

# **Chowchilla Subbasin**

## **Nitrate Control Program Communication and Engagement Plan**

November 2020

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# Chowchilla Subbasin

## Nitrate Control Program Local Management Zone

### Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan

#### November 2020

The purpose of this Communication and Engagement Plan is to assist the Chowchilla Sub-basin local Management Zone in its efforts to develop general and strategic communications to engage stakeholders in the development of the Preliminary Management Zone Plan (PMZP) and Early Action Plan (EAP) activities.

## Overview and Background

The Central Valley (Valley) is the epicenter of California's economy—encompassing 40% of the state and providing water for people and businesses from San Francisco to San Diego, as well as food for California, the nation, and the world. Over the last 150 years, increased agricultural, industrial, and municipal activities, coupled with population growth, have resulted in dramatic increases in nitrates and other pollutants in groundwater, soils, and surface waters. In some communities, the nitrate concentrations have caused unsafe drinking water.

Most of the nitrates accumulating in the groundwater come from sources such as manure, fertilizer, and failing septic systems. In the Valley, 90% of residents rely on groundwater wells for drinking water, and some of this supply is now unsafe. Currently, dischargers (growers, ranchers, municipalities, food processors, etc.) are regulated for nitrate discharge, but in many cases compliance with the regulations is difficult or even impossible to achieve. Recognizing this, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and State Water Resources Control Board have adopted amendments to the Water Quality Control Plans in the Central Valley. These amendments include a Nitrate Control Program, which gives water quality permit holders the option of having more time to achieve compliance with Water Quality Objectives for nitrate, if they are willing to work together to provide access to safe drinking water in their communities.

The Nitrate Control Program divides the Valley into three areas of priority for nitrate management. The highest priority areas (Priority 1 areas) have the greatest number of affected drinking water supplies and will be addressed first. The high priority areas are located in these groundwater Subbasins: Kaweah, Turlock, Chowchilla, Tule, Modesto, and Kings.

## Chowchilla Subbasin

The Chowchilla Subbasin has been identified by the RWQCB as a Priority 1 subbasin due to high levels of nitrate in groundwater. The area has a substantial agricultural community heavily reliant on groundwater. In addition, the Subbasin is economically distressed, with nearly 79 percent of the Subbasin designated as part of a severely disadvantaged community (SDAC) and approximately 30 percent of the Subbasin (primarily in the northern and southern central parts of the Subbasins and also around the City of Chowchilla) is designated as part of a DAC.

## Subbasin Governance

Dischargers/Permit Holders along with key stakeholders, engineers, and staff will work to develop a governance

structure through a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be made up of Permit holders and permit holder representatives, with representation based on a weighted distribution.

## Purpose of Communication and Engagement Plan

The purpose of the Communication and Engagement Plan (Plan) is:

- To provide Dischargers/Permit Holders, community leaders, and other stakeholders a roadmap to follow to ensure consistent messaging about Nitrate Control Program requirements and related Chowchilla Subbasin information and data.
- To provide a roadmap to Dischargers/Permit Holders and community leaders to follow to ensure stakeholders have meaningful input into PMZP decision-making, including EAP development.
- To ensure a process that is widely seen by stakeholders as fair and respectful to the range of interested parties.
- To make transparent to stakeholders their opportunities to contribute to the development of a PMZP and EAP that can effectively address nitrogen management in groundwater within the Chowchilla Subbasin.

## Communication Plan Goals

The Plan seeks to accomplish the following goals:

1. Educate stakeholders about:
  - a. Nitrate Control Program and its requirements.
  - b. Individual Dischargers/Permit Holders within the Subbasin as management units.
  - c. Potential changes to current nitrogen management in groundwater under the Nitrate Control Program.
  - d. How stakeholders will be represented in the PMZP and EAP development process.
2. Communicate important Nitrate Control Program deadlines and dates.
3. Coordinate outreach and engagement activities between Dischargers/Permit Holders to ensure efficiencies and to support stakeholders in PMZP and EAP development.
4. Articulate strategies and channels for gaining ongoing stakeholder input and feedback to inform PMZP and EAP design and development.
5. Encourage stakeholder engagement by communicating dedicated Nitrate Control Program outreach strategies and channels, including meeting and workshop dates and content, as opportunities for stakeholders to provide input in the PMZP and EAP decision-making and planning processes.

