

October 9, 2018

San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group Quarterly Newsletter

You are receiving this newsletter as a member of the San Diego Regional Irrigated Lands Group (SDRILG). As a reminder, SDRILG is a non-profit organization governed by seven farmers who volunteer their time as members of the board of directors. Joining SDRILG is a benefit exclusively for Farm Bureau members. As a member you are enrolled in a third-party group as required by the General Order for Agriculture adopted by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board).

Enforcement

The San Diego Water Board has increased staff and is now systematically sending Directives to growers who have failed to enroll in a third-party group. The Directives are legal documents stating that the recipients have 30 days to comply by enrolling in a third-party group. In the Directive it is stated that failure to respond may result in penalties up to \$1000 per day once the 30 days have expired. Even if the 30-day requirement is met, all Directive letter recipients must pay a \$200 late fee. It was recently learned that the first enforcement letter for failure to comply has been sent to a grower with accrued penalties of \$5000.

Third quarter self-inspection

It is time to conduct your simple third self-inspection for 2018. At this link <https://noi.sdirrigatedlandsgroup.org/qsir/login/2017/04> you can log on with your member number to fill out the quarterly report. The completed version will be emailed to you, which you must keep for your records. Please note these self-inspections are an important part of the process that keeps you from dealing directly with the San Diego Water Board.

Monitoring

Sometime this winter following a rain event the laboratory team retained by SDRILG will go into the field to gather dozens of runoff water samples. The samples will be sent to a lab for testing to see if chemicals likely coming from agriculture are entering the waterways. The sampling will be watershed-based and not attributable to any farming operation. The results from the testing will provide the evidence needed to see if the standard best management practices growers are using are adequate to protect water quality. Should the testing reveal exceedances in the allowable limits of chemicals coming from farms, recommendations on best preventative practices will be sent to all members.

Annual Acreage Fees

Thank you to all members for payment of your annual acreage fees. These are the funds that will be used to conduct the water monitoring and group administration. We can now report that 99 percent of the active members have now paid their fees. The next round of annual acreage fee collection will not occur until May 2019.

Information Changes

If you change your email address, mailing address, or your phone number, please contact the SDRILG office (see below) so your records can be kept up to date.

Embezzlement

As reported out to the membership some time ago, an independent bookkeeper retained by SDRILG embezzled funds in 2015. The wheels of justice turned slowly, but they turned. A few months ago the individual plead guilty to three felony counts and is now serving a two years and 8-month sentence in county custody. The payment of full restitution was also ordered by the judge.

As always, if you have any questions about SDRILG or your compliance responsibilities, please feel free to call 760-745-2215 or email info@sdirrigatedlandsgroup.org