

# Farmer and University Advisor Q&A

How to comply with ag water quality regulations in San Diego



San Diego Farm and Nursery Expo  
Val Mellano and Gerry Spinelli, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Do I need to join the Irrigated Lands Group?

# If you grow or trade agricultural goods commercially, you must enroll in the Ag Order

The screenshot shows the website for the California Water Boards San Diego - R9. The page is titled "Commercial Agriculture Regulatory Program" and includes links for "General Agricultural Order Enrollment Application" and "General Agricultural Order Enrollment Instructions". The "Program Overview" section explains that since the 1980s, the San Diego Water Board has regulated discharges from agricultural and nursery operations. It mentions that in 2016, the board adopted Order No. R9-2016-0004 (Third-Party General Order) and Order No. R9-2016-0005 (Individual General Order). The page also states that the General Agricultural Orders do not regulate discharges from cannabis cultivation and that they require Commercial Agricultural Operations to implement measures to protect downstream water quality. A list of requirements is provided at the bottom.

waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water\_issues/programs/commercial\_agriculture/

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## Commercial Agriculture Regulatory Program

### General Agricultural Order Enrollment Application

### General Agricultural Order Enrollment Instructions

### Program Overview

Since the 1980s, the San Diego Water Board has regulated discharges from agricultural and nursery operations (Agricultural Operations) within its jurisdictional boundaries by requiring the implementation of management measures and/or best management practices to prevent or minimize the discharge of pollutants that may adversely impact the quality or beneficial uses of the waters of the State.

In 2016, the San Diego Water Board adopted Order No. R9-2016-0004 (Third-Party General Order) and Order No. R9-2016-0005 (Individual General Order). Collectively, both Orders are referred to as the General Agricultural Orders. The San Diego Water Board requires all owners or operators of Commercial Agricultural Operations in the San Diego Region to comply with the General Agricultural Orders. Commercial Agricultural Operations are defined as any agricultural business or trade activity, including farms, nurseries, and orchards, that produce crops or ornamental plants with the intent to make a profit.

The General Agricultural Orders do not regulate discharges from cannabis cultivation. For information to the State Water Resources Control Board's Cannabis Cultivation Program.

The General Agricultural Orders require Commercial Agricultural Operations to implement measures to protect downstream water quality. For example, Commercial Agricultural Operations must:

- Develop and implement operation-specific Water Quality Protection Plans (WQPP)
- Provide maps with property boundaries, growing areas, surface flow directions, drinking water and irrigation wells, material and waste storage areas, and BMPs
- Use effective BMPs to eliminate or reduce discharges of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and sediment
- Complete annual training regarding protection of water quality
- Conduct water quality monitoring and reporting activities

Subscribe directly to the Agriculture and Nurseries Email List

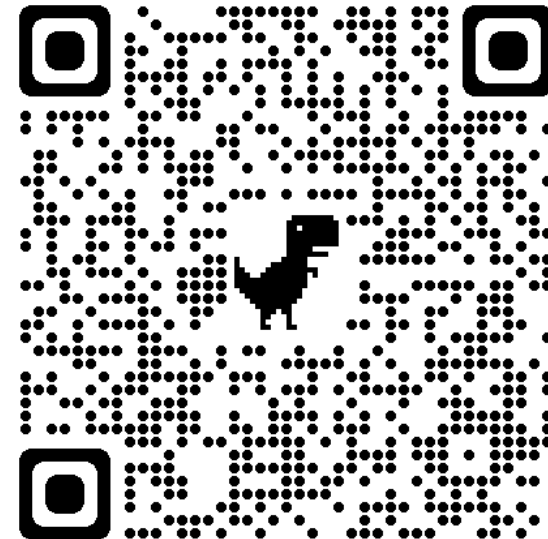
#### Contacts

- Ben Neill, Senior Water Resource Control Engineer  
✉ Ben.Neill@waterboards.ca.gov  
☎ (619) 521-3376
- Cailynn Smith, Water Resource Control Engineer  
✉ Cailynn.Smith@waterboards.ca.gov  
☎ (619) 521-3380
- Abigail Pashina, Environmental Scientist  
✉ Abigail.Pashina@waterboards.ca.gov  
☎ (619) 521-3379

