

Short “elevator talk” to an important person in your industry

Providing safe drinking water to residents is driving regulations to a place where enforcement will make farming illegal. Despite the compliance with water quality regulations by growers, drinking water quality standards for groundwater cannot be met. That is why regulators and stakeholders, which includes irrigated agriculture, have been meeting for the last 10 years under a program called CV-SALTS. CV-SALTS is a solution that will give regulators more flexibility in enforcing the regulations and give growers an ability to comply with regulations through the establishment of management zones.

Cristel Tufenkjian KRCD

CV SALTS for dairy industry audience

CV SALTS is a process whereby state water quality regulators are working with Central Valley stakeholders on a long-term strategy to provide safe drinking water for all, without putting farmers, food processors and most of the valley’s economy out of business.

Nearly 7 million tons more salt is imported into the valley each year than exits the valley through return of water to the ocean. This has caused a buildup of salts and nitrates in valley groundwater over the past century, a trend CV SALTS plans to slow and eventually reverse. The CV SALTS strategy calls for treating drinking water to remove nitrates and salts and create new sources of safe drinking water, exporting salts to the ocean, and adopting improved management practices for farms and other sources to minimize future impacts and achieve long-term sustainability.

This requires a major change in regulatory approach, which currently focuses on ever-tightening control measures that are difficult or impossible to achieve for many dischargers. Instead, stakeholders hope to change the basic regulatory framework to allow for a dual-prong approach: Reasonable, achievable control measures for farmers and other dischargers, combined with regional and cooperative efforts to treat water sources for salt and nitrate, using resources more efficiently so that all may enjoy safe drinking water and a robust agricultural economy. While this approach will almost certainly lead to dischargers bearing part of the cost of treating and serving water to nitrate and salt impacted communities, the overall hope is that these costs will end up being less, more fairly distributed and achieve quicker results compared to a strategy relying solely on source control measures.

JP Cativiela Dairy CARES

Petroleum Industry Pitch to Engage CV-SALTS

As we all know, oil and gas production in the Central Valley has become an increasingly challenging endeavor as the regulatory policy governing produced water management undergoes a thorough scrutiny and process check relative to Federal and State law. The concepts of discharging produced water to the ground surface or of deep zone disposal are increasingly uncertain. Certainty of process and compliance costs, as well as the establishment of alternate compliance policy are essential to create an environment of economic well being and protection of beneficial uses (and reuses) of the Central Valley's water balance.

Over the course of the last eight years, CV-SALTS has functioned as a coalition among industries, regulatory agencies and non-government organizations dedicated to establishing industry specific general order discharge compliance and alternate compliance draft policy. This draft policy becomes the template for industry specific regulation. Other industries included in the process consist of agriculture, dairy and public water treatment among others. The future pathway for petroleum industry regulatory policy has been established by these other industries and regulatory agency collaboration. In fact, many of you have likely heard Dr. Longley, Ms. Creedon and her staff from CVRWQCB mention and encourage our industry's participation in the CV-SALTS process several times as we have approached the development of general order reports of waste discharge for oil field produced water.

Currently, there are only two petroleum industry Coalition members. In order to have a meaningful stake in the policy process, that number must increase. It is far better that we wade into this process and help shape what the regulations will look like than to inherit regulations that are potentially economically crippling or that miss key issues. Once policy becomes regulation, the effort to improve it becomes significantly more difficult to engage.

I have engaged in this process for about a year and a half now and find the effort so worthwhile that I continue to participate in CV-SALTS meetings and currently serve on the public education and outreach committee as a volunteer. This process is essential to our industry's future. Please contact me any time at (661) 205-2885 so that we can discuss additional petroleum industry engagement.

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From Land IQ, Stephanie Tillman:

Pitch #1: 1.5M acres of irrigated land in the Central Valley are salinity impaired and 0.25M acres have already been taken out of production. Without a way to address salt accumulation, farming and rural communities will be threatened, costs of managing saline irrigation water and salinized land will continue to increase, and fresh water supplies will get scarcer. And without a salt management strategy that includes agriculture, government regulators will be obliged to develop salinity control measures that could make compliance more difficult for irrigators. CV-SALTS is developing this strategy, but needs the input of farmers on how to balance salts so that farming can continue to be viable in the Central Valley. Agriculture's voice is critical in helping to shape salinity regulations that will be considered by the California public in 2017, adopted in 2018, and that will impact the way Central Valley growers farm for years to come.

Pitch #2: Salt accumulation is the largest long-term chronic water quality problem in the Central Valley, and nitrates threaten drinking water safety in many parts of the region. CV-SALTS is a collaboration between agriculture, cities, municipal regions, and environmental justice to address salinity and nitrates throughout the Central Valley. A strategy agreed upon by these diverse interests will increase the potential for success and sustainability for the Central Valley's farms, industries, and communities. In the next year and a half, innovative ways to balance the accumulation of salt in the Central Valley that are based on 10 years of scientific studies will be published for public review and comment. These strategies will be finalized into new regulations in 2018 that will introduce greater flexibility to manage salts in different areas of the Central Valley.