## Key Messages

As Dischargers/Permit Holders begin the process of reaching out to stakeholders to inform and engage them in groundwater management issues and items, it is critical that Dischargers/Permit Holders share clear and consistent key messages to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Key messages are as follows:

1. Multiple entities and industry partners have joined together to ensure local control of groundwater nitrate management in the Chowchilla Subbasin:
  - a. City of Chowchilla
  - b. Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program

- c. East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition
- d. Madera County Farm Bureau
- e. Non-Government Organizations representing stakeholders in the Chowchilla Subbasin.

2. Management elements include PMZP and EAP decision-making, funding, implementation and enforcement.
3. Dischargers/Permit Holders are committed to proactively and sustainably manage nitrates in groundwater in the Subbasin.
4. Dischargers/Permit Holders shall ensure compliance with the Nitrate Control Program to prevent State intervention.
5. The Chowchilla Subbasin will develop a single PMZP, including an EAP, for the Subbasin.
6. Dischargers/Permit Holders are committed to proactive and transparent outreach and engagement with stakeholders and Subbasin community members during the MZIP planning process, implementation and beyond.

## Decision-Making

Decision-making and communication about said decision-making will be made by the Steering Committee until governance structure, policies, and procedures are established.

## Engagement Strategies

The following strategies are meant to ensure successful engagement of Chowchilla Subbasin stakeholders during the PMZP and EAP development and implementation process:

1. Engage local Non-Governmental Organizations who work in Stakeholder communities and have trusted relationships with affected communities.
2. Develop communication tools (documents) in plain language and in the languages of the people in affected communities.
3. Integrate and expand on existing Nitrate Control Program communication and outreach efforts.
4. Develop and maintain a list of interested parties
5. Maintain a centralized Chowchilla Subbasin website
6. Provide regular public notices and updates on meetings
7. Provide notices and updates in local newspaper periodicals
8. Institute regular stakeholder outreach and engagement opportunities
9. Strategically engage local, specially identified groups
10. Develop and update Subbasin outreach and engagement resources table
11. Develop consistent, coordinated messages and talking points in languages of stakeholders

## Localized Outreach and Engagement Strategies

While consistent messaging is to be coherently coordinated at the Subbasin level, specifically among the Dischargers/Permit Holders, localized outreach is to be coordinated at the Dischargers/Permit Holders

management area level through existing, trusted channels. Dischargers/Permit Holders will utilize local agencies' standing meetings, utilize local agencies' existing resources, and build on strategies to engage local, specially identified groups.

### 1. Utilize Local Agencies with Standing Meetings

The most effective way to inform and engage many stakeholders and beneficial users regarding Nitrate Control Program requirements and soliciting feedback is through trusted local agencies and community organizations with standing meetings and communication channels.

1. Support local agencies and community organizations in disseminating information and engaging stakeholders in the following ways:
  - a. During standing board and/or community meetings
  - b. Through monthly information pieces in newsletters or included in utility bills of associated fee assessing organizations
  - c. Disseminating information in both English and Spanish
2. Local trusted agencies and community organizations include but are not limited to:
  - a. Madera County and Merced County Farm Bureaus
  - b. Madera County
  - c. Mutual water companies (such as Sierra Vista)
  - d. Merced Area Groundwater Pool Interests
  - e. DAC community meetings and leaders
  - f. Growers' associations and industry organizations (such as wine and dairy)
  - g. Resource conservation groups
  - h. Local and regional environmental justice groups (such as Self-Help Enterprises, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, and Community Water Center)
  - i. Local hospitals and schools
3. Organize public meetings around concrete impacts to specific stakeholders, including:
  - a. Educational workshops to inform stakeholders of important changes in groundwater management (especially as related to addressing high nitrates in groundwater) and how it will impact them.
  - b. Meetings that detail when and how opportunities to provide input to the Dischargers/Permit Holders decision making and PMZP/EAP development processes will occur.
  - c. Public meetings regarding fee structures to help people understand how to interpret the impacts on them.
4. Make information and meetings accessible to various stakeholder groups.
  - a. Provide information in easy-to-understand and streamlined terms.
  - b. Provide information and facilitation in both English and Spanish.
  - c. Hold some meetings during hours that do not impede regular work schedules of affected stakeholders (i.e., evenings and weekends).
5. Some groups may need to be engaged through channels that do not include the need for internet access, via door-to-door and other opportunities for face-to-face engagement.