#### Quick Links

- Instructions for Enrolling
- Geo Tracker
- Cannabis Cultivation Program
- General Agricultural Orders
- Contacts
- Resources

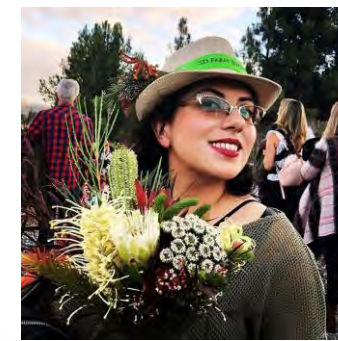
One of the requirements of the Ag Order is to test surface waters for pollutants





How do I join the Irrigated Lands Group and how much does it cost?

# You need to contact Tasha Ardalan!



## Irrigated Lands Group

*Administered by the San Diego County Farm Bureau*

# Enrollment Application

Name of Farm or Individual: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Farm Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Bureau Member #: \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Grove Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Grove Manager Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Crops Grown: \_\_\_\_\_

### ENROLLMENT FEES:

**Acreage Enrollment Fee:** Number of irrigated agricultural acres (must be whole number) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 1: \$325 ☐ 2: \$650 ☐ 3: \$975 ☐ 4: \$1300 ☐ 5: \$1600 ☐ >5-10: \$1700 ☐ >10-25: \$1800 ☐ >25: \$1900


**Enrollment Fee :** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**State Application Fee:** (choose one) collected on behalf of the State of California

☐ \$50 OR ☐ \$200 if you have received a Directive to Obtain Regulatory Coverage for Irrigated Lands

**State Fee :** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

dirrigatedlandsgroup.org/index.html



San Diego Region  
IRRIGATED LANDS GROUP

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GROWERS WORKING  
TOGETHER



San Diego Region IRRIGATED LANDS Group

Administered by the San Diego County Farm Bureau.

Growers Working Together to Comply With Clean Water Regulations



# SAN DIEGO REGION

## IRRIGATED LANDS GROUP

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region is responsible for making certain that state water runoff regulations for irrigated agriculture are implemented locally. For commercial agriculture this is done through the General Waste Discharge Requirement for Agriculture (Ag Order), adopted in 2016.

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board gives operators the option of compliance through a third-party monitoring group or as an individual. The San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group (SDRILG) formed so Farm Bureau members would have an easy cost-effective path to compliance.

The San Diego County Farm Bureau carefully studied the regulations and decided to provide members in San Diego, Orange, and Southern Riverside Counties with the option of joining SDRILG.

### MEETING ANY ONE OF THE ITEMS BELOW REQUIRES COMPLIANCE

Intent to make a profit (commercial sale of ag products).	Owner or operator files an IRS Form 1040 Schedule F Profit or Loss from farming.	Owner or operator is required to have an Operator Identification Number for pesticide use reporting.	Operator receives agricultural water pricing (residential/ag meters may be exempt if there is no commercial production).
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Please note: the source of irrigation water is not a factor. Any type of irrigation, regardless of water source, triggers compliance.

### WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF SDRILG?

#### UPON ENTRY

- Use SDRILG's easy online platform (software) to complete a Notice of Intent (NOI) which includes a Water Quality Protection Plan and details of the farming operation.

Documents can be completed via telephone interview for those without internet access.

#### QUARTERLY

- Complete simple quarterly self-inspections provided by SDRILG.

#### ANNUALLY

- Participate in 2 hours water runoff education provided by SDRILG.
- Submit Annual Report provided by SDRILG.

San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group is a 501(c) 5 non-profit administered by the San Diego County Farm Bureau, created to benefit the Farm Bureau members of Region 9.

