



Gallo Winery to pay penalty for discharge threatening water quality in Merced River

Half of penalty amount to be applied to environmental project in Livingston

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RANCHO CORDOVA – E. & J. Gallo Winery has agreed to pay a penalty of \$378,668 in connection with an Aug. 9, 2021, discharge into the Merced River of more than 90,000 gallons of wastewater mixed with irrigation well water from the company’s Livingston winemaking facility.

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board first learned of the discharge through a report by a concerned citizen. During its subsequent investigation, board staff confirmed that a discharge had occurred containing elevated levels of potassium, organic matter and salinity, all of which can threaten the health of fish and other aquatic life.

The Central Valley Water Board determined the penalty in this matter using a formula that calculates a number of factors, including an estimate of the size of the discharge, its impact on water quality, a determination of the winery’s culpability and how willing the company was to cooperate with the investigation.

“Protecting the water quality of our creeks and rivers is a core duty of the regional board,” said Clay Rodgers, an assistant executive officer of the board. “Discharges like these put the health of our waterways at risk, and the penalty reflects the seriousness of this violation. Gallo has also agreed to steps to prevent this from happening again in the future.”

Modesto-based Gallo has installed additional check valves in strategic pipeline locations that should prevent wastewater from backing up and flowing in the irrigation system toward the river outlet.

Half of the penalty amount will be dedicated to what is known as a supplemental environmental project, which will pay for a portion of Merced County's Hagaman Park restroom septic tank and leach field relocation project in Livingston. Gallo will pay the remaining \$189,334 to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account.

[The Central Valley Water Board](#) is a state agency responsible for protecting water quality and ensuring beneficial uses such as aquatic habitat and human health for 11,350 miles of streams, 579,110 acres of lakes, and the largest contiguous groundwater basin in California. It is the largest of nine regional boards, encompassing 60,000 square miles, or about 40 percent of the state. Thirty-eight of 58 counties are either completely or partially within the board's boundaries, formed by the crests of the Sierra Nevada on the east, the Coast Ranges and Klamath Mountains on the west, the Oregon border on the north, and the Tehachapi Mountains on the south.