

Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program

For the benefit of dairy producers, cattle operators and water quality across our valley

FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

Letter From the Chairman:

You're invited to CVDRMP's Annual Membership Meeting



I would like to personally invite you, our members, to the Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program's annual membership meeting, **1:30 p.m. Monday, March 11.** We will hold this meeting by Zoom

teleconference to make it as easy as possible for dairy and feedlot operators from around the Central Valley to participate. (*Meeting agenda, instructions for joining are on page 2.*)

Our board of directors is made up of dairy and cattle ranch owners elected by you, our members. We serve as volunteers in overseeing this program to ensure it is as effective and cost-efficient as possible. This program has always been about dairy and feedlot operators working together for our mutual benefit. After chairing CVDRMP for three years, in January I passed the gavel to our incoming chairman, Justin Gioletti. It was my honor and I thank the board for entrusting me to lead the organization.

Please review this newsletter carefully – it contains helpful information about the annual dues you pay CVDRMP, services we provide in exchange, other facts

to help you remain in compliance, and how to contact CVDRMP staff or your elected board members.

This year, there are important changes in the requirements for some of our dairy and feedlot members, and the dues they pay. The Central Valley Water Board has been phasing in its Nitrate Control Program for several years. As a result, many of our members already pay dues to participate in Nitrate Management Zones in so-called “Priority One” areas like the Modesto, Turlock, Kings, Kaweah, Chowchilla and Tule groundwater basins.

In December 2023, the Water Board announced it is now phasing in Priority Two areas. This means about 500 dairies and feedlots in other areas, such as the East San Joaquin, Delta-Mendota, Merced, Madera, Tulare Lake sub-basins and Kern County, must join Nitrate Management Zones.

We've worked to make this a streamlined process for you. Your annual bill from CVDRMP covers all costs for participating in Nitrate Management Zones, also

covering groundwater monitoring and compliance with the Water Board's Salt Control Program. For dairies and feedlots in Priority Two areas, you'll see a line item reflecting these changes. Once the invoice is paid, you're automatically enrolled in your local Nitrate Management Zone without additional paperwork.

'This year, there are important changes in the requirements for some of our dairy and feedlot members, and the dues they pay.'

- Scott Wickstrom

CVDRMP Outgoing Chairman

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Serving you, saving money. Since 2011, CVDRMP has managed a representative groundwater monitoring program on behalf of our members. Without this, installation of dedicated groundwater monitoring wells would be required on all dairies and other confined cattle operations. Instead, by efficiently monitoring a representative subset of our facilities, we've **collectively saved members more than \$70 million since 2011.** Due to our continuous push for efficiency, we were able to lower annual groundwater monitoring dues from \$900 to \$700 last year. We'll share information on 2024 fees at the annual meeting.

Experience shows us that working together creates opportunities to save costs and provide effective solutions. On behalf of CVDRMP, thanks for your support and I hope to see you at the annual meeting!

Sincerely,



Scott Wickstrom
Outgoing CVDRMP Chairman

Annual CVDRMP Membership Meeting Agenda

DATE AND TIME: Monday, March 11, 2024, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual meeting via Zoom video conference, bit.ly/CVDRMP2024

OR use the QR code **OR** call: 1 (669) 900-6833

Enter meeting ID: 827 3112 7339

Passcode: 767540

AGENDA

1. Determination of quorum per CVDRMP bylaws
2. Welcome to the members; review CVDRMP mission and goals
(Chairman Justin Gioletti)
3. Results and certification of 2023 Board of Director elections *(Vice President Jeff Troost)*
4. Report to the members on organizational finances *(Treasurer Rodney Kamper)*
5. 2024 Fee Schedules for Monitoring Program, Nitrate Management Zones, and Salt Control Programs
(Treasurer Kamper/Administrator James Garner)
6. Nitrate and Salt Control Program updates *(Director of Regulatory Relations J.P. Cativiela)*
7. Dairy and Bovine monitoring program technical reports *(Technical Program Manager Till Angermann)*
8. Questions and comments from members
9. Adjourn

NOTE: CVDRMP bylaws require that no action by the members shall take place unless a) it is included on a properly noticed agenda, AND b) a quorum (one-third) of voting members are present. The membership meeting will take place and informational presentations provided without a quorum present; however, no actions will be taken by the members on matters not on the agenda, nor if a quorum is not met.



Key Information & Updates

Expect a membership invoice between March and May 2024. CVDRMP is coordinating with local Nitrate Management Zones, which are in the process of setting budgets for water quality permit holders, such as dairies, bovine operations, irrigated farmland and other non-agricultural businesses. This is the first step in determining annual fees for compliance with the Nitrate Control Program for our members.