### FEES

#### ONE TIME ENROLLMENT FEE CALCULATED BASED UPON THE NUMBER OF IRRIGATED ACRES

1 acre -	\$325
2 acres -	\$650
3 acres -	\$975
4 acres -	\$1,300
5 acres -	\$1,600
>5-10 acres -	\$1,700
>10-25 acres -	\$1,800
25+ acres -	\$1,900

#### ONE TIME STATE FEE

\$50 fee collected on behalf of the state.

If you receive a Directive Letter from the Water Board, the fee increases to \$200.

#### 2023 ANNUAL ACREAGE FEE

Current fee schedule:

- \$75 admin fee
- \$9 per irrigated acre
- \$1.35 state fee per irrigated acre

Annual fee covers SDRILG's operating costs, bio-assessment analysis performed by environmental engineers, laboratory costs, and required state fees.

Due immediately after NOI submission and then billed annually in the spring.

Annual Fees subject to change yearly.

#### AVOID EXPENSIVE FINES

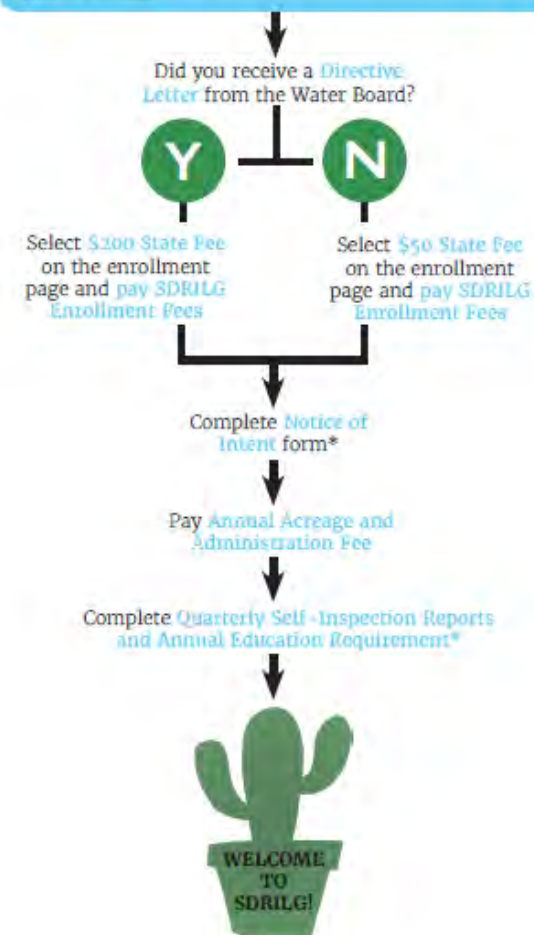
The San Diego Water Board has GIS maps of the region that show which agricultural properties are in compliance. An effort has been launched by the San Diego Water Board to send Directive Letters to farmers stating that compliance is required and failure to act can lead to substantial daily fines.

# ENROLLMENT PROCESS

## SAN DIEGO REGION IRRIGATED LANDS GROUP

### ENROLL AT [NOI.SDIRRIGATEDLANDSGROUP.ORG/ENROLLMENTS](http://NOI.SDIRRIGATEDLANDSGROUP.ORG/ENROLLMENTS)

If you are not already a Farm Bureau Member, make sure to join prior to enrolling.



\*San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group will communicate instructions and reminders via email. To submit a paper application, call the SDRILG office at (760) 745-2215.



# Sounds expensive, are there alternatives?

waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water\_issues/programs/commercial\_agriculture/

CA.GOV

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CALIFORNIA WATER BOARDS San Diego - R9

Regional Board Programs News Room Board Decisions

- Complete annual training regarding protection of water quality
- Conduct water quality monitoring and reporting activities
- Pay an annual fee based on acreage of irrigated acreage

**How to enroll:**

The San Diego Water Board strongly encourages Commercial Agriculture Operations to contact an approved Third-Party Group to assist with application submittal and document upload. Additionally, compliance with the General Agriculture Orders will be significantly less costly if done through the membership and assistance of a Third-Party Group. They also assist growers with the items mentioned above.

