

CV-SALTS Releases New and Innovative Plan to Address Salt and Nitrates in Groundwater

Portions of the Central Valley have a Problem with Salt and Nitrate Accumulations: Portions of California's immense Central Valley (Valley) have salt or nitrate accumulations in the groundwater and soil from both historic and ongoing discharges from legal and accepted agriculture, municipal, and industrial activities (see maps). The nitrate concentrations are impacting drinking water quality and, in some communities, water supply wells do not meet safe drinking water standards. The salt accumulations have resulted in 250,000 acres taken out of production and about 1.5 million acres being salinity impaired. If not addressed, the economic impacts could be staggering. For example, if salt accumulations are not managed, the resulting direct economic costs to the Valley could exceed \$1.5-billion per year by 2030. The Valley's economic future depends on addressing these impacts.

Stakeholders Collaborate to Find New Solutions: In 2006, a broad coalition of Central Valley stakeholders including representatives from federal and state agencies, regulated dischargers, and environmental justice groups began to collaborate to develop a new, more effective and efficient, regulatory framework to provide workable solutions. The Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) initiative was launched to develop sustainable salinity and nitrate management planning for the Valley. The Central Valley Salinity Coalition (CVSC) formed in 2008 to fund the much needed technical and scientific studies needed by CV-SALTS.

New Salt and Nitrate Management Plan Sets Goals: After extensive collaboration and technical studies, a management plan was developed—the [Salt and Nitrate Management Plan](#) (SNMP). The SNMP is a blueprint that identifies actions, results, regulatory policies, and a timeline to address the salt and nitrate accumulations. The overarching commitment of the SNMP recommendations is to ensure safe drinking water supplies, balanced salt and nitrate loadings, and, where reasonable and attainable, restore groundwater.