Your total CVDRMP fee this year may be different than last year. Your CVDRMP invoice may include line items for three regulatory programs: Groundwater monitoring, salt control and local nitrate management zones. Fees for local Nitrate Management Zones are impacted by budgets set in those local zones and changes in the herd size of your operation.

Your fee “tier” for your Nitrate Management Zone is based on the Annual Report you filed in 2023. CVDRMP determines your herd size and corresponding fee tier based on the most recent Annual Report you submitted to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board; it is not based on the herd size at the time you receive your CVDRMP invoice and will not be adjusted to reflect current herd size.

Do not pay fees directly to your local Nitrate Management Zone or the Central Valley Salinity Coalition for the Salt Control Program. If you pay your CVDRMP invoice, you’re in compliance with both of these regulatory programs.

2023 Board of Directors Election Results

CVDRMP has a 12-member Board of Directors, elected by members. There are two directors in each of five Central Valley regions, and two at-large directors. Directors serve staggered two-year terms, so half the Board seats are open for election each fall.

Following the nomination process and election, the following seats were filled:

- District 1 (Tulare County): John Pereira
- District 2 (Merced and Madera counties): Jeff Troost
- District 3 (Fresno, Kings and Kern counties): Perry Tjaarda
- District 5 (all other Central Valley counties): Rien Doornenbal
- At-large: Scott Wickstrom (Appointed to vacant seat by board action)



At the time of publishing, there are currently two vacant seats on the CVDRMP Board of Directors: 1 seat in **Stanislaus County** and 1 seat for **San Joaquin and all northern counties**. Pursuant to CVDRMP bylaws, the Board can consider appointing a director to a vacant seat to fill out its term until the next election. The Board usually meets 6-8 times annually via Zoom teleconference to oversee and direct the work of the coalition. If you are interested in filling one of the vacancies, please contact CVDRMP staff at cvdrmp@gmail.com or 916-594-9450.

More dairies and feedlots will join Nitrate Management Zones in 2024

If you're one of the hundreds of dairy and feedlot operators who received certified letters from the Central Valley Water Board in late December 2023, you are now required to comply with the Nitrate Control Program by joining a Nitrate Management Zone.

For hundreds of CVDRMP members, Nitrate Management Zones aren't new – beginning in 2021, CVDRMP enrolled many of its members in “Priority 1” Management Zone areas such as the Turlock, Modesto, Chowchilla, Kings, Kaweah, and Tule groundwater basins. Since 2021, dairies in those basins have paid extra dues to cover their share of Management Zone costs.

This process now begins in “Priority 2” areas (see map), which include parts of Kern County and the Tulare Lake, Madera, East San Joaquin, Yolo, Madera, Merced, and Delta-Mendota subbasins.

So, for operations in the Priority 2 areas, what does this December letter from the Water Board mean and what do dairies and feedlots have to do?

The short answer is all CVDRMP members who are required to join Nitrate Management Zones will be automatically enrolled in their local zone through their CVDRMP membership. Costs for this will be included in your annual membership dues invoices, which will be sent out in the first or second quarter of 2024, depending on where you are located. Once your invoice is paid, there is no additional paperwork required, and CVDRMP will take care of making sure your enrollment and compliance is documented.

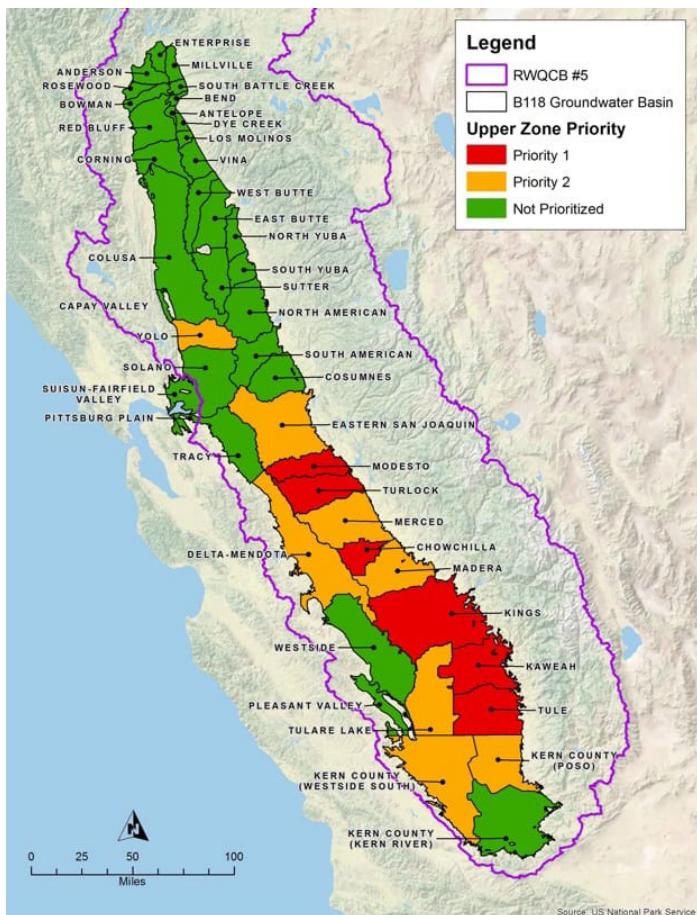
Below are more details about the program for those new to it – or who want a refresher – and what to expect in terms of cost.

