

Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group  
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
Ventura County Farm Bureau  
June 13, 2008

**Executive Committee Members in Attendance**

Rex Laird – Farm Bureau of Ventura County  
John Krist – Farm Bureau of Ventura County  
Jerry Conrow – Jerry L. Conrow & Co.  
John Mathews – Arnold, Bleuel, LaRoche et al.  
Rob Roy – VCAA

**Executive Committee Members Absent:**

Steve Bachman – United Water Conservation District  
Dave Souza – Pleasant Valley County Water District  
Kelle Pistone – AWA

**Steering Committee Members in Attendance**

Edgar Terry – Terry Farms, Inc. (*Committee Chairman*)  
Gus Gunderson – Limoneira Company  
Mike Friel – Laguna Grove Service  
Sam McIntyre – Somis Pacific Ag Management  
Cris Perez - Newhall Land & Farming  
Bill Reiman – Ventura Catalinos Berry Farm  
Craig Underwood – Underwood Ranches

**Steering Committee Members Absent:**

Jim Coultas – Coultas Ranch Company  
Robert Crudup – Valley Crest Tree  
Jim Lloyd-Butler – Lloyd-Butler Ranch  
Dan Naumann – A.A. Naumann, Inc.  
John Dullam – Dullam Nursery  
Jurgen Gramckow – Southland Sod Farms

**Guests/Consultants in Attendance:**

Ashli Cooper – Larry Walker Associates (by phone)  
Amy Storm – Larry Walker Associates

Edgar Terry chaired the meeting.

Membership Update and Group Fees

Updated information regarding VCAILG enrollment was passed out to Committee members. This table provided information comparing assessed versus irrigated acreage as reported by VCAILG members. The State Board is looking into issues regarding under-reporting of acreage in Region V. Their solution is to have a flat 90% irrigated proportion for every agricultural parcel and to charge growers based on that assumption. We have provided the Regional Board with information to oppose this new fee structure and would increase VCAILG fees by approximately 50%. This fee would go directly to the State and is not part of monitoring or other VCAILG activities. Rex noted that at the recent AWA Symposium representatives from Farm Bureau and DWR were brought together with the goal of discussing water records. DWR could provide the State Board with the information necessary to determine which growers were under-reporting their irrigated acreage.

There have been no further actions by the Regional Board to deal with those who received Notices of Violation.

Education Credits

Farm Bureau Directors decided VCAILG will no longer offer their own education classes. Those who have not completed their 8 hours will need to seek training through UCCE or Region III.

Letters will be sent to those in need of education credits with information regarding ways to complete this requirement. We are waiting on the Regional Board for a decision on the final date education credits will be accepted. The Committee noted that we need to ensure that no one can come back and claim the group is out of compliance regarding the education credits.

Classes will be offered to provide information regarding TMDLs and explaining the invoices growers in Calleguas Creek Watershed will be receiving. The Regional Board will be asked to consider whether these classes can count for Ag Waiver education credits.

#### VCAILG fees vs. TMDL fees

Ashli pointed out that Calleguas Creek Watershed (CCW) TMDLs need to start being implemented. The monitoring is scheduled to begin in August. All members of the MOA have signed an agreement and the Farm Bureau attorney has approved the invoicing for the TMDL fees. Rex and Ashli said that it is important to understand that billing and collecting fees is something that the Regional Board staff requested of VCAILG and the group has chosen to comply with the TMDL in this manner. There's still a question about whether people who refuse not to pay for the TMDL will be removed from VCAILG since the TMDLs are not a part of the Ag Waiver program. There are also those approximately 300 growers who are not members of VCAILG and their fees will need to be collected by the Regional Board. The other CCW stakeholders have shown concern that ag won't pay their 47% share of the TMDL program. As mentioned previously in the education section, there will be workshops to explain the TMDL requirements and why CCW growers are being billed.

The Steering Committee brought up the issue of TMDL direction, what's the outcome after this money is collected to pay for TMDL implementation? It was explained that TMDLs are an enforcement action as compared to a monitoring requirement. Monitoring will be done through the TMDLs to confirm sources and there will be a time period to allow all stakeholders to come into compliance with TMDL objectives. VCAILG will provide growers with information regarding BMPs to address TMDL constituents however how BMP implementation will be enforced is unclear at this time. The Committee also questioned whether the Regional Board will be dictating the BMPs that are used. Ashli responded that the growers will have the choice of how to address these water quality exceedances and that the monitoring will show whether the chosen practices are or are not working. It was also noted that the TMDL monitoring is different from the Ag Waiver monitoring points and will represent all stakeholders, not just ag. These sites monitor various contributors and the data will be compared to all other available information to determine the sources. The Steering Committee also brought up the point of public information. All data and reports submitted to the Regional Board can be requested by the public. The Committee commented that the fear of 3<sup>rd</sup> party lawsuits may lead growers to point fingers at their neighbors and known "bad players." There is concern that this may also lead to further restrictions on what growers can apply to their fields.

