

CV-SALTS Approach to Safe Drinking Water Responsibilities of Dischargers Including Growers

The stakeholder led CV-SALTS initiative will be proposing a Central Valley Salt and Nitrate Management Plan (SNMP) that prioritizes three goals:

- Ensuring a safe drinking water supply for all residents in the valley;
- Managing salt and nitrate loading to eliminate further degradation of receiving water; and
- Implementing managed restoration, where feasible, to rectify historic groundwater impairments.

Dischargers that discharge salts and nitrates will focus their short-term efforts on providing replacement drinking water to affected communities. Longer-term efforts will focus on managing salt and nitrate loading to eliminate further degradation and to ultimately restore impacted aquifers. The SNMP will be a salt and nitrate management blueprint that the Board will implement through waste discharge requirements and other regulatory measures.

Figure 1 is a draft implementation process under consideration by the CV-SALTS Executive Committee. A summary of the draft process follows:

- (1) The process is triggered either by a routine permit renewal or, where the Board identifies a "Priority Subbasin", notice to all dischargers that discharge salt or nitrates within that subbasin.
 - Priority Subbasins were determined through technical studies based on water quality conditions in the upper groundwater zone (typically serving domestic supply), trends, population, land use, and other considerations. Highest priority is for elevated nitrate. Phased reviews by priority will be complete within 5-years
- (2) Dischargers will have 90 days to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Board. The NOI will inform the Board of the Discharger's intent either to obtain permit coverage under an individual permit or an existing General Order, or the Discharger's intent become part of a Management Zone, where a series of dischargers will implement a regional strategy to reduce salt and nutrient loading consistent with the SNMP.
- (3) Within 180 days of submitting the NOI, the Discharger(s) will submit either a report of waste discharge (ROWD) to obtain an individual permit, a notice of intent to enroll under a general permit, or will collaborate with other dischargers participating in a Management Zone to submit a collective report of waste discharge to obtain waste discharge requirements that will implement the load reduction strategy chosen by the Management Zone.
- (4) The Board's permitting approach will be dependent on whether ambient water quality in the basin exceeds or falls below water quality "triggers" and whether the discharge will further degrade existing groundwater quality.
 - Triggers will be based on a percentage of the applicable water quality objective and water quality trends in the subbasin.
 - If trigger values are not exceeded and if degradation will not occur, the reissued WDRs will not need specific implementation language.

If triggers are exceeded or if degradation will occur as a result of the discharge, the discharger(s) may propose an alternative compliance strategy for the Board's consideration. The alternative compliance strategy may be based on:

- (5) Requesting allocation of available assimilative capacity, or
- (6) Requesting a conditional variance or exception.

The proposed compliance plan must address the goals/priorities of the SNMP, but may utilize any combination of management practices appropriate to the area and issue(s) (e.g. mitigation banks; offsets; stormwater harvesting; pump/treat; other).

- (8) Under the State Water Board's Anti-Degradation Policy, when existing water quality is sufficient to support all beneficial uses, the Board cannot authorize water quality degradation unless the Board finds that the degradation is of maximum benefit of the people of the State. Where existing water quality does not support beneficial uses, discharges above applicable water quality objectives cannot be authorized. However, the SNMP currently under consideration would alter the way beneficial uses are defined by focusing not on first encountered groundwater, but on the average concentration in the aquifer. Discharges authorized by the Board may therefore result in localized pockets of groundwater that does not meet applicable water quality objectives over the short-term. However, in order to authorize these discharges, the Board would require Dischargers to protect beneficial uses by preparing and financing an Assured Water Supply Plan that will ensure that residents within the influence of the dischargers are provided with an interim source of drinking water while long-term efforts to restore the groundwater aquifer are being implemented. The Plan must also specify a permanent solution to the identified safe drinking water concerns that should be implemented within five years of the Board's approval of the Plan.
- (9) Dischargers must also submit a Salt/Nitrate Compliance Plan, as needed, within two years of submittal of the NOI. This Plan shall provide the short and long-term approach to comply with Management Goals 2 and 3 within the area under the influence of the discharge. The specific content of the Plan depends on the significance of water quality concerns within the permitted area. In general, the Plan, which will be phased at ten-year intervals and implemented as part of an adaptive iterative process, shall include both short-term (≤ 20 years) projects and a long-term (> 20 years) strategy to achieve compliance. For salt management, this could include commitments to participate in the development/financing of a Central Valley brine line, participation in a mitigation bank to support the development of a brine line, or participation in the development of a Central Valley Water Board-approved salt management site.

The proposed Assured Water Supply Plan and/or Salt and Nitrate Compliance Plan will be considered for approval by the Central Valley Water Board as part of issuing WDRs. If the plan(s) do not provide adequate findings under the guidelines of the SNMP, the discharge will be prohibited.

