibility of current operators, and are unrelated to current irrigated agricultural activities regulated by this Tentative Order. As we have previously commented, fish tissue sampling is highly technical, requires permits, and, if the sampling will occur anywhere where there is the possibility of trapping co-occurring CESA-listed and/or Fully Protected species, requires consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS). It is for these reasons that this type of monitoring is almost exclusively performed by regulatory agencies. While there are certainly benefits to gathering data to support delisting waters that are currently on the 303(d) list for these legacy compounds in the Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel, placing the significant permitting and technical burden on the coalition is not the right approach. This type of monitoring would be best achieved regionally through a State monitoring program like SWAMP, in consultation with CDFW and USFWS.

CVWD provided CVILC monitoring, reporting, and other technical support under the previous Conditional Waiver, Order R7-2014-0046. While CVWD will continue to provide this type of support, the Tentative Order has many new substantive administrative and reporting provisions related to irrigated agricultural practices that are beyond CVWD's technical scope and CVILC's current resources. CVILC needs enrollment flexibility to remain a viable coalition and more time on certain provisions to grow into the new requirements in a reasonable, phased approach. The Regional Board should provide the requested flexibility, recognizing the value that CVILC provides to growers in the Coachella Valley and reduced regulatory burden compared to the alternative individual permitting and reporting process.

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Bigley, Director of Environmental Services, at [SBigley@cvwd.org](mailto:SBigley@cvwd.org) or by calling (760) 398-2661, extension 2286.

Sincerely,



Steve Bigley  
Director of Environmental Services