#### Final Draft of Annual Monitoring Report

The report has been revised following the May 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with Regional Board staff. Copies of the report will be distributed to Committee members by mail. This report has turned into a drawn out process since the Regional Board took a long time to figure out how the TMDLs fall into the context of the waiver and to determine what and how it applies to our monitoring results. Water quality benchmark exceedances that occurred during the first year of monitoring triggered the development of Water Quality Management Plans (WQMPs).

### Water Quality Management Plans (WQMPs) (Due August 15)

WQMPs were briefly discussed during the TMDL discussion. Ag Waiver benchmark exceedances trigger WQMPs due August 15<sup>th</sup>; however there are also TMDL required WQMPs, which are on their own separate schedule and are required regardless of any monitoring results. It was also noted that the Regional Board is looking for timelines and structure to be built into those plans so they are assured BMPs will be put in to place. There is the question of who will be policing and enforcing BMP implementation and the plans will have to be a balance of providing the Regional Board with an appropriate framework but keep them in the context that we are still in the baseline monitoring phase. We want to ensure that the ag community is comfortable with whatever plans are produced and the process that is laid out because that will determine their continued compliance with the Ag Waiver. The Steering Committee suggested we work with specific crop agencies, such as the Strawberry Commission for assistance with BMP and technological advancements. The Regional Board also needs to be aware of what is already being done by local growers.

It was noted that as we move forward with the current Ag Waiver and looking forward to the future there needs to be separation between Ventura and LA Counties.

In regards to the data and BMPs the Steering Committee brought up the need to also investigate source water since that will impact their runoff quality. For example, water that is recharged to groundwater basins by UMWD ends up moving from the Santa Clara watershed over to Calleguas Creek watershed. It was also asked whether stats can be applied to our monitoring data to detect severe outliers or anomalies, this is problematic due to the small sample size we're dealing with, however we can hope to show trends and reductions over the long-term.

### UCCE & RCD

#### **319h grant**

Amy gave an update regarding the approval by State Board to fund this grant. VCAILG and the TMDL group will provide UCCE and the RCD with information so they can do surveys and site visits and suggest appropriate BMPs to mitigate water quality exceedances. They will also do follow-ups and track any changes in practices. We hope this will be an effective service and will be incorporating it into the WQMPs.

#### **Mobile Irrigation Testing Lab**

John presented information provided by the RCD requesting a contribution from VCAILG to help get this program off the ground. It was noted that this will be a service for individual growers that may not lead to less watering overall, but better application efficiencies. The program will also be looking at municipal and urban systems and may show ag in a positive way when compared to these other systems. Rex also noted that this is an opportunity to provide growers with important information to make improvements or track already excellent systems; it can also be a beneficial public relations tool. It is also important on a broader scale when considering water cutbacks. Also, sediment transfer may be considered the most universal issue and appropriate irrigation is the first step to limiting sediment movement (at least during dry weather). The Committee asked if the Strawberry or other crop commissions had been approached for funding contributions and it was noted that Marty of the RCD was trying to secure funding from many different sources including DWR. The Committee inquired whether this would be a financially self sustaining program. John noted that the budget has been a moving target and it will all depend on the financial support they receive in the end. With full funding they are anticipating 3-4 audits per week and reports completed within 1 month of the audit. Rex also brought up the possibility of a partnership between

growers and water districts. Utilizing other RCDs with similar programs was discussed and the proposed mobile lab would use this outside expertise and also that of a consultant while training employees and getting the program off the ground.

#### Monitoring Update

Amy Storm gave an update on the current year's monitoring progress. Three of the four required events have been completed and the final event is planned for late this summer

Fish tissue results were discussed from DFG sampling of Arroyo chub in the Santa Clara River Estuary. This monitoring was requested by the Regional Board and approved by the Committee. In exchange fewer Santa Clara River sites will be monitored for toxicity during the next tox event. Actual sample site offset is still to be determined based on the DFG costs for collecting the samples.

#### Ag Waiver Cost Information Request

The Regional Board has requested that we release some program cost information for use in the State Board's 2009 California Water Plan. Rex initially questioned where the information would be released and what it was for and suggested we provide them with the information laid out in all VCAILG member invoices. John agreed that providing these general numbers would provide clear information on the actual economic cost of complying with the Ag Waiver. The Steering Committee suggested that we include watershed specific information as well. Ed suggested the addition of an executive summary playing up what we've accomplished and also sending it out to group members. Additional information may include the cost of putting on the education courses as well as the grower time spent to receive the 8 hours of training. John will approach this subject with the Farm Bureau Board and will pull together the appropriate information once approved.

#### VCAILG Financial Status

Rex updated the Committee on VCAILG's financial status and passed out current balance sheets.

The Steering Committee adopted the following motions:

- Recommend to the Farm Bureau Board that VCAILG provides some funding for the RCD Mobile Irrigation Testing Lab.
- Recommend to the Farm Bureau Board that John be allowed to provide the Regional Board with some general group cost information and an accompanying executive summary.

#### **Next Steering Committee Meeting:**

Monday, August 4, 2008  
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Farm Bureau Conference Room

Water Quality Management Plans will be discussed in detail!