



October 22, 2021

Dear Vineyard Owner,

In 2017, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted the Vineyard General Permit. Fees associated with the permit apply to vineyards five acres and larger that are in the Napa River watershed. The Farm Bureau successfully delayed the implementation of group monitoring fees during the fires and the beginning of COVID-19 to assist our members. Now, the Region 2 Water Board has begun implementation of fees for the start of the group monitoring portion of this program and the Farm Bureau is helping you qualify for lower fees in order to continue to comply with the Vineyard General Permit.

As you know, the Napa County Farm Bureau works diligently to protect the rights and interests of Napa County's agricultural community. For many years, we have met with the regional water board and other interested parties and worked to limit the impact of the Vineyard General Permit. While we were not able to eliminate the need for it, we have taken on the role of fee collector to protect our agricultural community and greatly reduce the expense and impact that this state-mandated program will have on your property. Without the Napa County Farm Bureau taking on this role, property owners would be required to pay significantly more in fees to the state water board. With the Farm Bureau's fee administration and oversight of this program, we are saving our members thousands of dollars, eliminating the need for other laborious requirements and ensuring a high rate of compliance by taking on the work ourselves.

The Napa and Sonoma County Farm Bureaus are acting as fee collector to ensure lower rates for the group water quality monitoring program, which will be conducted by technical staff that work at the Napa Resource Conservation District. The group water quality monitoring program will begin this winter. Administration of the group monitoring program is part of a broader compliance assistance program that the Farm Bureaus first agreed to implement for the benefit of vineyard properties in the fall of 2019 to a) collect and submit annual permit fees to the Water Board (which allows vineyard properties to qualify for lower fees), and b) develop a group water quality monitoring plan, that was due to the Water Board in July 2020.

The plan that was approved by the Water Board, specifies monitoring in representative vineyard properties and channel reaches to evaluate: a) the effectiveness of management practices implemented at vineyard properties to control erosion in farm areas and to control sediment discharge from unpaved roads; and b) to measure the amount of fine sediment (sand) in the streambed in channel reaches that provide habitat for steelhead and/or salmon.

There are approximately 1,400 properties enrolled in the General Permit. All but about 20 have joined a Farm Bureau compliance assistance group .

Since the water quality monitoring program is starting this fall, the Region 2 Water Board has directed the Farm Bureaus must also charge (for the first time) a water-quality monitoring fee to owners of properties that are designated as Tier 2 properties. Tier 1 properties will not be charged a monitoring fee because these properties are exempt from this requirement of the General Permit.

Based upon cost estimates by the Napa RCD for the group monitoring work, the monitoring fee is expected to be \$10 per acre. The Farm Bureaus must charge this fee to Tier 2 properties (Tier 1 properties are exempt) for the first time in November of this year. The fee was established at \$10 per acre to cover the total estimated expense of conducting the monitoring program during its first eighteen months, and then dividing that expense by total acreage now designated as Tier 2. The Farm Bureaus expect to reduce the monitoring fee to approximately \$5/acre in the fall of 2022, and approximately \$1/acre in the fall of 2023 because the scope of work decreases through time.

Please note that the monitoring fee is in addition to other fees that the Farm Bureaus are mandated to currently charge to ensure lower costs for our vineyard properties by being in the compliance groups. Invoicing for the annual General Permit fees will begin soon.

For the Fact Sheet on the Vineyard General Permit Group Monitoring, you may visit the state water board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/agriculture/vineyard/index.html

Please be assured that the Farm Bureaus remain committed to ensure that our vineyard properties will maintain as low costs as possible in order to comply with the Region 2 Water Board's Vineyard General Permit.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office at 707-224-5403.

Sincerely,



Ryan Klobas
Chief Executive Officer