



Why Join The Groundwater Cooperative?

Easy To Comply

Joining the CCGC is easy, effective and efficient. Instead of sampling each of your domestic wells and primary irrigation well, taking samples to the lab, having them tested, and filing related paperwork, the cooperative will handle it all. At this time, Tier 2 & 3 growers still must provide the information on their Annual Compliance Form about nitrate ranges in their primary irrigation source, and must still test these wells annually if applicable. However, those samples must only be tested for nitrates and results will stay in the farm plan.

Data Security

Individual Monitoring: Individual ranch/operation identifier can be included on a public website with data point blurred to one square mile.

Cooperative Monitoring: Location of data point is maintained the regulatory-only site of GeoTracker for the duration of this Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP), if not longer. If location is requested in an appropriate Public Records Act Request or shown for any merited reason in a public presentation, well location coordinates will be blurred by one square mile and the data point will be identified as a CCGC well, not a specific ranch/operation. The change to one square mile

blurring of well locations is being recommended to the Regional Water Board by its executive officer for its December 2013 meeting as an amendment to the Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MRP) and the Order.

Setting The Stage With Sound Science

This program will create an accurate characterization of the aquifers with science-based, consistent, aggregated reporting. This program's findings will provide agriculture with a basis of understanding and scientific background for the next ILRP developed by the Regional Board. Additionally, the data points collected in this program will be chosen based on their accuracy and ability to effectively characterize the aquifer. Good data = smart policy.

Understanding The Root Cause Of Problems

In certain circumstances, we may come across a "hot spot," an area where there is an exceedance of nitrate drinking water standards. As prioritized by the CCGC Board, certain samples will be tested for additional constituents (i.e. caffeine, pharmaceuticals) and/or isotope testing to understand age and source of nitrates, which could include legacy/historical production, septic systems, municipal systems, etc.

Central Coast Groundwater Cooperative Organization Background

August 7, 2013

Who We Are

The Central Coast Groundwater Cooperative (CCGC) is an organization founded in July 2013 to represent landowners and growers who operate in Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. CCGC is forming a non-profit 501(c)5 mutual benefit organization whose primary function is to fulfill groundwater quality regulatory requirements in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

How We Started

In January 2013, a group of agricultural interests began developing a cooperative monitoring plan in response to ILRP requirements for groundwater monitoring. The agricultural groups included the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, Western Growers and the farm bureaus of Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and San Benito counties. The plan was adopted by the Regional Water Board on July 11. A key component of the plan is sampling drinking water wells of selected CCGC members. That information will be compiled into a report with contour maps developed to characterize groundwater quality throughout the region.

How We Operate

CCGC will be managed by an 11-13 member board of directors made up of landowners and growers from the region. The Executive Director, Parry Klassen, is a fruit grower who also manages the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition based in the Central Valley. Funding to fulfill ILRP requirements comes from member dues and private contributions.

Cost To Participate In The Program

The cost for individual membership will depend on how many landowners or growers join CCGC. Early estimates place potential membership at approximately 150,000 acres. If that level of acreage participates in CCGC, member dues are expected to be \$12 per acre for the four-year program. Because most of the costs to implement are incurred in the first 18 months, member dues will be \$6 per acre at sign-up with the balance due in 2015. CCGC is asking landowners and growers to commit to a four year program and membership to ensure stable funding throughout the life of the current ILRP, which expires in March 2017.

Benefits Of A Cooperative Approach

Participating in the CCGC has multiple benefits for member landowners and growers. The organization combines the resources of its members to achieve economies of scale to comply with the regulatory requirements of the Regional Water Board. The CCGC also provides long term security of individual well monitoring information, fulfilling the needs for accurate information. CCGC will use experts in groundwater to create an accurate characterization of the basins covered by the plan, using science-based, aggregated reporting.

What Well Sampling Will Tell Us

Results from well sampling will provide growers, regulators and the public a better understanding of local aquifers and geology in the region. Information collected on tested wells will include depth to groundwater, well perforation levels as well as quality parameters such as nitrates and total dissolved

solids (TDS). In instances where the CCGC deems it appropriate, additional isotope testing and identification of nitrates coming from non-agricultural sources will be conducted. This information will then be compiled into a report to the Regional Water Board that will include maps showing areas where groundwater quality exceeds drinking water limits for nitrates and other constituents.

Member Notification If Problems Identified

Should well monitoring find levels higher than standards for the tested parameters, the CCGC will notify member landowners or growers. This information will also be provided to the Regional Water Board in a final report due in September 2014. CCGC will provide members with an annual report summarizing the information collected as well as summaries of revenue and expenditures. If a member agrees, CCGC may inform the Regional Water Board when the member provides a replacement water source or discontinues use of a well for drinking water purposes.

