



# Addressing Central Valley Drinking Water Quality New Groundwater Quality Regulations

## The Problem – Unsafe Drinking Water

Many communities in the Central Valley (Valley) rely on groundwater as their primary source of drinking water. In some localized areas, contaminants, including salts, nitrates, pesticides, heavy metals, and organisms that can cause disease, have seeped into the groundwater.

In these localized areas, nitrates are a major cause of unsafe drinking water. Nitrates seep slowly into the groundwater from fertilizers or after being discharged as wastewater from animal feedlots, industrial facilities, municipal wastewater plants, or leaky septic systems.

Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can create a health risk, especially to infants and pregnant women. Because nitrate levels have been increasing in groundwater over the last few decades, some drinking water supplies are unhealthy and do not meet State drinking water standards.

Salt is another contaminant that has, over time, gotten into the groundwater from agricultural, municipal, and industrial practices. Also, some areas of the Valley have naturally occurring high salt levels. High salt levels in water and soils can reduce crop production.

## New Approaches for Safe Drinking Water

Changes in regulations are needed to address the complex nitrate and salt problem. Current regulations do not address the need for safe drinking water in communities where groundwater is contaminated with nitrates and salts.

A group of dischargers, representing growers, dairies, industries, and local communities, regulators from government agencies, environmental organizations, and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) formed the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS). The goals of the CV-SALTS program are to:

1. Identify short- and long-term solutions to ensure safe drinking water in communities where groundwater is high in nitrates and salts.
2. Reduce impacts from nitrates and salts to the groundwater.



3. Where reasonable and feasible, restore groundwater quality.

To meet these goals, using scientific studies, CV-SALTS developed the 2017 Salt and Nitrate Management Plan (SNMP). The SNMP proposes new, more locally flexible regulations for nitrates and salts. Once the new regulations are adopted in 2018, they will be implemented first in high-priority areas that include: Kaweah, Turlock, Chowchilla, Tule, Modesto, and Kings groundwater sub-basins and basins.

## How can I learn more about CV-SALTS?

You are encouraged to participate and get involved now. For more information, visit [www.cvsalinity.org](http://www.cvsalinity.org).