

Regulators prepare water diverters for stepped-up reporting rules

Officials hold a workshop and 'information fair' to prepare landowners

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Hundreds of California farmers and others flocked to a state water board "information fair" on Aug. 22 to get answers on how stepped-up reporting requirements for water diversions will affect their farms and ranches.

Water-rights officials told an overflow audience in a meeting room at the California Environmental Protection Agency headquarters that state regulators will take their operations' unique characteristics into account when applying the rules.

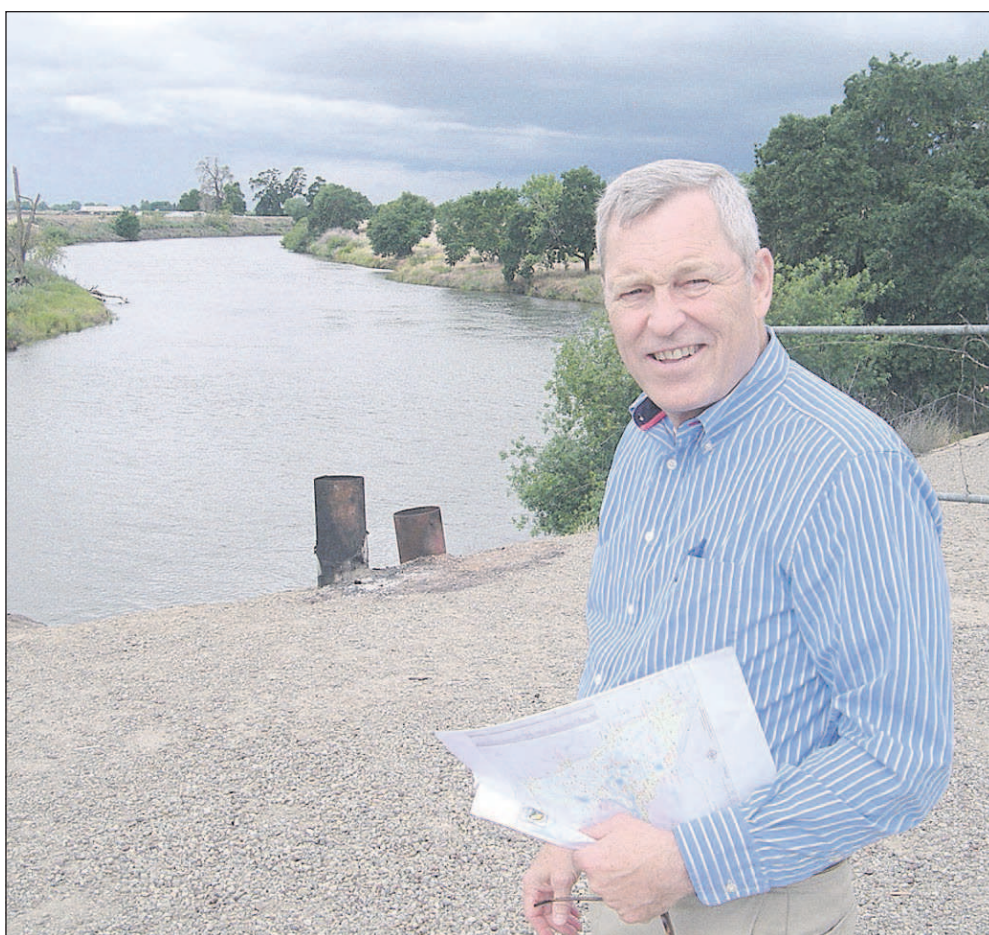
The goal, enforcement section chief Kathy Mrowka said, is to gather "accurate information" about how much water is being used around the state amid a drought now in its fifth year.

The State Water Resources Control Board's emphasis will be on achieving compliance, not necessarily the collection of fines, said Michael George, the watermaster for the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta region.

"We are interested in learning from some of the experimentation that's already going on" with regard to measuring diversions, George said.

The all-day workshop sought to bring together water right holders, vendors and other industry professionals to discuss how to measure water diversions. The workshop included an overview of the regulations as well as segments on measuring water stored in small ponds or reservoirs and measuring water from the Delta.

Farmers and others packed



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Michael George, the California Water Resources Control Board's watermaster for the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, stands next to the San Joaquin River. He was one of the presenters at an Aug. 22 workshop on the board's stepped-up regulations for reporting water diversions.

the meeting hall and an overflow room to view the sessions, which were also streamed online.

In addition, more than a dozen companies showcased their measurement instruments at booths in a hallway near the meeting room.

The workshop followed the board's decision in January to ramp up reporting requirements for California's roughly 12,000 landowners and users who have rights to divert surface water from nearby streams.