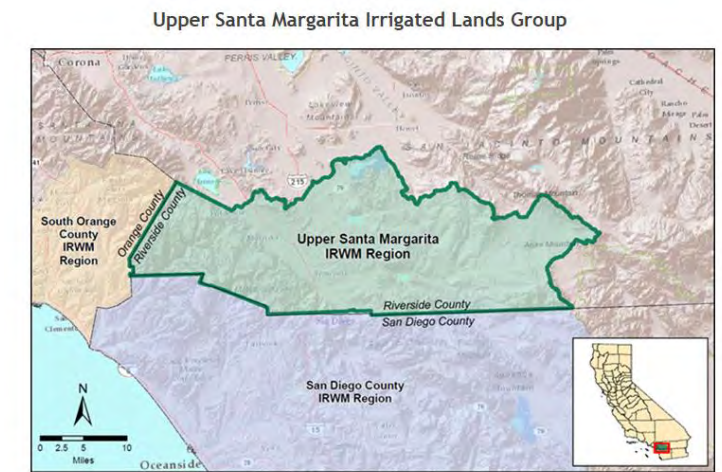
The approved Third-Party Groups in the San Diego Region are:

- San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group - (760) 745-2215
- Upper Santa Margarita Irrigated Lands Group - (909) 208-7847

To enroll in the General Agricultural Orders and obtain regulatory coverage, each operation must complete an on-line enrollment application using the GeoTracker database. Please download these [Instructions for Enrolling](#). Operations wishing to comply with the General Agriculture Orders by joining the San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group have a different enrollment process and should contact them for more information.

Each operation must pay an annual fee that is based on acreage of irrigated lands, in addition to a one-time enrollment fee. Members of an approved Third-Party Group will receive a discounted rate. Third-Party Groups will pay the annual permit fees to the State Water Board on behalf of their members. Annual fees are described on the [State Water Board's Fee Schedule](#) website.

