RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Discussion and possible action to approve a letter to the State Water Resources Control Board relative to the Agricultural Waiver Program, Fee Program.

This matter was discussed by RCRC at its May Board meeting, and direction was given to staff to draft a letter for use by the member counties supporting the joint Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition/California Rice Commission (Coalition) alternative fee schedule.

A draft letter is attached for consideration and possible action.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

The Board heard a presentation by staff of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, the State Water Quality Control Board, and the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition on May 24, 2005.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

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<th>Budgeted In Current FY?</th>
<th>Current FY Cost:</th>
<th>Annual Recurring Cost:</th>
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<th>Transfer Between Funds</th>
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CLERK'S USE ONLY:

Res. No.: 05-236

Vote – Ayes: 5

Absent:

Approved

Minute Order Attached

( ) No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date: __________

Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
County of Mariposa, State of California

By: __________

Deputy

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COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:

( ) Requested Action Recommended

( ) No Opinion

Comments:

CAO: __________

Revised Dec. 2002
MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: BOB PICKARD, Supervisor District V
FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

SUBJECT: LETTER TO THE STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
RELATIVE TO THE AGRICULTURAL WAIVER PROGRAM, FEE PROGRAM

Resolution No. 05-256

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

ADOPTED THIS Order on June 14, 2005

ACTION AND VOTE:

Discussion and Possible Action to Approve a Letter to the State Water Resources Control Board Relative to the Agricultural Waiver Program, Fee Program (Chairman Pickard)

BOARD ACTION: Chairman Pickard initiated discussion relative to this matter, and he advised of the recommendation from the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC). Supervisor Bibby urged the inclusion of a request for a low risk waiver for the small operations and things like 4-H and FFA animal projects. Other changes to the draft letter were discussed. (M)Turpin, (S)Fritz, Res. 05-256 was adopted approving the letter with changes as discussed. The vote was held for the following input.

Chris Castro provided input on the impact this program has on small growers, and stated she does not feel that those who do not use pesticides or chemicals should be included in the program. She stated she agrees with the desire to have clean water.

Chairman Pickard asked Supervisor Bibby to provide the wording that she would like to see used in the letter relative to a waiver for the small operations. Ayes: Unanimous.

cc: File
June 14, 2005

Arthur Baggett, Chairman
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Agricultural Waiver Program, Fee Program

Dear Chairman Baggett,

The State Water Resources Control Board (Board) is scheduled to consider for adoption on June 16, 2005 a fee schedule for the Central Valley Region Agricultural Waiver Program. On behalf of the County of Mariposa, I am writing to indicate our support for the joint Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition/California Rice Commission (Coalition) alternate fee proposal.

As you know, the Coalition has devoted a significant amount of time and effort to develop their program, during which time they have appropriately worked closely with the local County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs). Our County agrees with the Coalition and the Central Valley County Agricultural Commissioner’s Association that CACs should be brought into the agricultural waiver program now, as opposed to some unknown point in the future. CACs are familiar with their local agriculture, and are currently providing invaluable assistance to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) staff.

The Coalition proposes to pay, on behalf of Coalition members, an annual fee of $85,020 directly to the Board to fund the activities of the Board and the Regional Board, and $105,300 directly to CACs to fund field work activities as approved by the Regional Board and/or the Board.

It is imperative that the State of California and all impacted parties explore the development of a low-risk wastewater discharger waiver program, allowing small and/or rural agriculture activities an equitable proposal or exemption. The majority of small and/or rural agriculture operations do not include pesticides, and irrigation activities are conducted on a seasonal basis. For example, organic farmer’s market participants, rural livestock and farming operations, and livestock sales produced on irrigated pasture by participants in 4-H and/or F.F.A. organizations. As a result of additional fees/permits, estate taxes, real estate values, urban sprawl influences, and exorbitant operational costs, California’s agricultural lands are on a fast track to extinction. "California grown" will no longer represent a proud legacy of agriculture production. "California grown"
will be associated with a period of time in which agricultural lands were converted to urban areas at alarming rates due to increased fees and regulations.

In conclusion Mariposa County urges your thoughtful consideration to the low-risk waste water discharge waiver exemption for the reasons cited above; and requests that the Board adopts the Coalition’s alternate fee proposal, at a minimum on a pilot program basis.

Sincerely,

Bob Pickard,
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

BP: mw

cc: Senator Chuck Poochigian
Assemblyman Dave Cogdill
Members, State Water Resources Control Board
  Peter Silva
  Richard Katz
  Tam Docuc
  Gerald Secundy
Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Strategic Local Government Services
Cathi Boze, Mariposa Agricultural Commissioner
Mariposa County Farm Bureau

bc: Board of Supervisors