

## ***EnviroMapper for Water Version 3.0 Released***

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water recently released Version 3.0 of EnviroMapper for Water, a Web-based mapping link to a wealth of water data. EnviroMapper for Water allows the user to view and map water data, such as: the uses assigned to particular waters (fishing, swimming, etc.), waters that are impaired and do not support their assigned uses, the reasons why waters are impaired, water quality monitoring information, closures of swimming beaches, and the location of dischargers. Maps can be viewed at the national, regional, state, or local level. This latest release features several new layers of water data, including EPA's national water quality database, STORET; National Estuary Program study areas; and the location of nonpoint source projects. Other enhancements make it easier to locate and view these data, and instructions are provided on how to incorporate the resulting maps into your own Web page.

Visit [www.epa.gov/waters/enviromapper](http://www.epa.gov/waters/enviromapper).

## ***States, Feds Unite to Protect Colorado River Habitat***

In September, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton signed an agreement with representatives of Arizona, Nevada, and California for a 50-year, comprehensive initiative to protect species and habitats on the Colorado River from Lake Mead to the U.S.-Mexico border. In comments reported by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Norton said that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program will also ensure the river's water and power resources can continue to be used by the citizens of the three lower basin states to support their economy and quality of life.

The proposed plan would create more than 8,100 acres of riparian, marsh, and backwater habitat for 31 endangered

species. DOI will provide half of the estimated \$620 million cost of the program over its life span, and the states will provide the remainder, with California contributing \$155 million and Arizona and Nevada each paying \$77.5 million.

The partnership involved in the initiative includes the Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, the three Lower Colorado Basin states, several Colorado River tribes, water and power contractors, and other stakeholders involved in Lower Colorado River management. Under the agreement, the partners will publish a final Environmental Impact Statement for the program by late December, and will have a Record of Decision in place to implement the program by early January.

The initiative has some skeptics. According to *The Associated Press* as reported in *Newsday* on Sept. 15, Jennifer Pitt, a scientist with Environmental Defense, said the new plan may simply increase the numbers of animals and plants in an already damaged environment.

Visit [www.doi.gov/news.html](http://www.doi.gov/news.html).

## ***Arizona DEQ Leads Statewide Perchlorate Task Force***

In May, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Director Steve Owens announced the formation of an interagency task force to address the extent of perchlorate contamination in Arizona's water resources and to develop strategies for reducing the risk of perchlorate contamination. The task force includes officials from ADEQ, the Arizona Department of Health Services, the Arizona Department of Water Resources, and the Arizona Department of Agriculture.

Perchlorate has been used since the late 1940s in solid rocket fuel, munitions, and pyrotechnics. Most contamination occurs in the soil and water near military

bases, aerospace installations, and defense contractors who helped produce propellants. Perchlorate is soluble and mobile in ground and surface water, and degrades very slowly in the environment.

Arizona has set a health-based guidance level for perchlorate at 14 parts per billion in water. The guidance level serves as a benchmark by which officials and consumers can judge whether a drinking water source is safe for use. Federal safe drinking water standards for perchlorate are currently lacking, but the EPA continues to study the issue.

As part of the assessment, the task force collected water samples to test for perchlorate from around 100 locations throughout Arizona, including surface waters, canals, wells, underground storage facilities, and animal feeding operations, as well as background locations. Many agencies have been collecting perchlorate data since the late 1990s, and where the data are credible and scientifically defensible, they will also be incorporated into the group's findings.

The task force was scheduled to report its findings to the governor this fall. The report will summarize: 1) the investigation into perchlorate occurrence, and levels found throughout Arizona, 2) the status of developing a water-quality standard for perchlorate, 3) the risk to the public from consuming drinking water supplies, dairy products, and produce that contain perchlorate, and 4) recommendations for future action.

Visit [www.ev.state.az.us/function/about/perch.html](http://www.ev.state.az.us/function/about/perch.html).

## ***California Farmers Create Water Quality Co-op***

Farmers in California have found that a cooperative effort may be the best way to comply with new requirements to monitor runoff to surface water. Agriculture is exempt from federal discharge regulations. In 1983, farmers in California were waived from state requirements as well, but the

waiver expired in early 2003. The end of the waiver would have meant that any farmer who irrigates would have to apply for a discharge permit. However, new waivers were approved by the California State Water Resources Control Board early this year, which, under pressure from environmental groups, require water quality monitoring of agricultural runoff. Regional water quality control boards now have the authority to adopt specific requirements for their respective regions.