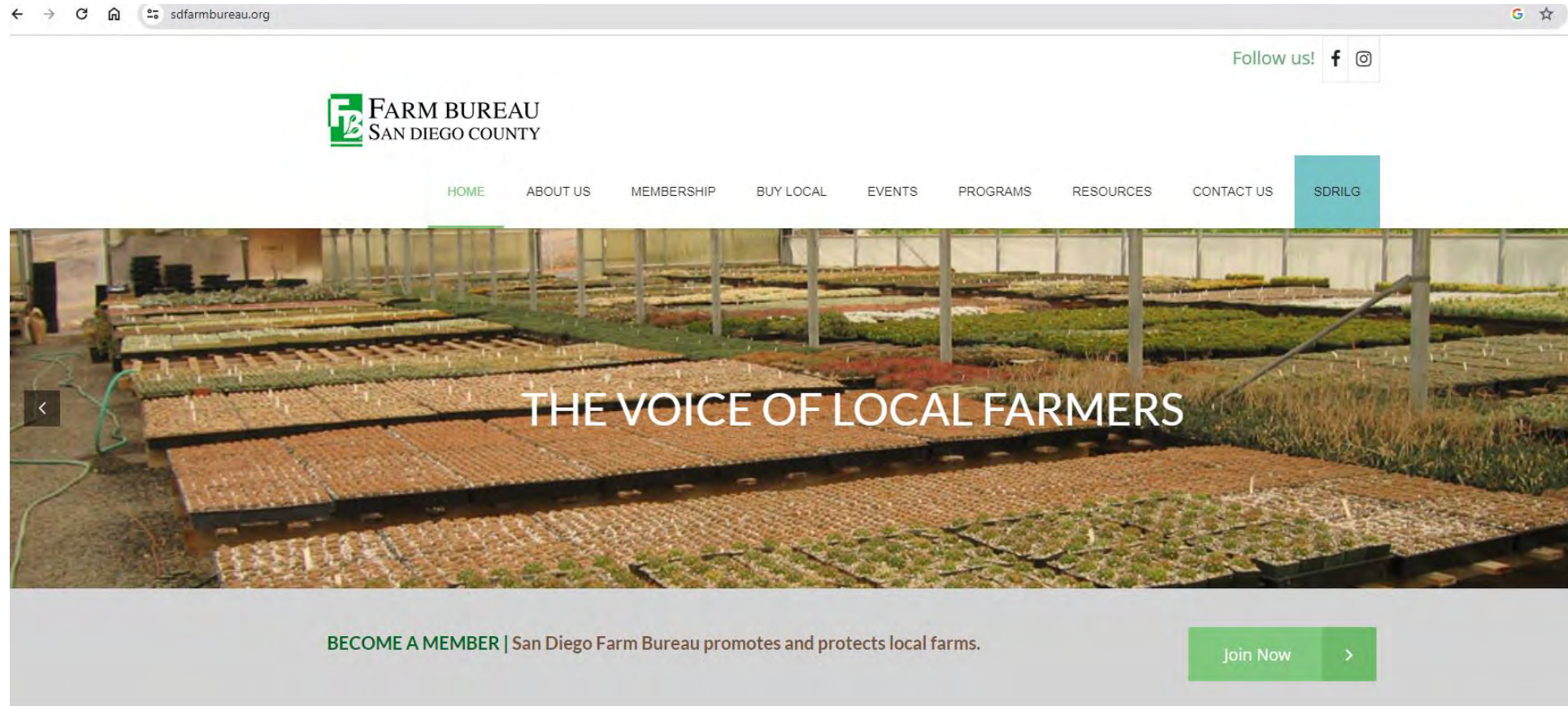
(Page last updated 9/16/22)



← Approved Third-Party groups

You could also sample and test water by yourself but it would be way more expensive

# Why do I need to be a member of the Farm Bureau to belong to the Irrigated Lands Group?



In San Diego, the Irrigated Lands Group was formed by and is housed by the Farm Bureau



Do all growers need to participate in this program?

All growers that grow commercially  
and all growers that use irrigation



Besides joining the group, what else am I required to do?

- You need to prepare a Water Quality Protection Plan
- You need to perform quarterly self-inspections
- You need to take 2 hours of education on water quality per year

#### WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF SDRILG?

##### UPON ENTRY

- Use SDRILG's easy online platform (software) to complete a Notice of Intent (NOI) which includes a Water Quality Protection Plan and details of the farming operation.

*Documents can be completed via telephone interview for those without internet access.*

##### QUARTERLY

- Complete simple quarterly self-inspections provided by SDRILG.

##### ANNUALLY

- Participate in 2 hours water runoff education provided by SDRILG.
- Submit Annual Report provided by SDRILG.

