

NITRATE PROGRAM GROWTH AND CRITICAL SALT PROGRAM DEADLINE

CV-SALTS Quarterly Update

September, 2021

Both the Nitrate and Salt Control Programs achieved significant progress in the third quarter of 2021. The Nitrate Program Management Zones (MZs) continued to ramp up their community outreach efforts. They began taking applications, scheduling and administering well water quality tests, and delivering water to qualifying residents. The Salt Program July 15th Notice of Intent (NOI) deadline passed, with a majority of permitted dischargers selecting the Alternative Permitting Approach. The fees from those dischargers are funding a long-term Prioritization & Optimization (P&O) Study, for which the planning process has begun.

Nitrate Control Program

Management Zone Activity

The MZs are focusing on providing safe drinking water for those impacted by high nitrate levels, the priority laid out in the Early Action Plans (EAPs) that they submitted last quarter.

The key to increasing the number of program applicants is getting the word out through community outreach. MZs are stepping up the efforts they began earlier this year to explore multiple avenues to reach residents. They continue to use online tools (Zoom meetings, email, social media platforms), mail notices, contribute to media stories, partner with local non-profits, schools, and government agencies, and leave flyers throughout the community. In addition, they have been able to expand their in-person efforts by staffing events such as food drives, farmers markets, and COVID vaccination fairs, and have begun door-to-door outreach, where COVID levels allow.

The increased public awareness has resulted in rapid growth in program activities. At the end of August, MZs have fielded nearly 900 inquiries and have received 846 applications. More than 360 of the applicants met the program requirements and had their wells tested. 171 of the tests indicating a nitrate concentration of greater than 10 mg/L, the EPA safe Maximum Contaminant Level for nitrate. So far, over 200 residents are receiving free bottled water through the program.

In addition to delivering bottled water, the program has installed seven free water refill stations located in strategic locations within some of the MZs. These refill stations are providing enough water for nearly 600 average households.

Management Zone Highlight: **Valley Water Collaborative (VWC)**

Established July 7, 2020, VWC is a non-profit that operates the Modesto and Turlock basin Management Zones. It has a 12-member board of directors that collectively represents agriculture, dairy, poultry, urban, winery and food processor constituencies.

VWC has been focusing heavily on community outreach since its establishment. It has launched an innovative partnership with local schools, engaging students to help reach the public. In addition, organizational staff attend local events each week to promote the Nitrate Control Program. The outreach has been the focus of several local newspaper articles and television reports, and these efforts have been effective at boosting the number of Modesto and Turlock program applicants and households receiving clean drinking water funded by VWC.

Salt Control Program

Important Notice of Intent Deadline

July 15, 2021 was the deadline for permitted dischargers covered under the Salt Control program to file the official NOI with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. If they selected the Alternative Permitting Approach, they also had to pay the fee to participate in P&O Study by the same deadline.

As expected, most permittees, over 3,500, chose the Alternative Permitting Approach as the most cost-effective choice. The program fees provided more than \$1.32 million for the P&O Study in 2021 alone.

If you are a permitted discharger and have **NOT** filed your NOI yet, here are the [instructions](#).

For the Alternative Permitting Approach, you must submit the following:

- Certificate of Participation from Central Valley Salinity Coalition showing financial participation in P&O Study. You will need your CV-SALTS ID # from your Notice to Comply to get started. Click [here](#) to make your payment.
- Completed NOI including Sections I, II, III.B, and IV. A fillable form is available [here](#).

If you elect the Conservative Permitting Approach, you must submit the following:

- Salt Characterization Report. See complete instructions and compliance guidelines [here](#).
- Completed NOI including Sections I, II, III.A and IV. A fillable form is available [here](#).

P&O Study

The P&O Study planning process has begun to take shape. Significant activities and discussion items for the next 3-4 years have been outlined in the Work Plan approved by the Central Valley Regional Water

Board in March. The CV-SALTS Executive Committee is reviewing the technical scopes and decision-making process for this first phase. By early 2025, the program will characterize salt conditions across the Central Valley, establish management targets, and identify sustainability needs and management actions. Phase 2 will evaluate and select the salt management actions and investments to sustain water supplies and the regional economy for the future.