

## **Introduction to the Water Board's General Permit for Vineyard Properties (January 2018)**

On July 12, 2017, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) adopted General Waste Discharge Requirements – a “General Permit” for Vineyard Properties in the Napa River and Sonoma Creek Watersheds. The General Permit is part of broader program of pollution control and river restoration underway in these watersheds. The General Permit regulates pollutant discharges from all parcels located in the Napa River and/or Sonoma Creek watersheds that are developed to include a 5-acre or larger vineyard. It requires vineyard owners or operators of such parcels to do the following:

1. Enroll in the General Permit by July 31, 2018;
2. Develop a farm plan to document natural features, developed areas, and best management practices implemented to protect water quality;
3. Have the farm plan verified by an approved Third-Party Program;
4. Implement the farm plan to achieve pollutant discharge performance standards;
5. Report annually on progress toward achievement of performance standards; and
6. Participate in a group-or-individual water-quality monitoring program.

The Water Board expects to open enrollment, electronically online, on or before April 30, 2018. The first annual report (compliance reporting form) is on December 15, 2018.

Irrespective of the slope of the planted vineyard, all vineyard properties subject to the General Permit are required to meet performance standards for soil erosion in the farm area and for discharge of nutrients and pesticides. Hillslope vineyard properties, where the slope of the planted vineyard is greater than 5 percent, also must achieve performance standards for storm runoff/bank erosion, and for sediment discharge from all unpaved roads.

The first significant deadline for required actions is July 31, 2020, when all existing vineyard properties subject to the permit (i.e., all parcels where a 5-acre-or-larger vineyard was planted prior to July 12, 2017), must have a verified farm plan completed, and achieve performance standards for vineyard soil erosion, and discharge nutrients, and pesticides. Existing hillslope vineyard properties also must achieve performance standards for storm runoff/channel erosion control by July 31, 2023, and for sediment discharge from unpaved roads (located throughout the parcel) by July 31, 2027.

At all new vineyard properties subject to the General Permit, parcels where a 5-acre-or-larger vineyard is planted subsequent to General Permit adoption, the performance standards for soil erosion, pesticides, nutrients, and storm runoff (at hillslope vineyard parcels), must be achieved by the completion of vineyard construction. At new hillslope vineyards, the deadline for achievement of the performance standard for channel erosion is within six years of vineyard construction, and for sediment discharge from unpaved roads within ten years of the completion of vineyard construction.

### **Where can I get more information?**

The Water Board maintains a list of interested parties who have signed up to receive information about the General Permit as it becomes available. To receive these updates, sign up at [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email\\_subscriptions/reg2\\_subscribe.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg2_subscribe.html).

When you click on the URL listed above, provide your email address and name, and then check the box under the header labelled "General" that says "Vineyard Program (Napa River & Sonoma Creek)."

In early spring 2018, Water Board staff expects to launch an outreach program to answer questions about the permit, how to enroll, and to connect vineyard owners/operators to approved Third-Party Programs, who can provide technical assistance. Please look for announcements later this winter and spring from the Farm Bureau, Water Board, and other organizations about meetings, workshops, and informational materials that will help you understand and comply with the General Permit.

**General Permit Announcements/Updates** – Following adoption last July, a lot has happened that bears upon the schedule and requirements of the General Permit.

- a. The North Bay wildfires affected many vineyards that are required to enroll in the General Permit. At its October 2017 meeting, the Water Board expressed its concerns about the impacts of the fires and a need to delay General Permit compliance for affected vineyards. Therefore, for vineyard properties located within the perimeters of the North Bay wildfires, the Executive Officer has extended: a) the deadline for enrollment in the General Permit by one year to July 2019; and b) the schedule of compliance by one year (beyond the dates specified in Table 1, p. A-12 of the General Permit). Vineyard properties not located within the perimeters of the North Bay wildfires are still required to enroll in the General Permit by July 2018 and to meet the compliance schedule specified in Table 1 therein.

Also, considering the effect of the fires, the Executive Officer has modified the Monitoring and Reporting Requirements specified in Attachment E of the General Permit, such that dischargers will have an additional year to prepare a surface water quality monitoring plan (now due July 15, 2020) and the surface water quality monitoring report (now due July 15, 2023).

- b. On January 12, the Executive Officer approved four organizations as Third-Party Programs – to help vineyard owners/operators prepare and verify farm plans to satisfy requirements of the General Permit. The four approved Third-Party Programs, listed in alphabetical order, are:
  1. The California Land Stewardship Institute (Fish Friendly Farming Program);
  2. The California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance;
  3. The Napa County Resource Conservation District (LandSmart Program); and
  4. The Sonoma Resource Conservation District (LandSmart Program).

**Staff Contact Information** – If you have any questions, please contact

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