

Water Quality Management Plans

Plan Development by Individuals, Groups, and Third Party Programs

The North Coast Agricultural Lands Discharge Program (Ag Lands Program) relies on the implementation of management practices to comply with conditional waiver requirements. North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) staff recognize that individual planning needs vary for operations across the North Coast Region and want to provide flexibility to operators to select the management practices most appropriate for their operations. Therefore, Regional Board staff are proposing that the Ag Lands conditional waiver contain general performance standards and prohibitions (i.e., requirements) that may be met through the implementation of site-specific practices. Water Quality Management Plans (Water Quality Plans) are the means for documenting compliance with these requirements.

The Ag Lands conditional waiver will provide several options for developing Water Quality Plans in order to make use of existing programs and planning documents and to make the administration of the Ag Lands waiver more efficient. Regional Board staff recognize that some operators may have already developed a farm plan that addresses water quality management. Regional Board staff are inviting input from Advisory Group members regarding existing programs and planning documents that could be used to satisfy planning requirements.

Regional Board staff are proposing the following options for the development of Water Quality Plans:

1. Plan is developed for an individual operation (templates may be provided)
2. Plan is developed for a group of operations
3. Plan is developed as part of an approved third party certification program

Contents of Water Quality Management Plans

Whichever form a Water Quality Plan takes, it must contain a set of common elements and include management practices as necessary to meet all waiver requirements. The following list of Water Quality Plan elements is intended as a starting point for a discussion with the Advisory Group. The elements listed are based on the Regional Board's need for water quality-related information about each operation and the need to verify each operation's compliance with the requirements of the conditional waiver.

1. Contact information
2. Description of operations and land use relevant to the program scope
3. Description of physical hydrologic features and local water quality conditions
4. Description of management practices to be implemented to meet waiver requirements. Management practices should be designed to afford water quality protection in the following areas (as applicable):
 - Nutrient management
 - Erosion control
 - Pesticide management
 - Livestock management
 - Riparian and stream management
 - Irrigation and drainage management
 - Road management
 - Treatment of existing, human-caused problem sites
5. Farm/Ranch map corresponding to above descriptions
6. Time schedule for implementation of management practices
7. Monitoring and reporting plan