Table 1. SNMP Implementation Schedule (Numbers in Process Step refer to Figure 1)

Process Step	Compliance Date
Central Valley Water Board Notification (1)	Priority 1 - Within 90 days of adoption of BPA Priority 2 – Within 1.5 years of adoption of BPA Priority 3 – Within 3 years of adoption of BPA Priority 4 – Within 5 years of adoption of BPA
Discharger Notification of Intent (2)	Within 90 days of receipt of notification
Compliance Approach (Water Quality Evaluation) (3)	Within 180 days of submittal of the NOI
Determine Need for Assured Water Supply Plan (8)	Within 180 days of submittal of the NOI
Submit Assured Water Supply Plan (8)	Within 1 year of submittal of NOI
Submit Salt/Nitrate Compliance Plan (9)	Within 2 years of submittal of NOI

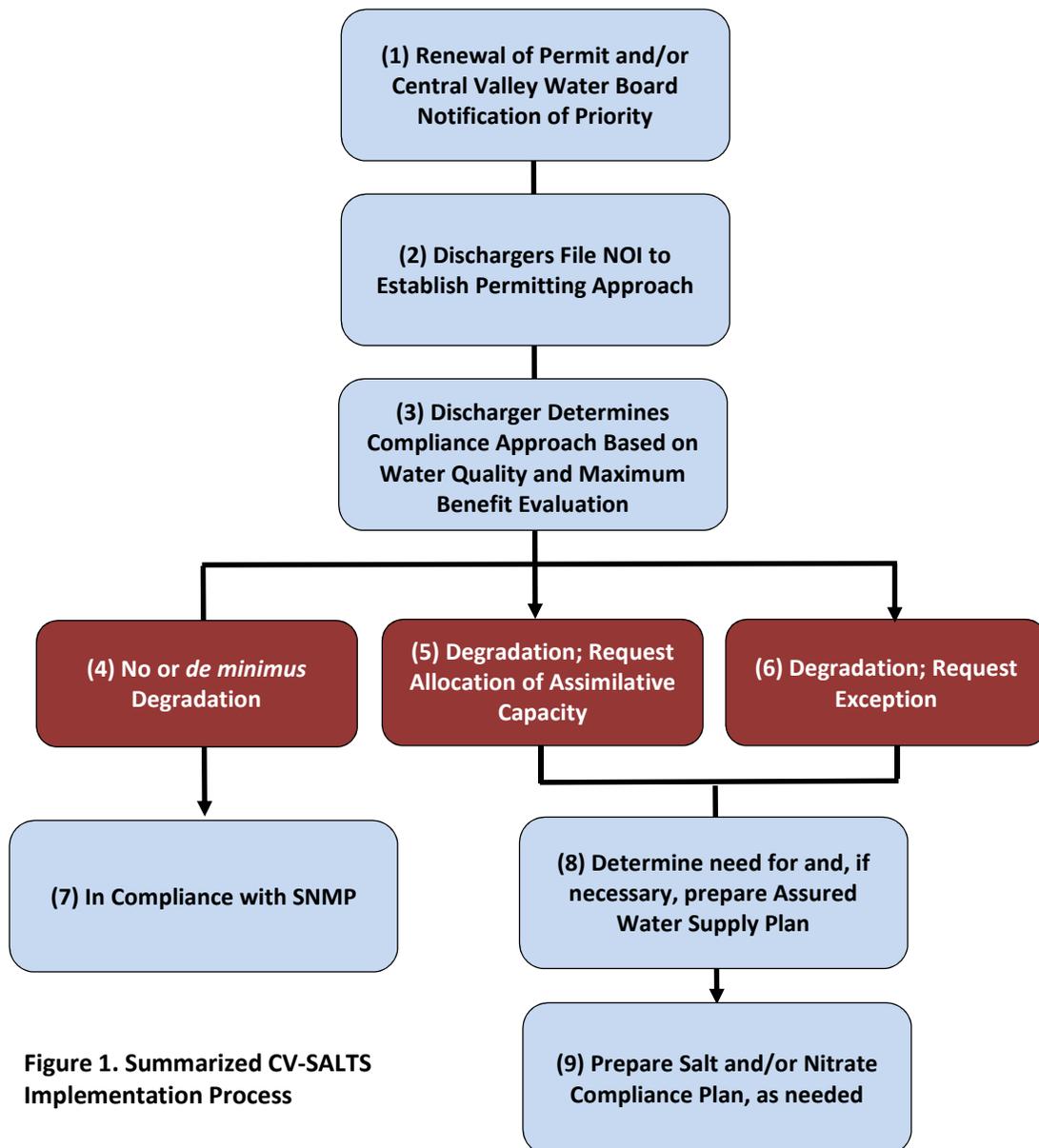


Figure 1. Summarized CV-SALTS Implementation Process