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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority receives Notice of Applicability from Regional Water Board; Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program membership sign-up begins

BAKERSFIELD, CA: The Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority (KRWCA) received approval on Feb. 4 from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) to serve as a third-party (Coalition) to represent and aid growers in the Kern River Watershed area to meet compliance requirements for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP).

On September 19, 2013, the RWQCB adopted a new General Order that encompasses new waste discharge requirements to protect ground and surface water from irrigated agricultural discharges. Growers who irrigate agricultural lands for commercial purposes within the Kern River Watershed area are now required to either join the KRWCA or obtain individual coverage with the RWQCB. The new General Order rescinded the previous Conditional Waiver program that only applied to growers in the region that had potential for irrigation or storm water runoff into surface waters.

The KRWCA will facilitate regulatory compliance towards General Order requirements for coalition members, as well as, advocate for growers on water quality issues in various forums, and develop and implement economical and scientifically valid water quality monitoring programs for surface water and groundwater in the region.

"It is more cost effective and efficient for growers to join the coalition, as it provides the ability for growers to work together as a group and share resources to minimize redundant efforts," explained Nicole Bell, ILRP Manager for the KRWCA. "Some investigations and evaluations could require extensive expertise and costs that could be difficult for the individual grower to complete on their own. Coalition membership dues will cover the expenses for the various investigations and evaluations, annual reporting to the RWQCB, the annual State Water Resources Control Board fee, as well as other General Order requirements."

The RWQCB is currently estimating the cost of obtaining coverage under the Individual General Order in 2014 for a 250-acre farm is approximately \$17,700. To obtain regulatory coverage with the KRWCA under the General Order in 2014 for a 250-acre farm is approximately \$1,400; significantly less than the individual option.

"Individual costs are expected to be significantly more than obtaining membership in the KRWCA," said Bell.

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www.krwca.org



Informational and membership sign-up meetings for growers within the Kern River Watershed are scheduled for:

- Wednesday, March 19 at 4 p.m. – Kern Ag Building, 501 South Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield
- Wednesday, March 26 at 4 p.m. – Wasco Elk's Lodge, 16694 Wasco Avenue, Wasco
- Wednesday, April 2 at 4 p.m. – McFarland Community Center, 103 W. Sherwood Avenue, McFarland

Membership forms and additional information, including Frequently Asked Questions and resources on Best Management Practices, are available at www.krwca.org. For specific questions or more information, growers can call (661) 616-6500 or email admin@krwca.org.

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