

## San Joaquin Valley Wastewater Task Force

### WHAT IS THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WASTEWATER TASK FORCE?

- Formed to expand dialogue about wastewater issues and impacts on economic development of the Valley
- Covers the area San Joaquin County to Kern County
- Initiated in December 2000 by Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) grant program in response to a request from Governor Davis' staff
- Participants have included:
  - Economic Development Administration
  - CA Trade & Commerce
  - CA League of Food Processors
  - Manufacturers Council of the Central Valley
  - Legislative representatives from the offices of Congressmen Dennis Cardoza, Cal Dooley, and George Radanovich, Assemblymembers Barbara Matthews, Dean Florez, and Sarah Reyes
  - Representatives of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Water Resources Control Board, and Environmental Protection Agency
  - Representatives of Cities and Counties from the area San Joaquin County to Kern County
- Offers recommendations via an August 2001 White Paper (available at [www.mcag.cog.ca.us/publications](http://www.mcag.cog.ca.us/publications)). An updated White Paper will be published by August 2003.

### WHY DISCUSS WASTEWATER ISSUES?

- Affects sewer rates paid by residents and industries
- Affects housing development
- Affects economic development

Valley residents already pay some of the highest sewer rates in the State.

### SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WASTEWATER NEEDS: A PRIMER

- Wastewater operators must apply for permits every 5 years
- Permit requirements are governed by documents referred to "Basin Plans" (in the valley, there are 2 Basin Plans)
- The Valley's 2 Basin Plans date from the early 1970s
- State agencies lack the funding and staffing to update the Basin Plans; currently there is a 13-year waiting list statewide for this work
- For a variety of reasons (among them environmental lawsuits), Regional Water Quality Control Boards now have less discretion in applying **Basin Plan** standards to **wastewater permits**.

As a result, wastewater operators must now install costly technologies (see table at right). *In some cases, water to be used for irrigation must first be cleaned to drinking water standards.*

- Grant funds for wastewater treatment are limited- the primary grantmaking agencies have the following amounts available annually to grant, statewide:
  - USDA, \$12 million
  - Dept of Water Resources, \$36 million
  - Dept of Housing & Community Development, up to \$1 mill for certain small communities, but under very limited circumstances (Merced not eligible)
  - CA Water Resources Control Board, \$15 million, under limited circumstances
- Grants for wastewater treatment are usually available only to cities with populations of less than 20,000

Potential Costs to Comply with Requirements of 1970's Basin Plans	
Community	Cost

Ceres	\$4.2 mill
Dinuba	\$12.5 mill
Fresno/Clovis	\$30 mill
Lathrop	\$40 mill
Lodi	\$40 mill
<b>Merced</b>	<b>\$49 mill</b>
Porterville	\$8 mill
Stockton	\$121 mill
Tracy	\$67 mill
Tulare	\$38.6 mill
Turlock	\$25 mill
<u>Visalia</u>	<u>\$36.8 mill</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$472.1 mill</b>

**Note: the cost estimate to update a Basin Plan is approximately \$2 million**

## SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WASTEWATER TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- \$4 million funding in State budget for appropriate state staffing levels to amend the Valley's 2 Basin Plans
- \$12 million increase in federal grant funds (through USDA) to assist with required wastewater infrastructure improvements, available only to Valley communities of less than 100,000 population
- \$12 million increase in state grant funds (through HCD) to assist with required wastewater infrastructure improvements, available only to Valley communities of less than 100,000 population

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Anna Fuentes, Planner/ Grant Writer  
Merced County Association of Governments  
369 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Merced, CA 95340



(209) 723-3153 extension 314  
(209) 723-0322 (fax)  
[anna@mcag.cog.ca.us](mailto:anna@mcag.cog.ca.us)