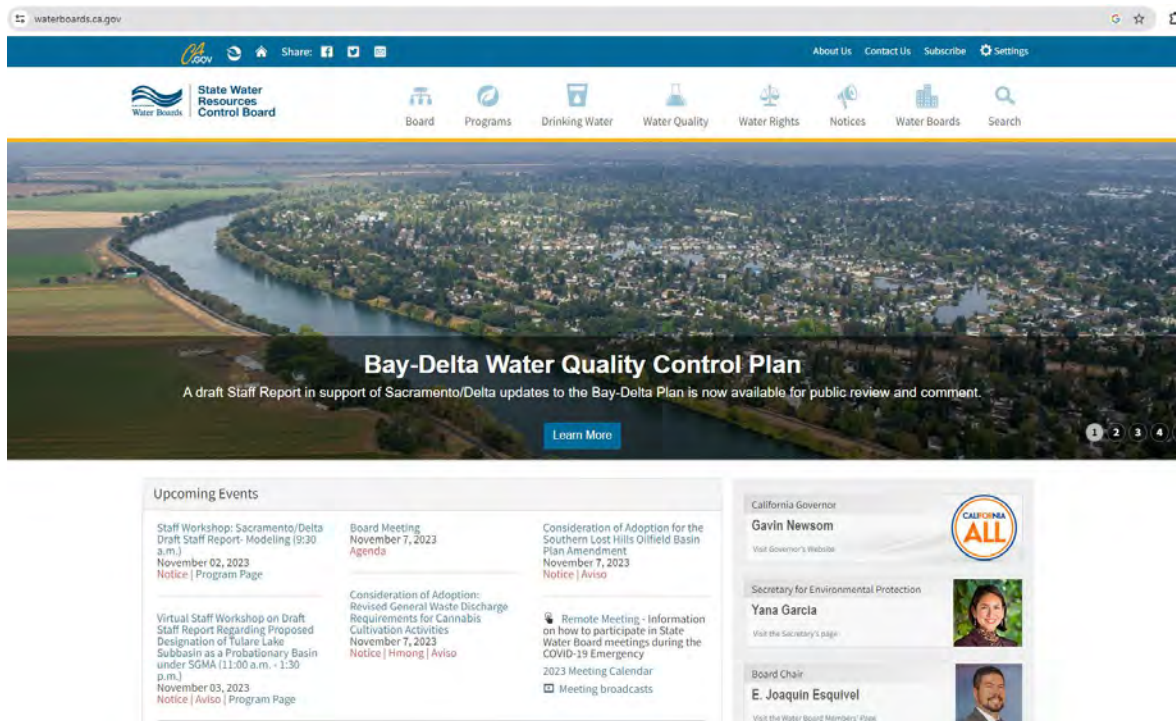
*San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group is a 501(c) 5 non-profit administered by the San Diego County Farm Bureau, created to benefit the Farm Bureau members of Region 9.*



# Who makes the rules about water quality?

State Water Resources Control Board and >>  
Regional Water Quality Control Board

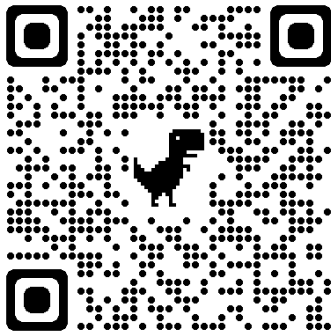
To preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use, for the benefit of present and future generations.



It has nothing to do with the Water Authority/Water Districts. Those are involved with water supply

I am already inspected by the San Diego County Department of Agriculture. I think they inspect for water quality too. Is that correct?

Unincorporated area: San Diego County



[sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/awm/ag\\_water.html](https://sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/awm/ag_water.html)

[SanDiegoCounty.gov Home](#)

Agriculture, Weights & Measures

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MENU

### Agricultural Water Quality Program

The County of San Diego Agricultural Water Quality Program (AWQ) helps to ensure that our waterways are protected by preventing pollutants from commercial agricultural businesses from entering the County's storm drain system in compliance with our municipal Stormwater permit.

AWQ conducts outreach, inspections, and complaint investigations at commercial agriculture businesses to ensure operations are protecting regional water quality through compliance with regional stormwater permit standards.

Water that is released to the streets, gutters, and storm drains in San Diego County is NOT TREATED before it reaches our local creeks, rivers, and ocean. All sources of pollution are prohibited from leaving your site and entering streets or storm drains. Only rainwater is allowed in the streets and storm drains. The County of San Diego Agricultural Water Quality Program supports businesses in their efforts to prevent pollution by offering the resources found on this page.