What is the Nitrate Control Program?

In short, the Nitrate Control Program is an “alternative” compliance program. Current laws and regulations say that holders of water permits – including crop farmers, dairies, food processors and others – may not cause or contribute to the groundwater below their operations exceeding safe drinking water standards (10 parts per million nitrate).

Unfortunately, this is extremely difficult to achieve, because 10 parts per million is a very small amount of nitrate and most farmers use significant amounts of nitrogen fertilizer to grow their crops. This includes dairies and feedlots, who apply nitrogen-rich manure to crops, and store manure in retention ponds and corrals. Groundwater monitoring on dairies frequently shows levels four to five times higher than the drinking water health standard.

Experts generally agree that for dairies and many farmers, it will take many years to develop cost-effective technologies and practices for reducing nitrate. It will take even longer for groundwater quality to improve. Therefore, in 2019, the State Water Board adopted the Nitrate Control Program, which allows up to 35 years



for dairies, feedlots, farmers, and others to gradually stop contributing to nitrate exceedances. Without this extra time, operations could face orders to stop applying fertilizer and manure to land, and to clean up impacted groundwater, which would essentially force many operations to close.

But this extra time comes with conditions. To qualify, dairies and feedlots must join Nitrate Management Zones, local groups that work together to manage the impact of nitrates in their area. These groups must:

- Provide safe drinking water to residents who have been affected by nitrates;
- Enact programs to begin to reduce nitrate loading and achieve safe levels of loading over time; and
- Participate in efforts to restore groundwater quality where feasible and practicable.

New Nitrate Management Zones will operate much like those that already exist.

There are already six “Priority 1” NMZs up and running in the Central Valley, from north of Modesto to south of Tulare (see map). In 2021, these Priority 1 areas began offering free well testing for rural residents. Residents whose wells test above safe levels for nitrate are eligible to receive free replacement drinking water. You can learn more about these existing programs here: cvsalinity.org/nitrate-program/management-zones/.

Who pays for well testing and water? Costs are shared among the various groups of permit holders, including



A CVDRMP well is sampled to measure depth to first-encountered groundwater, total dissolved solids, nitrogen and general minerals.

dairy and cattle operations. So, in each NMZ, cattle operators pay a share. Usually the share paid by dairies and feedlots is only a fraction of the overall costs of operating the Management Zone, with other permit holders covering the large majority of costs.

Because it is the only financially feasible path forward, CVDRMP assisted its members in Priority 1 NMZs to automatically comply with this alternative pathway. Our coalition negotiated with individual NMZs to set “fair share” costs for dairies and cattle operations, with group discounts that resulted in lower rates than those offered to individual permit holders. We also made sure CVDRMP is represented throughout the governing boards of all NMZ groups, so dairies and cattle ranchers always have a seat at the table where important decisions are made. CVDRMP is doing exactly the same thing in Priority 2 areas to ensure that dairies and feedlots get the best representation possible.

CVDRMP advocates for efficient management of NMZs, also supporting successful grant applications to reduce overall costs. To reduce administrative costs, CVDRMP handles billing of NMZ fees for its members – instead of receiving separate bills from different organizations and having to execute individual agreements between each dairy or cattle operation in each NMZ, our members receive a single detailed bill explaining each charge. As a nonprofit, we collect only the amount needed to cover NMZ costs and pass that along to NMZs, with no “markup.”

Importantly, the job of NMZs goes beyond testing wells and providing replacement drinking water. Over the long term, each NMZ must develop long-term drinking water solutions and plans with progress milestones to reduce the amount of nitrates entering groundwater. As this process moves forward, CVDRMP will stay closely engaged to make sure that the perspective of dairies and cattle operations are at the center of the discussion and decision-making.

Are all CVDRMP members already in NMZs?

About two-thirds of CVDRMP members were already in Priority 1 NMZs. Most others will be folded into the program this year and their 2024 invoices (sent in the first or second quarter depending on your location)

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will include a line item identifying the NMZ cost, which generally ranges from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars annually, depending on herd size. Dues schedules for 2024 were still being worked at the time of publication of this newsletter, but we expect to have more information to present at CVDRMP's annual member meeting March 11 (see details on page 2) and we encourage members to tune in for an update.

