

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NITROGEN MANAGEMENT PLAN (NMP)

1. Why is my property listed as High Vulnerability?

- *Vulnerability categories (low and high) were determined through the Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR) that was prepared by a hydrogeology firm hired by SCJDWQC. The GAR outline was approved by the Regional Water Board in Dec 2014. The draft GAR is pending review. The land characteristics examined in the GAR include soil type (sandy soil is more likely to leach nitrates than clay soils), concentration of nitrates in the groundwater, and depth to groundwater.*

2. Do I need to test my soil for nitrogen carryover? (Number 24)

- *Soil testing is a Best Management Practice and is recommended but not required. If you do have your soil tested and there is available nitrogen, it could be usable by the crop and you may be able to apply to less dry/liquid and foliar applications during the growing season.*

3. Do I need to test my irrigation water for nitrates? (Number 25)

- *This is considered a Best Management Practice and is recommended but not required. If the irrigation water contains high nitrate levels, you can apply less fertilizer as the nitrogen in irrigation water provides usable nitrates for the crop.*
- *If you irrigate with canal water, your water district may be able to give you an estimate of the N typically found in their canals.*
- *SCJDWQC recommends that irrigation and domestic wells be tested for nitrates.*

4. What calendar year do I use in my NMP?

- *Nitrogen Management Plans are a forward looking document, taking into account what you or your CCA/agronomist believes you should apply for optimal production, then at the end of the year, recording what you actually applied. Plans completed now are for the 2015 crop year.*
- *At the beginning of the year, complete numbers 1-10 and all spaces in column 15. This is what you plan on doing based on recommendations or other crop specific information.*
- *At the end of the year, fill out numbers 11-13 and column 16, based on actual amounts of nitrogen applied and production from the field.*

5. When is the plan due?

- *The plan is to remain on farm and therefore the due date refers to the date your plan should be certified, completed and on file at the farm.*
- *A Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or other qualified agronomist must sign off on your plan in June 2016 if the property is designed in a high vulnerability groundwater area. Most fertilizer suppliers have CCAs on staff or can recommend a CCA.*

High Vulnerability

- Fields in High Vulnerability area are to have the plan on site June 15, 2015*

- A CCA certification is required for 2016 crop year by June 15, 2016
- Summary Reports for crop year 2015 due June 15, 2016

Low Vulnerability

- Fields in Low Vulnerability areas are to have the plan on site June 15, 2017* (no CCA sign-off required).

6. Do I return my Nitrogen Management Plan to the coalition?

- *No. Nitrogen Management Plans are to be kept on farm, NOT returned to the coalition. Please keep them where they are easily accessible in case of an inspection by the Regional Water Board.*
- *Summaries will be requested later in the year with further instructions.*

7. How do I determine the amount of water I apply to a field in one crop year?

- *If you do not have a water meter on your irrigation system, estimate the amount water applied throughout the growing season. UC (University of California) has information on the amount of water needed to produce most crops. The amount applied multiplied by the level of nitrates in the water gives you an estimate of nitrates in irrigation water (number 25) that can be used by the crop.*

8. What number should we put in #13 (Nitrogen Removed)?

- *For now, leave #13 blank. SJC & DWQC will be contacting you in late 2015 about how to calculate that number.*
- *The NMP Technical Advisory Work Group is currently discussing and putting together a plan and resources to help growers calculate this value.*

9. Do I still need to fill out a NMP even if I do not fertilize my pasture?

- Yes, regardless of fertilizer use, you must fill out a Nitrogen Management Plan.
- You should fill out numbers 1-5 with required information. In the cell for number 6, you should write pasture. Because you are not measuring an output, the cells for numbers 7 and 8 can be filled with Not Applicable. Number 9, N Recommended, should be filled in with a zero, as you do not plan on applying Nitrogen.
- Most importantly, in notes, number 14, write "PASTURE DO NOT FERTILIZE"
- The cells in column 15 can be filled in with zeros. If you have your irrigation water and soil tested for nitrogen, you should fill in actual amounts for numbers 24 and 25.
- At the end of the year, if you did not apply nitrogen column 16 should also be filled in with zeros.
- We will contact growers with pasture at the end of the year to let them know if a CCA sign off is required of those who do not apply fertilizers.
- <https://www.certifiedcropadviser.org/certifications/professional-search/>

10. How do I change my vulnerability designation or contest my designation?

- Vulnerability designations for fields will not be changed in the near future. They were created from a large study looking at nitrate levels in groundwater sampling over the past several years within the Coalition as well as the physical properties of the land.
- The Groundwater Assessment Report, which outlines field vulnerability, is updated every 5 years. This means there is a potential for vulnerability changes with each update.
- Overall, vulnerability does not change the paperwork load. While High and Low vulnerability fields have different deadlines, they both have the same reporting requirements. High Vulnerability areas are just prioritized with respect to reporting and compliance.