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Monitoring Control Board adopted a new five-year waiver that requires farmers to: complete 15 hours of farm water quality education within three years; develop farm water quality management plans that address irrigation management, nutrient management, pesticide management, and erosion control; and begin implementing the management practices identified in their plans. Those who have completed the requirements by Jan. 1, 2005 will qualify for reduced reporting requirements.

Monitoring agricultural runoff is a required part of the management plans. Farmers may perform independent monitoring or they may join the Cooperative Monitoring Program. The latter option allows individual growers to pool resources and conduct group monitoring. In July, 23 central coast agricultural organizations agreed to implement the Cooperative Monitoring Program. The program is supported initially by a combination of settlement and grant funds. For the first few years, costs to participate are expected to be minimal or none. The agricultural industry is forming an agricultural committee to oversee the program. According to the *San Jose Mercury News*, the water board estimated costs will be \$900,000 to \$1 million a year to run the co-op program. If the cost is shared equally among all central coast farmers, individual costs will be about \$400 per year.

Under the program, if ambient monitoring reveals water quality problems, follow-up

monitoring is almost always necessary, unless only a single possible source of the problem exists in a watershed. The Regional Board will not be able to take enforcement action unless it can show which operation(s) are responsible for the problems. The Regional Board has a variety of options once it determines the source: assist the facility to come into compliance or implement alternate Best Management Practices; issue a notice of violation or civil liability complaint; or, in the rare case where compliance with waiver conditions will not adequately control the discharge, issue individual waste discharge requirements.

Visit [www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/AGWaivers/Index.htm](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/AGWaivers/Index.htm)

### **CA DWR Announces Local Groundwater Grants**

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) recently awarded new grants totaling \$6.2 million under the Local Groundwater Assistance Fund. Twenty-eight public agencies throughout the state received grants to perform groundwater studies and conduct groundwater monitoring and management activities. Grants ranged from \$110,000 to \$250,000, with most falling between \$200,000 and \$250,000. This is the fourth year in which grants have been awarded under the program. So far, with \$15 million in funding from the program, local agencies have completed 44 projects and another 26 are underway.

The goal of the Local Groundwater Management Assistance Act of 2000 (Assembly Bill 303) is to help local agencies better understand how to manage groundwater resources effectively to ensure the safe production, quality, and storage of groundwater. Intense interest in the program is reflected in the submission this fiscal year of 72 proposals requesting nearly \$17 million.

A listing of the agencies and projects receiving grants is available at the Division of Planning and Local Assistance Web site at [www.grantsloans.water.ca.gov/grants/assistance.cfm](http://www.grantsloans.water.ca.gov/grants/assistance.cfm).

### **"Use it or Lose it" in Action in New Mexico**

"Use it or lose it" is a phrase often used to describe water rights law in the West: if a right is not exercised by putting the water to "beneficial" use, the owner risks relinquishing that right. In New Mexico, Phelps Dodge Mining Company recently did just that. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported that Phelps Dodge planned to transfer a right of 20 acre-feet per year to the Village of Pecos as part of a compensation package for wells that may have been impacted by mining activities. However, mining ceased in 1939 and the water rights were put into a trust, according to the paper. In 1999, the mining company made a deal with the village that also included \$65,000 for hookups, said the article, but it was not until 2003 that the request for transfer of rights was submitted to the Office of the State Engineer. The state engineer recently determined that because the water hadn't been used since the 1930s, the right no longer existed, and that the remaining 2,200 acre-feet that Phelps Dodge claimed was also in question, according to the paper.

A Phelps Dodge lawyer interviewed by the *New Mexican* acknowledged that the company knew the transfer request would draw scrutiny, because it not only concerned water that had not been used for 70 years, but also would change the place and purpose for which the rights were issued. A spokesman for Phelps Dodge told the paper that the company would appeal the decision on the grounds that the state engineer does not have the authority to rule the water rights abandoned, because once a right is adjudicated, legal action, not administrative action, is required to rescind the right. The Phelps Dodge representative also noted that regardless of the outcome, by attempting the transfer, the company had made a "good faith effort" to comply with their agreement with the Village of Pecos.

Visit [www.santafenewmexican.com](http://www.santafenewmexican.com).