





# New Water Quality Regulations Provide Options for Flexibility San Joaquin Valley and Delta Agriculture

Chowchilla, Tule, Modesto, and Kings sub-basins and basins (red areas on map).

## Local Collaboration is Key

Under the new regulatory options, all dischargers, including agriculture, will be asked to collaborate locally to implement necessary solutions to meet **water quality** standards. Similarly, the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) provides a framework for **water quantity**, through sustainable, local groundwater management. While SGMA focuses on water quantity and the SNMP is focused on water quality, there will be close coordination between the two.

## Key Benefits of New Regulatory Options

The “toolbox” of new regulatory options will be available to **all dischargers** whether they choose to comply under a traditional permit or participate in a local management zone.

Local Management Zone. The formation of local or regional management zones will save time, money, and resources. Farmers or landowners who decide to join a management zone can work collectively as part of a regulatory compliance unit. Members pool resources to implement water quality protection measures that ensure safe drinking water supplies. While working to provide safe drinking water, members may be authorized for nitrate and salt discharges and given more time to comply with current Waste Discharge Requirements.

Exceptions Policy. When prohibiting a discharge does more harm than good, and allowing the discharge to continue is determined to be better for the public good, an “Exception” can be authorized that provides farmers or landowners more time to implement a workable and effective regulatory solution that is site-specific to a local management zone.

Assimilative Capacity. Assimilative capacity is the ability of a natural body of water (e.g., lake, river, or groundwater aquifer) to receive discharged waste without harmful effects. Within a management zone

or a groundwater basin/sub-basin, using assimilative capacity along with localized management measures will be considered as a factor towards compliance.

Protection of Agricultural Beneficial Use. The current salinity requirements that protect agricultural beneficial water uses vary widely. With the new regulations, protecting the agricultural beneficial use of water will be tailored to reflect local and regional differences in water use by agriculture.

Coordinating New Regulations and ILRP. It is too soon to know how the CV-SALT SNMP-based regulations and the ILRP will be coordinated. With a common goal of controlling and protecting surface and ground waters from impairment by nitrates and salts, there will certainly be collaboration in meeting water quality objectives.

Compliance Cost. The costs associated with implementing the new regulatory options have yet to be determined. The approach of local management flexibility and collaborative action to address the highest priority needs first is expected to increase compliance efficiency. Growers are encouraged to be at the table now to help shape the future of the drinking water projects and alternative compliance projects in their area.

## Get Involved, Shape Your Future

Without more flexible management options for nitrates and salts, regulators will likely continue to develop control measures that may make compliance more difficult, and even prohibit discharges. Irrigated agriculture’s voice is critical now to help shape the future of regulation. The “toolbox” of regulatory options agreed upon by diverse interests through CV-SALTS, and presented in the SNMP, will increase the potential for success and sustainability for farms, industries, and communities.

If you work in any aspect of irrigated agriculture, you are encouraged to participate and get involved now. Visit [www.cvsalinity.org](http://www.cvsalinity.org) to learn more.