The regulations require annual reporting of water diversions rather than reporting once every three years, as previous law required of senior right holders. Under the

new rules, anyone who takes out more than 10 acre-feet of water per year must measure their diversions.

The requirements will be phased in. Large diverters with a claimed right to take 1,000 acre-feet of water or more per year must have a measuring device in place by Jan. 1, 2017, while those with rights for 100 acre-feet or more have until July 1, 2017 and those with rights to take 10 acre-feet or more must comply by Jan. 1, 2018.

Failure to comply with the new regulations could bring fines of up to \$500 per day, according to the board. The emergency regulations were required as part of legislation that enacted the 2015-16 state

budget.

George told landowners that he and members of the board's water rights division were creating a mechanism by which right holders could seek extensions of their deadlines. But he advised people not to "wait until the 11th hour" to ask for more time.

"You'll have to show good cause, which ... will vary according to circumstances," he said, adding that applicants will have to show they've done the "due diligence" to prepare but that they face obstacles.

"By coming today, this is a good start," he said. "There are a lot of vendors out there who are eager to tell you what they could set you up with."

Boise Farmers' Market vendors have no regrets about 2013 split

By **SEAN ELLIS**
Capital Press

BOISE — Four seasons after seceding from Idaho's largest farmers' market, producers who sell their products at the Boise Farmers' Market say they have no second thoughts.

"We did the right thing," said Meadowlark Farms owner Janie Burns, chairman of the BFM's board of directors. "We think it's working out really well."

About two dozen farm vendors from Capital City Public Market left and formed their own market in 2013 following the 2012 firing of Karen Ellis, who founded the CCPM in 1994 and guided it to become Idaho's largest farmers' market.

Ellis is now executive director of the BFM.

Burns, a founding vendor of the CCPM, said the split was tough at the time but now both markets co-exist well and even feed off each other, with potential customers walking from one market to the next, a span of about four blocks.

"It's not unlike a divorce in which it's very bitter at the time," she said. "But now that we've had some time ... we've come to a good understanding of each other."

Ellis said BFM farmers wanted to create a food-centric market focused more on agriculture where people go just to shop for food — CCPM includes a good mix of farm as well as non-ag vendors — and that's exactly what happened.

Ninety-five percent of the products sold at the BFM are local ag produce and food items and 5 percent are non-food items.

"We are truly the food shopper's market," Ellis said. "It's the 'foodie' market."

She said the market, in



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

People shop for produce at the Boise Farmers' Market on Aug. 13.

its fourth season, has grown every year and now includes about 60 vendors during the summer months and attracts 6,000 to 8,000 people each Saturday, up from about 3,500 its first year.

Farm vendors who stayed at the CCPM, which remains Idaho's largest, have told the Capital Press they aren't about to give up the potential 15,000 customers that the market attracts each Saturday.

Lee Rice, owner of Rice Family Farms and a Boise Farmers' Market vendor, said a lot of people were confused by the existence of the two markets the first few years.

However, "It's hard to find somebody now who doesn't know there are two different markets in Boise," he said. "When they want certain things, they can go to the Capital City market. When they want to do their main food shopping, they can come to our market."

Burns said the split has worked out well, for farmers as well as the public, and she's happy to point someone to the CCPM if they can't get what they're looking for at the BFM.

"Enough time has passed that we are able to differentiate ourselves from the other market," she said. "They have their identity and we have ours. We serve the public well by having these distinctive (markets)."

Wheat farmer appointed to WSU board of regents

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Gov. Jay Inslee has appointed wheat farmer Brett Blankenship to the Washington State University Board of Regents.

The board is the university's governing body, responsible for coordinating and managing the WSU system. Blankenship's appointment is effective Oct. 1.

Blankenship, who farms near Washtucna, said he submitted an application to Inslee's office. He doesn't have a personal agenda in joining the board, he said.

"I don't want to be seen as the 'agricultural representative,' just as a person taking a seat among the rest of the regents to do our part and lay the groundwork for a bright future for the university," he said.

During the search in which new WSU President Kirk Schulz was hired, several agricultural representatives expressed concern over whether the industry would be adequately considered.

"I think the governor's office has heard the concerns and was key on maintaining, certainly, a perspective from agriculture on the board," Blankenship said.

Blankenship is a former president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, where he worked to increase lawmakers' understanding of grower needs.

He received a bachelor's degree in music from Eastern Washington University and a master's degree in music performance and literature from the University of Rochester.

Blankenship believes WSU is entering a new stage.

"This will be an exciting time ... (with) advances in ag research, as well as the launch of a new medical school," he said. "We want to make sure the footprint of WSU will be felt far and wide."

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