

MINUTES

In response to direction from the BCC on August 27, 2008 the Sacramento Valley Basin Control Counsel's (BCC) Technical Advisory Committee's Agricultural Burning Subcommittee met on a conference call to discuss a possible cut back in the water allocations this fall/winter due to the State Water Board invoking "Term 91" relating to in-basin water uses. The concerns are the rice grower's ability to promote decomposition of rice straw if water availability is restricted by the use of "Term 91" in light of the limited number of acres available to be burned under the BCC's Smoke Management Plan.

Rice diseases such as Rice Blast, Aggregate Sheath Spot and Stem Rot are present in Sacramento Valley rice fields and can be devastating to the rice crop on any given year. Decomposition of rice straw is an important tool used to control these diseases. Lack of water restricts the use of this tool with few other economical viable tools left.

Burning of rice straw has been the traditional means of controlling disease, but this tool is restricted due to the Rice Straw Burning Reduction Act of 1991 and the Sacramento Valley Smoke Management Program. At the August 1st BCC meeting the California Rice Commission requested that the Smoke Management Program be reviewed to see if there could be improvements in the process to maximize burning opportunities. The subcommittee met to discuss what Air Districts could do to help the rice industry in this potentially water short year.

Present on the conference call were Mark Black- Glenn County APCD (Chair), David Valler and Jeff Citron of Feather River Air Quality Management District, Les Fife- BCC Burn Coordinator, Harry Krug-Colusa County APCD, Jim Wagoner-Butte County AQMD, Gabe Ruiz, Dennis King and Jeff Lancero- ARB.

After various discussions the group came up with the following recommendations:

1. Better understanding of the fall program is important because this allows burning of the optimum number of acres available to be burned. Returning unused acres to Les for redistribution is not taken full advantage of by air districts.
2. Growers do not take advantage of early fall burning. They should be informed of this and educated how to better use this time. Growers will be at the top of the burn list but will not burn. This does not utilize the burn program to its full potential especially in years when water is short.
3. Growers also may receive acres to burn and not burn them only to return the acres to the air district late in the afternoon when the burn hours have passed or it is otherwise too late to give the acres to another grower.
4. Chopping rice straw will put the straw in contact with the ground and winter rains will assist in decomposition better than straw lying on top of the rice stubble.
5. The bailing of rice straw has seen a marked increase the last several years. When fields are to be bailed they usually are not available to be burned as early as non-bailed fields. However, bailing significantly reduces the amount of straw in the field, thus it should reduce the need for rice straw decomposition.

6. We should be uniform on the conversion factor we use for baled rice straw. There is a section in the Smoke Management Program plan that states: **Adjustments for burned acreage** - when a field is baled, grazed, flooded, or straw is substantially reduced due to other factors and there is a request to burn the remaining straw, the district APCO may review the conditions in the field and decide the percentage reduction in acres up to a maximum of 95% of the total acreage.
7. Feather River Air District suggested that they would be willing to redistribute up to half of their acres on North wind days. It was suggested that Sacramento and Placer may have acres available for redistribution on North wind days. This should be discussed further. If this is approved Les could automatically redistribute these acres to other Districts.
8. Les indicated he would discuss the above recommendations at his annual burning training class on September 15 to see if any further thoughts or information is forthcoming.
9. If you want more acres, call Les to let him know and/or to see if there are any available.
10. Most if not all of the above call for increased coordination and education for both the Districts and the growers. It was felt that the California Rice Commission could focus on grower education to help enhance our abilities to cope with the short water supply this fall. It was suggested that these measures apply to this fall and if there is still a water shortage next spring, these should be re-examined at that time.

This information is to be presented to the TAC at their September 19 meeting in Butte County for further discussion.

Respectfully submitted by Mark Black