State Water Board considering new dairy rules

The State Water Resources Control Board says it plans to issue a directive this year to the Central Valley Board to revise the Dairy General Order. The State Board has signaled that dairies can expect **more focus on achieving a "whole-farm balance" of nitrogen**, meaning the amount of nitrogen produced by cattle in their manure is in rough balance with the ability of non-alfalfa forage crops grown by the dairy to take up the nitrogen without losing an unreasonable amount of it to the environment. Surplus manure exports will be allowed but expect more scrutiny and record-keeping in the future with stricter standards and monitoring of pond performance also likely.

As a producer-led, nonprofit coalition, CVDRMP does not create regulations. However, we look for ways to assist our members in understanding and navigating the regulatory landscape.

Also included in your membership: Cost-effective salt compliance

Besides providing representative groundwater monitoring and automatic enrollment in NMZs, CVDRMP membership also covers the requirement that dairies and cattle operations comply with the Salt Control Program.

Like the Nitrate Control Program, this alternative compliance pathway allows permit holders to defer meeting strict standards for salt control in land application of manure and process water. Without this pathway, many operations would be forced to meet strict standards

and adopt expensive control measures to reduce salt loading.

As with nitrates, the State has concluded that significant time is needed to determine control measures for salt that are feasible (technically and economically) for farming to continue in the San Joaquin Valley. The Central Valley Salinity Coalition (CVSC), a stakeholder group made up of farmers, cattle and dairy, other industries and cities, is funding a long-term study to develop a road map for controlling salt in the future. In the meantime, permit holders who fund development of the roadmap are considered to be in compliance with the Salt Control Program.

'As a producer-led, nonprofit coalition, CVDRMP does not create regulations. However, we look for ways to assist our members in understanding and navigating the regulatory landscape.'

The cost for this alternative salt compliance is much smaller than immediate implementation of control measures. Our members (depending on size) pay between \$80 and \$320 per year to comply. As with the Nitrate Control Program, compli-

ance is automatic for CVDRMP members, with no need to hire consultants or execute new agreements and paperwork. Your Salt Program contribution is clearly identified on your annual invoice, and like NMZ fees, it is a "pass through" to the CVSC with no added charges.

Questions?

At CVDRMP, we are literally here to serve you. For questions about your invoice or anything else related to our program, contact the CVDRMP office at cvdrrmp@gmail.com or call (916) 594-9450.



2024 CVDRMP Directors & Officers

Justin Gioletti | Chairman
District 4 (Stanislaus County)

Jeff Troost | Vice Chairman
District 2 (Merced/Madera Counties)

Greg Hooker | Secretary
District 2 (Merced/Madera Counties)

Rodney Kamper | Treasurer
District 3 (Kern/Fresno/Kings Counties)

John Pereira
District 1 (Tulare County)

Cynthia Tiemersma
District 1 (Tulare County)

Perry Tjaarda
District 3 (Kern/Fresno/Kings Counties)

Rien Doornenbal
District 5 (Other Central Valley Counties)

Lucy Areias
At-large

Scott Wickstrom
At-large

CVDRMP Member Liaisons to local Nitrate Management Zones

The following CVDRMP members have volunteered to serve as liaisons to local Nitrate Management Zones in 2024, making sure CVDRMP members are fully represented in local management decisions and strategic direction. We thank them for their service!

Justin Gioletti & Ray Prock, Jr.
Valley Water Collaborative
(Modesto & Turlock Management Zones)

Scott Wickstrom & Greg Hooker
Chowchilla Management Zone

Rodney Kamper & Lucy Areias
Kings Management Zone

Gerben Leyendekker & Pete Tiemersma
Kaweah Water Foundation
(Kaweah Management Zone)

Tom Barcellos & Mike Faria
Tule Management Zone

Perry Tjaarda
Kern Water Collaborative

CVDRMP

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Sacramento, CA 95812

Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program

For the benefit of dairy producers, cattle operators and water quality across our valley

CVDRMP Membership covers compliance for three Central Valley Water Board Requirements: Ground-water monitoring, salt control, and local Nitrate Management Zone participation.

Please pay your CVDRMP invoice upon receipt to maintain coverage in the coalition. **Failure to pay will result in cancellation of your membership, Notices of Violation and potential fines from the Water Board, and additional fees to reinstate your membership.**

If you have a Dairy or Bovine permit open with the Water Board – **regardless of whether there are any animals on your property** – you must maintain membership in the CVDRMP coalition or install your own monitoring wells.

Want to verify your membership standing in CVDRMP?

Email your facility name & address to CVDRMP@gmail.com or call (916) 594-9450.

Recent change of ownership? Update your membership forms at CVDRMP.org.