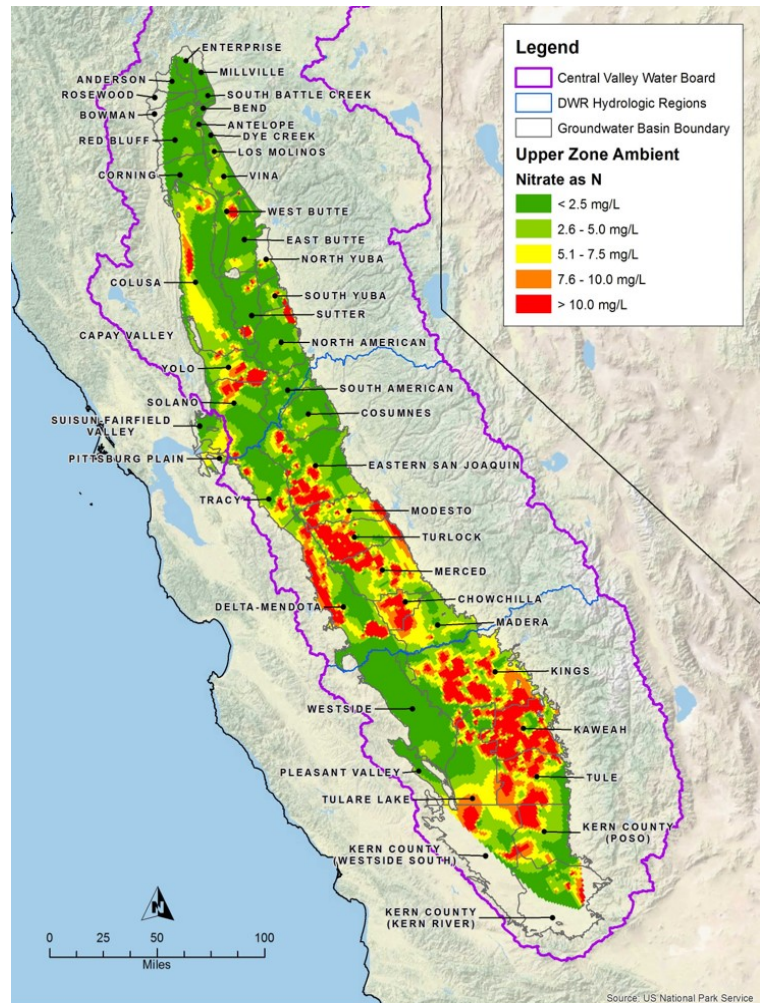


Figure 1-- Nitrate Concentrations Vary Throughout Central Valley

New Regulatory Policies are Needed to Address Salt and Nitrate: The SNMP contains policy changes that add regulatory tools to provide flexibility and allow for results to be achieved more quickly. Throughout the Valley, farmers, businesses, and communities will be able to use the new flexibility to achieve compliance. For example, the new policies offer the option for local and/or regional groups to come together and develop localized management plans that first provide safe drinking water and then implement cost-effective measures to balance salt or nitrate loadings and begin restoring groundwater. Once developed locally, the Central Valley Water Board would review, approve, and oversee completion of these local management plans.

Cost of Implementation and Next Steps: The costs for SNMP implementation will vary throughout the region; local costs will be determined as plans are developed. The first step toward attainable salt and nitrate management is for the State to amend the existing Basin Plans to include the new, flexible, more-localized regulatory framework proposed in the SNMP. Then, as local areas work together, costs and funding would be determined.

March 9, 2017: SNMP presented to the Central Valley Water Board

October 2017: Draft Basin Plan Policy Amendments drafted to reflect the recommended SNMP policy changes

February 2018: Basin Plan Amendments discussed at public hearing by the Central Valley Water Board

April 2018: Basin Plan Amendments considered for adoption by the Central Valley Water Board

July 2018: SNMP considered for approval by the State Water Resources Control Board and subsequently the California Office of Administrative Law and approval of surface water portions by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

October 2018: SNMP implementation

Stay Informed/Get Involved:

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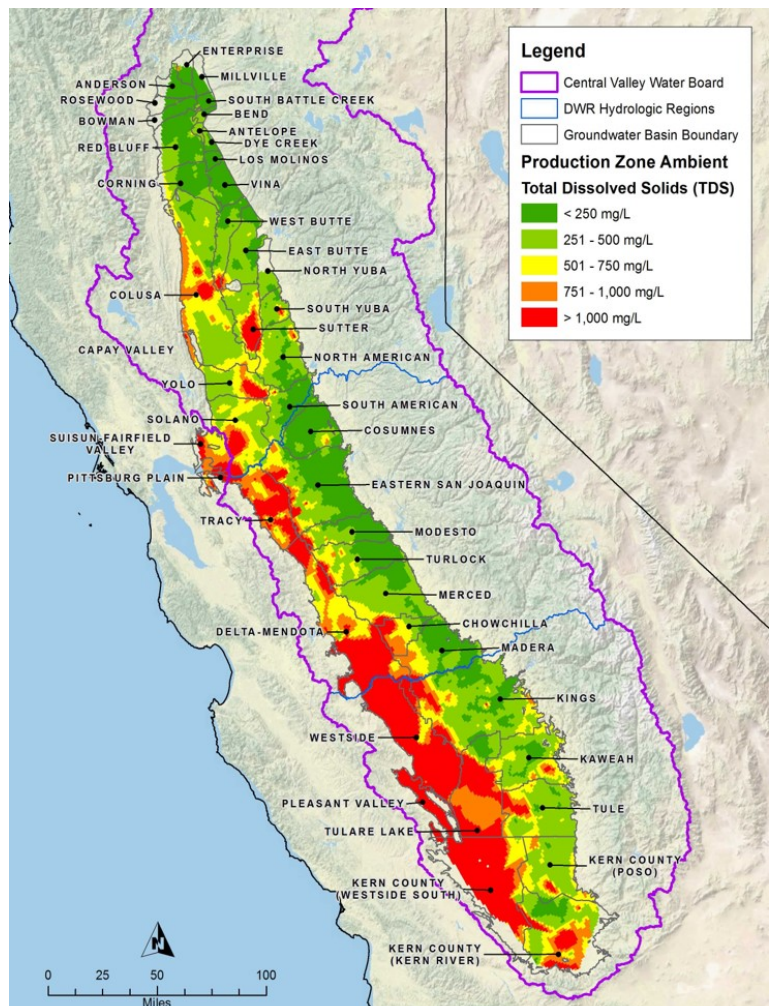


Figure 2 – Salt Concentrations in Central Valley Groundwater