

Central Valley Salts Policy
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April 16, 2020

The Salt and Nitrate Control Program (CV-SALTS) was approved by the State Water Resources Control Board on October 16, 2019 ([RESOLUTION NO. 2019-0057](#)) and the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) on January 15, 2020. The majority of the program became effective on January 17, 2020 after OAL's Notice of Decision was filed with the California Natural Resources Agency. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVWB) intends to begin sending out Notices to Comply for the Salt and Nitrate Control Program in late May.

CV-SALTS consists of two distinct programs with which permittees must comply. The first addresses salt in both surface and groundwaters and the second addresses nitrate in groundwater. All who land apply biosolids, including compost, in the Central Valley Region need to comply with requirements of both programs. Details on each program are below.

SALTS

The Salt Control Program employs a phased approach to address salt in surface and groundwater throughout the Central Valley Region. Permittees have two options for complying with the new Salt Control Program of CV-SALTS. They must either, as an individual permittee, meet conservative electrical conductivity requirements of 700 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ (0.7 dS/m) in most cases, or they can participate with other permittees in a region-wide effort.

To take the conservative individual permitting approach, rigorous technical studies will be required, likely including a monitoring well network on land application sites which allow for analyzing the groundwater for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) or Electrical Conductivity (EC) as a measure of salinity.

In the alternative approach, land appliers would elect to participate with others in a Prioritization and Optimization (P&O) study. This alternative region-wide effort consists of three phases, each lasting 10-15 years. Phase I consists of preparation of a comprehensive study, and development of a long-term strategy, for the management of salts throughout the Central Valley (i.e., P&O Study). The other two phases consist of the further development, funding, and implementation of the P&O study. To participate in the P&O study effort, participants would pay a fee to the Central Valley Salinity Coalition, which is the entity administering the study. Further, participants will be required to comply with existing, performance-based permit requirements. Participants would not be subject to conservative water quality based permitting requirements for salinity during Phase 1. At completion of Phase 1, recommendations regarding permitting requirements for Phase II will be considered and put forward as part of a Basin Plan Amendment package., General information is available [here](#). Fees for some entities participating in the study are available [here](#). Fees for biosolids application are still in development.

NITRATES

The Nitrate Control Program utilizes a priority approach to implementation. Under the Nitrate Control Program, the most seriously impacted groundwater basins for nitrate are addressed

first. Implementation will begin in six priority 1 sub-basins. They are the Kaweah, Chowchilla, Modesto, Turlock, Tule, and Kings sub-basins (based on DWR bulletin 118 designations). The CVWB will issue notices to comply for existing dischargers (including biosolids land applicators) in these basins in May 2020. The first priority of the Nitrate Control Program is to provide safe drinking water to those whose drinking water has been contaminated with nitrate at concentrations at or exceeding 10 mg/L Nitrate as Nitrogen.

A Notice to Comply for existing dischargers in Priority 2 groundwater basins will be issued between late 2022 and late 2024. Priority 2 basins include: Yolo, Merced, Kern County (west side south), Tulare Lake, Kern County (Peso), Delta Mendota, Eastern San Joaquin, and Madera.

Notably, new or expanding dischargers of nitrate may be subject to compliance with the Nitrate Control Program at the time of permit application and issuance.

The remaining groundwater basins in the Central Valley have not yet been prioritized.

There are two options to comply with the nitrate provisions of CV-SALTS. Pathway A, Individual Permitting, provides that a regulated discharger or groups of dischargers subject to a single WDR may opt to comply under **individual permit provisions** that:

1. Define requirements to protect shallow groundwater.
2. Include requirements based on the categorization of the discharge according to five discharge categories.
3. Establish trigger levels for additional required actions.
4. Ensure that those affected by nitrate in the discharge area have safe drinking water.

Pathway A compliance options are difficult and expensive if:

1. There are drinking water wells near your facility that are high in nitrate.
2. Your discharge is high in nitrate, and/or
3. Local shallow groundwater exceeds 75% of the nitrate drinking water standard.

If any of these conditions exist, there are a series of steps which must be undertaken.

Pathway B, the local Management Zone approach, allows permittees to work together to form a Management Zone. The Management Zone may then work collectively to receive an exception from meeting the nitrate standard for up to 35 years upon adoption of an approved Management Zone Implementation Plan. A condition of Management Zone approval includes the need to first assure safe drinking water to those that rely on groundwater and where the groundwater exceeds the nitrate drinking water standard. The Management Zone Implementation Plan must then look to reduce nitrate impacts from dischargers to water supplies. The ultimate goal is for groundwater to be restored where reasonable and feasible. Restoration of groundwater itself to meet the drinking water standard is not required to occur within the 35-year time frame. In summary, the Management Zone participants work together (along with communities, groundwater sustainability agencies and others) to comply with the Nitrate Control Plan requirements. This is similar to holistic Watershed management approaches which we have historically supported.

Much more detail and information is provided at this link: cvsalts.info