### Recommended Milestones for Engaging Stakeholders

To employ the Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan effectively, Chowchilla Subbasin

Dischargers/Permit Holders will need to develop a schedule for outreach and engagement activities. The below table (Table 3) identifies milestones, as well as centralized and localized engagement strategies. This schedule shall be updated into a Task oriented work plan and timeline as communication and engagement tasks are allocated.

*Table 3: Summary of Engagement Opportunities and Milestones*

Timeframe	Milestone or Stage		Centralized & Localized Communication Strategies
			•
		•	•
		•	•

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## Evaluation and Assessment

The communication strategy should include opportunities to check in at various points during implementation to ensure that it is meeting the communication and engagement goals and complying with the Nitrate Control Program. These check-ins should include the following inquiry and topics:

- ✓ What worked well?
- ✓ What didn't work as planned?
- ✓ Meeting recaps with next steps
- ✓ Listing lessons learned ... and developing mid-course corrections
- ✓ (As relevant) communications budget analysis

## Educational Materials

CV-SALTS and the RWQCB have developed various educational materials about the Nitrate Control Program and PMZP/EAP development. **Table 4** lists some helpful educational and reference materials related to the Nitrate Control Program.

*Table 4. Educational and Reference Documents Related to the Nitrate Control Program*

Educational/Reference Document Titles	Publishing Entity	Date

Chowchilla Subbasin Management Zone Interested Parties List

First name	Last name	Company
	Fagundes	
Richie	Iest	
Maggie	Estrada	IHI Power Services Inc.
Scott	Wickstrom	Red Top Jersey
Brad	Nyman	
Tom	Collishaw	Self-Help Enterprises
Brandon	Tomlinson	Chowchilla Water District
Allison	Macias	Fagundes Dairy
Jim	Kopshever	
Greg	Hooker	Diamond H Dairy
Julia	Berry	
Michael	York	Cowifornia Dreamin' Dairy
David	Talley	
Duane	Blech	
Russell	Harris	The Almond Co.
Mike	VanderDussen	
Cliff	Talley	
Jeffrey	Troost	Troost Dairy
Eddie	Ocampo	Self-Help Enterprises
Kole	Upton	
Christina	Beckstead	Madera County Farm Bureau
Ben	Pitman	Pitman Farms - Mary's Turkeys, Chickens, Ducks
Matthew	Elvena	Denali Water Solutions
Layne	Baroldi	Synagro
Mark	Hutson	
Diana	Robinson	Foster Farms
Dirk	Vlot	Vlot Dairy
Anja	Raudabaugh	
Karun	Samran	
Jason	Pucheu	Prudential
Tess	Dunham	Kahn, Soares & Conway
Darcy	Vlot	
Andrew	Clark	
Larkin	Harman	
Madeline	Harris	Leadership Counsel
Carl	Evers Jr.	HNRG
Doug	Welch	Chowchilla Water District
Miguel	Guerrero	The Wine Group
Justin	Kosta	Foster Farms
Vicki	Kretsinger Grabert	Luhdorff & Scalmanini, Consulting Engineers (LSCE)
Paul	Souza	
Clay	Haynes	
Amanda	Monaco	Leadership Counsel
Zach	Solow	Condor Earth
Simranpreet	Kaur	Synagro
Dave	Orth	New Current Water
Jennifer	Azevedo	The Wine Group



Bill	Mattos	
Richard	Meyerhoff	GEI
Angela	Islas	Self Help Enterprises
Michael	Claiborne	Leadership Counsel
Samantha	Lopes	FMS
Steve	Massaro	
Stephanie	Anagnoson	Madera County
Denise	Holmes	Foster Farms
Molly	Thurman	HNRG
Terry	Violett	The Wine Group
Bree	Ramos	Merced County Farm Bureau
Barbara	Dalgish	Luhdorff & Scalmanini, Consulting Engineers (LSCE)
Paul	Buwalda	The Wine Group
Lacey	Kiriakou	Merced County
Lacey	McBride	County of Merced
Michael	Boccardo	West Coast Advisors - Dairy
Michael	Borelli	Ampersand Chowchilla Biomass, LLC / Merced Power,
Bill	Littleton	Fairmead Farms
Case	Vlot	Vlot Dairy
Edgar	DeJager	
Lauren	Layne	Baker Manock & Jensen
Ralph	Pistoresi	
Philip	Vereway	
Dale	Arthur	Capital Agricultural Property Services Inc.
Jason	Rogers	City of Chowchilla
Luis	Gill	The Almond Co.
Stephanie	Sherrell	
Jason	Littleton	Fairmead Farms
Allan	Clark	Clark Bros.
Dirk	Vlot	Vlot Dairy
Cole	Vlot	Vlot Dairy
Richard	Deveau	Merced Power, LLC
Marc	Frelier	MRF Lands
J.P.	Cativiela	
Greg	Kester	CA Association of Sanitation Agencies
Mark	Sherrell	Maricopa Orchards/Touchstone Pistachio
Paul	Boyer	Self-Help Enterprises
Carl	Evers, III	Hancock
Larkin	Harmon	Harman Bros.
Jeannie	Habben	Madera County
Kevin	Soares	
Bryant	Elkins	Iest Family Farms
John	Lane	Condor Earth
Alex	Dewitt	Condor Earth
Jenaro	Gamez	Condor Earth
Luke	Castle	Condor Earth
Ashley	Young	Self-Help Enterprises
Eric	Moller	IHI Power Services, Inc.
Roger	Faust	
Connley	Clayton	
Lucas	Avila	Hancock
Kristi	Robinson	Water Wise

