

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Forest Activities Program Overview

General Discussion

The Forest Activities Program at the Central Valley Water Board addresses non-point source (NPS) activities in our forested headwaters. These activities primarily include; timber harvesting and fuels management, post-fire impacts assessment and mitigation, rural roads construction and maintenance, and off-highway vehicle use areas. All of these NPS activities in our forested lands have the potential to impact the beneficial uses of our surface waters. These impacts can be either negative or positive.



Our forested watersheds are the source of much of California's water supply and NPS activities have the potential to negatively impact water quality. Potential impacts from land disturbing activities in our forests include; sediment discharges from poorly designed and constructed/maintained roads and watercourse crossings, petroleum discharges from heavy equipment usage near surface waters, herbicide discharges from efforts to control competing vegetation, decreases in aquatic habitat condition, and increases in water temperature from the removal of shade producing vegetation near surface waters.

These same activities also have the potential to positively impact the beneficial uses of our surface waters. Timber harvesting and fuels reduction operations provide an opportunity to decommission, replace or reconstruct legacy roads which are frequent sources of chronic sediment input to surface waters. Fuels reduction projects assist in reducing wildfire severity and thus can reduce post-fire sediment discharges. Post-fire assessment and mitigation work can also provide opportunities for restoration of legacy erosion sites and removal of fish migration barriers.

Permitting

Timber harvesting operations are of significant economic importance in the Central Valley region of California. Approximately 50 percent of the state's timberlands are located in this region and approximately 45 percent of the statewide harvest of commercial timber occurs here. Due to cutbacks in harvesting on federal lands, most of this harvested volume is now removed from private and state owned land. The California Board of Forestry is responsible

Timber Harvest Program Overview

for the development of the California Forest Practice Rules, a set of best management practices used to ensure resource protection for timber harvesting on state and private lands. Utilizing the Forest Practice Rules, the [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection](#) (CAL FIRE) reviews, approves and provides oversight for timber harvesting projects on state and private lands. This timber harvest plan review process constitutes a [California Environmental Protection Act](#) equivalent process. The Central Valley Water Board is engaged in this process as a responsible agency and provides a water quality perspective during the review and approval steps.

The Central Valley Water Board is responsible for evaluating the various non-point source forest activities and ensuring appropriate regulatory coverage. Timber harvesting, fuels management and post-fire salvage projects are the primary activities that may be enrolled in our Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges Related to Timber Harvest Activities, Order No. R5-2010-0022 (Waiver). The Waiver specifies eligibility criteria and conditions that must be met by dischargers engaged in timber harvest activities on private, state and U.S. Forest Service lands in order to qualify for regulatory coverage. The Waiver also includes a Monitoring and Reporting Program which identifies specific times and types of monitoring that must be conducted to ensure that high standards of water quality protection are achieved throughout project implementation and upon completion.

Dischargers submit Waiver enrollment applications at least 30 days prior to the commencement of timber harvest activities on approved plans. The project must remain enrolled under the Waiver until operations and discharges associated with the operations have ceased.

Program staff spends a significant amount of time conducting field inspections of the various forest activities. Inspections may be conducted pre-project, during operations, during the wet period after operations have begun and after operations have been completed.

The program currently supports technical staff in each of the three offices maintained by the Central Valley Water Board. Geographical areas of responsibility are split by the staff in the three offices as listed on our [program webpage](#).

Other Program Activities

Participation in CAL FIRE Review Team Process

As mandated by [AB 1492](#), our program staff coordinates with CAL FIRE in the review of timber harvest projects submitted for non-federal lands. Detailed review and field inspections by regional board staff are reserved for those projects that appear to pose the greatest threat to water quality. This effort constitutes a proactive approach to prevent timber harvest related impacts on water quality and assists in educating the timber industry of the need to implement additional management measures (beyond those required by the Board of Forestry's Forest Practice Rules) where necessary to comply with [Porter-Cologne](#) and our [Basin Plan](#) objectives.

Timber Harvest Program Overview

Participation in the California Board of Forestry Committees and Rule Making Process

Program staff attends select Board of Forestry committee and regular meetings where proposed rule changes relating to water quality protection are drafted and then considered for adoption.

Coordination with the State Water Board, CAL FIRE and Other Regional Boards

Staff works closely with the State Water Board and other regional boards to coordinate review and oversight of forest activities, comment on proposed legislation, and communicate regularly on issues with the potential to affect the program.

Outreach To Industry and Watershed Groups

Staff works with local watershed groups to address concerns regarding water quality issues associated with forest activities. Staff also communicates with the regulated industry by speaking at conferences and industry group meetings.

Enforcement Actions

Staff initiates enforcement actions in the form of requests for corrective actions, adoption of wasted discharge requirements or civil penalties for those activities that violate the Waiver conditions and criteria and threaten to adversely impact water quality.