Security Of Well Information

Once member drinking water wells have been sampled, the information will be compiled into maps of the region where similar water quality levels, such as nitrates, will be connected by lines or colors. This contour map will be submitted to the Regional Water Board in September 2014 along with the supporting well data. Eventually, the Regional Water Board will post this map and data to the regulatory side of a website called GeoTracker, a public website containing statewide groundwater quality information. Only if a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request is submitted and approved by the Regional Water Board will the well location, identified as a CCGC well, be released (but blurred to one square mile.)

Collecting Available Water Quality Data

A key requirement of the program is to characterize the rural drinking water supply and shallow groundwater aquifer in the CCGC region. In addition to using data from member wells, CCGC will also gather publicly available data generated by the counties and by using data submitted by landowners and growers who perform individual monitoring as part of the current ILRP. This information may enable CCGC to sample only a sub set of member wells in a specific area. This determination will be made after existing information is examined by CCGC hydrogeologists.

Schedule For Sampling Drinking Water Wells

The well identification and sampling component of the plan is divided into three phases:

Phase I: Salinas Valley & Lockwood Valley (9/13-3/14)

Phase II: Pajaro Valley (12/13-6/14)

Phase III: Gilroy-Hollister area (1/14-8/14)

Well identification is scheduled to be completed by September 1, 2013 with all wells sampled by September 1, 2014.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Who can join?

A All growers/landowners with acreage in Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties, regardless of whether they opted into Cooperative Groundwater Monitoring on their eNOI, may sign up for this program.

Q Will all of my wells be sampled?

A Not necessarily. Only drinking water wells that are appropriate and necessary to characterize the aquifer will be sampled. Data may be gathered from irrigation wells if the information is necessary for aquifer characterization.

Q Will irrigation wells be sampled?

A Irrigation wells will only be sampled if there are no domestic wells available for the proper characterization of drinking water aquifers (most likely these will be wells used for both irrigation and drinking water).

Q Will I need to conduct and pay for sampling if my wells are chosen?

A No, this will be done and paid for through the cooperative. Your only financial costs are your membership dues.

Q Must I enroll all of my ranches?

A The more acreage enrolled, the less expensive the program will be for everyone, and the better characterization of the aquifer. Enrollment is done by ranch, just as it's done on your eNOI.

Q Can I discontinue my membership during the course of this waiver?

A No, all members must make a four-year commitment on the specific ranches/parcels they enroll.

Q What happens if there's money left over at the end of the program?

A Dues are required at sign up (50% = \$6/acre), with the balance billed at a later date within the course of the 4 years of this program. If program costs are less than originally budgeted, subsequent invoices will be smaller and/or credits will be issued. Additionally, the board of directors for CCGC, made up of growers, will have the authority to determine how funds will be spent to meet the regulatory requirements of this program.

Q Do I still need to sample my wells?

A Currently, if your farm is in Tier 2 or Tier 3, the Annual Compliance Form (Section B) asks about the maximum nitrate level in your primary irrigation well (which is reported as a range on the drop-down menu of choices). While CCGC is arguing the validity and necessity of this question in our appeal to the State Water Board, we have no final decision on whether it will be removed, and may not know until mid-2014. Therefore, at this time, for Tier 2 & 3 ranches, this question needs to be answered on the annual compliance form, although you don't need to provide a specific data point, or well location.

Q Will my exact well location eventually be uploaded to the public side of GeoTracker?

A We have made an agreement with the Regional Board that for the course of this waiver (through March 2017) any data collected from this program will be loaded to the regulatory-only side of GeoTracker, not the public side. The Regional Board is unable to commit to such agreements for future orders, although we will make a similar request for the next order. Additionally, if despite our best efforts, a data point collected for this program is uploaded to the public site at a future date, the following language has been written into the program, in an effort to keep any well locations blurred to one mile, in perpetuity, consistent with similar programs in the state:

"Consistent with the same practice used to protect public drinking water supply wells regulated by the California Department of Public Health, we acknowledge the verbal commitment made by the CCRWQCB staff and State Water Resources Control Board staff to revise the Central Coast waiver and its Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MRP) to show with an uncertainty of the precise locations of groundwater wells sampled in this program to one square mile. We acknowledge the verbal commitment made to us by the CCRWQCB staff that this show with an uncertainty by one mile squared will be made of any and all well locations reported as part of this program."

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