[Contact Us, FAQ's, & Resources](#)

[Watersheds](#)

[Commercial Agriculture Businesses](#)

#### Stormwater Training

##### Annual Stormwater Training Material

Agricultural Stormwater Training Event

[PDF Version of Presentation](#)

Agricultural Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs)

| [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Tagalog](#) | [Arabic](#)

Only Rain in the Storm Drain

| [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Tagalog](#) | [Arabic](#)

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COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
AGRICULTURE, WEIGHTS & MEASURES

#### AWM Contact Information

If you have questions or would like to contact us:

Webmail: [sdawm@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:sdawm@sdcounty.ca.gov)

San Diego Office: 858-694-2739

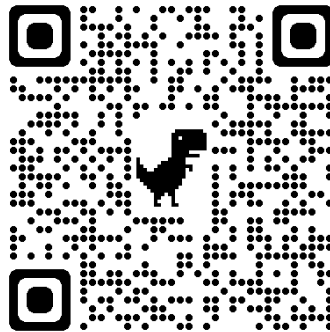
San Marcos Office: 760-752-4700

Pesticide Inquiry between 8am-5pm: 858-694-8980

After-Hours Calls and After-Hours Pesticide Inquiry: 800-853-3754

Land Use & Environment Group Open Performance

Incorporated area: Cities



MEMBERS

RMC members consist of the 21 Copermittees in the San Diego Region under the Municipal Permit, Order No. R9-2013-0001 (as amended by Order Nos. R9-2015-0001 and R9-2015-0100). Contact information for each copermittee is listed below.

Chelsea McGimpsey

County of San Diego

858-229-1865

5510 Overland Ave, Suite 410

San Diego, CA 92123

[chelsea.mcgimpsey@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:chelsea.mcgimpsey@sdcounty.ca.gov)

Chris Helmer

City of Imperial Beach

619-628-1370

825 Imperial Beach Blvd

Imperial Beach, CA 91932

Reed Thornberry

City of San Marcos

760-744-1050 x3217

1 Civic Center Drive

San Marcos, CA 92069

Joe Kuhn

City of La Mesa

619-667-1340

8130 Allison Ave

La Mesa, CA 91942

Emily Stein

City of Santee

619-258-4100 x177

10601 Magnolia Ave, Building 4

Santee, CA 92071

Marisa Soriano

City of Chula Vista

619-397-6134

1800 Maxwell Road

Chula Vista, CA 91911

Michael Fellows

City of Lemon Grove

619-825-3812

3232 Main Street

Lemon Grove, CA 91945

Mike McCall

City of Coronado

619-522-2652

1825 Strand Way

Coronado, CA 92118

Dan Goldberg

City of Solana Beach

858-720-2470

635 S. Hwy 101

Solana Beach, CA 92075

John Quenzer



## Why do we have some many inspectors looking at the same things?

## San Diego Region Agriculture & Water Quality

Stormwater is not treated before entering our local waters. Stormwater flowing through storm drains, ditches, and culverts flows untreated to creeks, bays, beaches, and the ocean. Pollutants such as sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, and organic waste are commonly generated by agricultural activities and can contribute to pollution of our waterways if not managed properly.

**Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help meet both AWQ Program (County) and Ag Order (San Diego Water Board) requirements:**

**BMP #1:** Be aware of how stormwater flows across your property and how this impacts downstream water quality. Map your property and know where the drains on your property discharge. Direct stormwater flows away from potential sources of pollution.

**BMP #2:** Ensure annual stormwater training is completed and complete 2 hours of continuing education/water quality training.

**BMP #3:** Use, store, and manage materials properly. Store materials with the potential to contaminate runoff, in a manner that prevents contact with stormwater flows, and inspect these areas frequently.

**BMP #4:** Practice proper disposal methods. Never dispose of waste in waterways or stormwater conveyances. Waste must be stored to prevent contact with rain and stormwater flows.

**BMP #5:** Use dry cleanup methods (spill kits) with absorbent material, personal protective equipment such as gloves and eyewear, a dustpan and broom, and a garbage bag to aid in clean up. Keep materials for spill response accessible.

