



In Brief

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM
THE LEGAL SERVICES DIVISION OF
CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU

August 2023

CAFB JOINS MULTIPLE STATE FARM BUREAUS IN COMMENTS REGARDING FEDERAL REGULATION OF TRANSMISSION SITING AND CONSTRUCTION



The State Farm Bureaus responded to a Notice of Intent (“NOI”) and Request for Information (“RFI”) issued by the Grid Deployment Office of the United States Department of Energy (“DOE”) regarding the designation of National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (“NIETCs”). The State Farm Bureaus encouraged DOE to adopt a number of changes and clarifications to the NOI’s proposal to help ensure that NIETC designations do not usurp the roles of state siting processes, the roles the Independent System Operators and Regional Transmission Operators have over transmission planning, and FERC’s limited backstop siting authority.

The comment letter noted that Farm Bureau members will be directly impacted by the designation of NIETCs which enables transmission line developers to seek FERC backstop authorization. The threat that eminent domain may be exercised for transmission line projects, when those projects may not be

the right solutions for grid constraints or congestion, raises significant concerns. A copy of the comment letter can be accessed [here](#).

Staff contact: Karen Mills, (916) 561-5655 or kmills@cbbf.com

DRAFT VINEYARD PERMIT REGULATING THE NORTH COAST



On June 30, 2023, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board released its draft Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Vineyards and supporting Draft Environmental Impact Report for public comment. Comments are due August 30, 2023. CABB, Mendocino County Farm Bureau, and Sonoma County Farm Bureau are urging vineyard members to submit comments. The draft order is available [here](#).

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STATE WATER BOARD RELEASES DRAFT ORDER CHANGING AG ORDER 4.0

On June 16, 2023, the State Water Board released its draft order on the petitions seeking State Board review of the Central Coast Regional Water Board's Ag Order 4.0. Ag Order 4.0 was adopted by the Regional Board in 2021 and was petitioned to the State Board for review by agricultural groups, including CABB, as well as environmental groups. The ag petitioners, including CABB, submitted comments on August 11, 2023. The State Board will hold a public meeting to receive oral comments and consider adoption of the Draft Order at its September 19, 2023, Board Meeting. The draft order is available [here](#).

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DRAFT PERMIT FOR DISCHARGES FROM AGRICULTURAL LANDS REGULATING VENTURA AND L.A. COUNTIES OUT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The Los Angeles Regional Board will hold a Board meeting on September 28, 2023, to consider proposed General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Agricultural Lands within Los Angeles and Ventura Counties (General WDRs). Comments are due on August 18, 2023. The proposed General WDRs can be found [here](#).

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PUBLIC WORKSHOPS ON UPCOMING CHANGES TO THE SAN DIEGO REGIONAL WATER BOARD'S AG ORDERS

The San Diego Regional Board will be holding three public workshops this week to discuss proposed changes to the Ag Orders and receive comments from stakeholders. The San Diego Regional Board anticipates releasing the revised Ag Orders for formal public review and comment later this year. The San Diego Water Board will conduct the public workshops at the following times and locations:

1. August 15, 2023, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM in person. Rancho California Water District 42135 Winchester Road Temecula, CA 92590
2. August 18, 2023, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM [Link to register for Zoom meeting](#)
3. August 22, 2023, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM in person. San Diego Farm Bureau 420 South Broadway, Suite 200 Escondido, CA 92025

Additional information is available [here](#).

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WATER QUALITY FEES



The State Water Board is proposing a 5.8% increase in the per acre annual fee each operation must pay based on acreage of irrigated lands. The item will be heard at the State Water Board on September 19, 2023. Annual fees are described on the [State Water Board's Fee Schedule](#) website.

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FARM BUREAU FILES REPLY BRIEF IN PACIFICORP GENERAL RATE CASE

Farm Bureau filed its Reply Brief on August 11, 2023, in PacifiCorp's General Rate Case (GRC). PacifiCorp and Cal Advocates Opening Briefs remained largely true to their prior testimony and Farm Bureau's Reply Brief focused on PacifiCorp's lack acceptance of the cumulative impacts of their proposal as well as the failures to produce sufficient cost/benefit information in order to properly address wildfire mitigation and vegetation management (WFVM) expenses in the GRC proceeding which has separate requirements than the Wildfire Mitigation Plan process.

Farm Bureau reemphasized several other points from its Opening Brief and remains optimistic the Commission will provide ratepayer relief on Return on Equity and disallow WFVM funding until proper analysis is provided. A decision is anticipated in the fourth quarter of 2023.

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CALIFORNIA MINIMUM WAGE TO RISE TO \$16 ON JAN. 1; CAFB QUESTIONS THE INCREASE

Per California Labor Code section 1182.12, subdivision (c)(1), the director of the California Department of Finance issued on July 31 a notice that the state's minimum wage will be \$16 an hour in 2024. The 2023 minimum wage is \$15.50.

The minimum salary of a qualifying executive, administrative, or professional employee classified as

exempt from minimum wage, overtime premium pay, and time-recordkeeping requirements in 2024 will be \$1,280 per week (monthly equivalent: \$5,547; annual equivalent: \$66,560). The 2023 minimum weekly salary is \$1,240 (monthly equivalent: \$5,374; annual equivalent: \$64,480).

On August 10, California Farm Bureau's Legal Services Division sent to the director of the Department of Finance a letter questioning the calculation the agency used in setting the minimum wage at \$16 for 2024. The letter asserts that the unusual method specified in the statute for determining whether the minimum wage is to be increased—and if so, by how much—in fact warrants no increase for 2024.

The letter further notes that even under a more typical and straightforward calculation based simply on the increase calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics of 2.3 percent in the U.S. Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) from July 2022 through June 2023, the minimum wage in 2024 should be only \$15.90.

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UTILITY COMPANIES WARN CUSTOMERS ABOUT POSSIBLE SCAMS



CAFB members have reported receiving apparent scam calls regarding unwarranted past due account payments, noting that the incoming calls reflect phone numbers similar to recognized utility numbers.

PG&E provides the following guidance regarding possible scams:

Customers report calls or emails from scammers posing as PG&E. These include attempts to collect payments from prepaid cards or sell a service. Beware of requests for your personal information.

[GET MORE SCAM DETAILS AND PREVENTION TIPS](#)

Report suspected scams.

Scam call: [Submit a Telephone Scam Report Form](#).

Scam email: ScamReporting@pge.com.

Southern California Edison (SCE) provides the following recommendations regarding potential scams: Beware of Scams – SCE does not have a disconnection department and an SCE agent will not call you

to demand payment over the phone. They do not accept prepaid cards, like money-pack, cryptocurrencies like bitcoin, or payment apps like Cash-App, Zelle, or Venmo. Visit www.sce.com/scamalert

San Diego Gas and Electric Company recommends that if you are suspicious, please call 800-411-7343.

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