



Dairy CARES Report

April 2009

www.dairycares.com

Central Valley dairies get limited relief, but continued compliance remains critical

Central Valley dairy families got some desperately needed relief Thursday from the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Board unanimously approved a request, submitted by the CARES coalition in February, to allow additional time for dairies to prepare engineering plans.

All sides hope this will buy critical time for dairy families. The water quality regulations that were in place give dairies until this July to submit Waste Management Plans (WMPs) signed off by a civil engineer. When a dairy needs improvements to adequately manage manure and water, the WMP is supposed to spell out what improvements are needed and a schedule for completion. However, costs for preparing a WMP are \$10,000 to \$30,000 per dairy, a tough item for dairies that have been losing money due to falling milk prices and rising costs.

Thursday's Regional Board action offers some helpful and welcome flexibility, but should not be seen as an opportunity by anyone to relax compliance efforts. Although WMPs now are not due until July 2010, all dairy improvements must be enacted on the original schedule. That is, any needed improvements must be in place by July 2011, as called for in the regulations.

What is the "take-home" message for dairy families? There are several:

The WMP is only one part of the regulations. All other requirements remain on schedule and dairy producers should review the regulatory requirements closely with their professional consultants, trade association representatives or other trusted sources to ensure they understand what reports are required by July 1, 2009. The California Dairy Quality Assurance Program will issue a mailing this week with important information about reporting requirements for this July. Producers can also visit www.cdqa.org.

This is a change in schedule, not a removal of the requirement for a WMP. While the proposed order would grant additional time for submittal of the engineering report, the report will still be due next year. Producers who are able to continue on the current schedule are well advised to do so. And dairy families who are currently facing financial stresses may wish to get an "early start" as prices recover. This will prevent a last-minute rush for available engineering services next year. More importantly, it will give dairy operators time to assess their facility needs and where necessary, begin to plan for any needed improvements in advance of the July 2011 deadline.

CARES coalition members recognize that while this amendment to the Regional Board regulatory schedule provides important relief at a critical time, it is temporary and not enough by itself to resolve the serious economic crisis producers currently face. It is our hope that this will allow those producers who need it some time and flexibility to continue to operate while the industry takes measures to improve the overall economic situation.

CARES is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability for California's dairy industry. CARES members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-California, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O' Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Turlock Dairy & Refrigeration, Western United Dairymen, and others. For information about CARES, visit our web site at www.dairycares.com, write dairycares@aol.com or call 916-441-3318.