**BMP #6:** Prevent erosion and sediment loss. Remove or contain accumulations of loose soil. Convey stormwater around areas of erosion. Stabilize graded areas with fiber mats, fiber rolls, geo-textiles, or hydro-seeding. Erect silt fences or construct berms to prevent discharge of sediment. Implement sandbags, straw bales, straw wattles, mulch, and strips of vegetation. Install sediment catch basins to promote settling out of sediments before stormwater flows leave your property. Build farm roads with sediment catch basins and culverts to prevent farm road washouts.

**BMP #7: Manage nutrients and pesticides.** Monitor crop nutrient needs and apply only what is needed. Store, use, and dispose of pesticides according to the law.

**BMP #8: Manage Irrigation Water.** Assess and upgrade irrigation equipment to reduce excess irrigation water runoff generated by inefficient irrigation equipment. Do not allow irrigation water to discharge from your property.

**BMP #9:** Reduce and recycle when feasible. Implement pollution prevention strategies that reduce the amount of pollutants used or generated by your operation. Reuse water where feasible. Excess irrigation water can be collected and applied to farm roads for dust control.



<p>What water quality regulatory programs apply to commercial agriculture operations? Scan QR code for additional program information.</p> <p>Who enforces the program?</p>	 <p>Agricultural Water Quality (AWQ)</p> 	 <p>Agricultural Order (Ag Order)</p> 
What are they regulating?	Stormwater runoff impacting <b>County-maintained roads, culverts, conveyances, and storm drains.</b>	Impacts to all water resources, including impacts to <b>all surface water bodies and ground water resources.</b>
What is the purpose?	The purpose is to ensure the County is compliant with the <b>Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit</b> that is issued by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) pursuant to National Clean Water Act requirements.	The purpose is to ensure irrigated commercial agriculture businesses comply with the (3 <sup>rd</sup> party or individual) <b>Ag Order</b> , to prevent pollution to all surface and ground water resources.
Do agriculture operations need to take additional steps to enroll?	Commercial agriculture properties <b>do not need to take additional steps</b> to be listed in the County's regulated inventory and there are no fees.	Commercial agriculture properties are mandated to take steps to <b>enroll</b> with the Ag order by submitting a <b>Notice of Intent</b> , a Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP), and pay an <b>annual fee</b> .
Where are inspections conducted?	County inspectors conduct inspections at commercial agriculture properties in the San Diego Region <b>unincorporated County</b> .	Water Board staff conduct inspections at commercial agriculture properties <b>throughout the San Diego Region</b> , including incorporated (cities) <u>and</u> unincorporated (County) areas of the San Diego Region.
What do they look for during inspections?	Inspections are to ensure annual <b>stormwater training</b> is documented and that <b>best management practices (BMPs)</b> are implemented to prevent pollution to stormwater and to prevent non-stormwater discharges that may impact downstream County-maintained roads, culverts, conveyances, and storm drains.	Inspections are to ensure operations are <b>enrolled</b> with the Ag Order, maintaining a <b>current WQPP</b> , and implementing <b>best management practices (BMPs)</b> to prevent pollution to all surface water bodies and ground water resources.
Is training required?	<b>Annual stormwater training</b> is required. Stormwater training material is available in English, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Chinese on the AWQ Program webpage which you can access by scanning the QR code above.	<b>Annual 2-hour water quality training</b> is required. Training options include formal classroom training, individual meetings with a qualified trainer, and/or internet-based training with the local Farm Bureau, University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), or other comparable organization.
Are other documents or steps required?	No. However, some operations may require a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). A Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP) may meet the requirements of the SWPPP. SWPPP requirements are based on watershed impairments and site compliance history. Unless instructed, operations are not required to maintain a SWPPP.	Enrolled properties are required to regularly update their <b>WQPP</b> , complete quarterly and annual <b>self-inspection</b> reports, submit self-inspection <b>reports</b> to the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party Irrigated Lands Group (ILG) or Water Board, and collect <b>water samples</b> *.  <b>*Water sample</b> requirements are fulfilled by 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party ILG, or individually.