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Geoffrey	Vanderheuvall	
Varley	Fitch	
Eddie	Gomes	
Scott	Menefee	
Robin	Clayton	Clayton Water District
Lisa	Baker	

Updated September 10, 2020

## Chowchilla Subbasin Management Zone Engagement Matrix

CHOWCHILLA SUB-BASIN CV-SALTS							
Communication Log							
Date	Agency/Company	Contact	Contact Type	Reason	Response	Action	Action Date
12/20/20	Key Stakeholders			Schedule Meeting - Dates of Availability requested			
3/9/20	CV Salts Large Group Meeting	Interested Parties	Web Meeting				
6/3/20	CV Salts Large Group Meeting	Interested Parties	Email	Meeting information and invitation sent			
6/5/20	CV Salts Large Group Meeting	Interested Parties	Web Meeting				
6/17/20	Condor Earth	Luke Castle	Email	Request to add 4 names to Interested Parties List		added to list	6/17/20
6/29/20	SynaGro	Layne Baroldi	Email	Request to add 2 names to Interested Parties List		added to list	6/29/20
7/7/20	Denali Water	Mathew Elvena	Email	Request to be added to Interested Parties List		added to list	7/7/20
7/15/20	CV Salts Large Group Meeting	interested Parties	email	Meeting information and invitation sent			
7/15/20		Geoffry Vanderheuvall	Email	Request to be added to Interested Parties List	Was on list but had an error in emailed.	resolved	7/15/20
7/15/20	Fagundes Dairy	Allison Macias	Email	Request to be added to Interested Parties List	Was on list but had an error in emailed.	resolved	7/16/20
7/22/20	CA Association of Sanitation Agencies	Greg Kester	Email	Request to be added to Interested Parties List		added to list	7/22/20
7/28/20	John Hancock	Molly Thurman	Email	Request for video recording of meeting.		video sent	7/28/20
7/29/20	CV Salts Large Group Meeting	Interested Parties	Web Meeting				
7/30/20	Ampersand Chowchilla Biomass	Michael Borelli	Email	Request to add 4 names to Interested Parties List		added to list	7/30/20
8/10/20	County of Madera	Stephanie Agnonson	Email	Requested the notes taken at the meeting to post on the county website		notes sent	8/10/20
8/20/20	Cowifornia Dreamin Dairy	Michael York	Email	Request to be added to Interested Parties List		added to list	8/21/20
8/26/20	Leadership Council	Amanda Monaco	Email	Couldn't get on zoom call.	Emailed link again to her immediately and called her, was able to get on prior to email and call.	resolved	8/26/20
8/31/20	Madera Irrigation District	Tom Greci	email	Sarah reached out to get groundwater quality data.	MID does not have the groundwater quality data requested		

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Sample of living document

**Chowchilla Subbasin Management  
Zone  
Outreach Check List**

Meeting/Event	Meeting/ Event date	Topics presented	Audience (estimated # participants; interests represented)	E-blast to Interested Parties list? Which list and when?	Email to Others? Which list and when?	Flyer created?	Flyer distributed at other meetings/events? Where and when?	Information provided at other meetings/events? Where and when?	Additional outreach and publicity (e.g., pop-ups)?	Press release? Which outlets?	Advertised on website? Which website(s)?	Advertised on social media? Which platforms and accounts?	Translation of meeting provided?	Additional comments
PMZP/EAP-Specific Events: Subbasin wide meetings, capacity-building events, educational tours, e-blasts														

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