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Lawsuit by activist groups puts politics before water quality and public health

Central Valley dairies most regulated in nation

FRESNO – A lawsuit filed by activist groups against state water quality officials will only stall progress on implementing the nation’s toughest water quality protection measures for dairies.

“We’re very disappointed. It’s truly unfortunate that these groups continue to divert public resources toward political grandstanding and away from clean water and public health,” said William Van Dam, chairman of CARES, a statewide coalition of groups representing California dairy families.

The lawsuits seek to overturn water quality regulations for dairies adopted in May 2007 by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. The regulations, 128 pages in length, are the nation’s most extensive requirements for dairies and are geared to protect groundwater and surface water. Independent estimates put the cost of the regulations to dairy producers at more than \$30,000 per dairy, per year.

“The regulations were developed with broad public input during a process that lasted more than a year and included a series of public meetings and public comment. The regulations were adopted unanimously by the 8-member Regional Board with bipartisan support,” said Michael L.H. Marsh, CEO of Western United Dairymen, representing 1,100 California dairy families.

Following the unanimous adoption by the Regional Board, activists appealed to the State Water Resources Control Board to overturn the regulations. That petition was also denied.

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CARES Statement on Activist Lawsuits over Water Quality Regulations
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“The regulations have been in place for more than year and progress is being made. These rules are the most stringent anywhere and need to be given a chance to work,” said Michael Boccadoro, CARES Executive Director.

“It’s truly unfortunate that these groups continue to place more importance on putting themselves in the political spotlight than actually serving the interests of public health,” Boccadoro added. “These actions will unfortunately divert the attention of our water quality officials away from doing the important job of protecting our water resources, and instead bog them down in the legal process fighting this baseless lawsuit. No one benefits, and the only losers are public health and clean water.”