

## Sun setting on water quality exemptions

Traces of diazinon are in the Sacramento River. Chlorpyrifos has been discovered between the banks of the San Joaquin. Federal officials say tiny amounts of these and other pollutants impair hundreds of California rivers, creeks, streams and sloughs.

The environmental group DeltaKeepers has filed a series of petitions and lawsuits to require cleanup of California surface waters. "There are 5 million acre-feet of tail water coming from agricultural fields in California, transported through 6,000 to 15,000 miles of drainage channels to an unknown number of outfalls, at unknown locations with unknown pollutants," DeltaKeepers executive director Bill Jennings says. "We need to identify these."

Farmers are also concerned, says John Garner, a Glenn County farmer who chairs the California Farm Bureau Federation's water advisory committee.

"Our livelihood depends on being ecologically balanced," Garner says. "Farmers are problem-solvers. We want to sit down with people involved in the process, come up with a workable solution, do it and get on with farming."

The federal Clean Water Act of 1972 set the stage for the current controversy. The law requires states to evaluate surface waters in order to determine where pollutants are adversely affect-



California agriculture's exemption from Clean Water Act provisions is set to expire in 2003. Growers may be required to develop plans for limiting pollution of natural waterways to protect beneficial uses such as fishing, swimming and wildlife habitat. Four-year-old Eugene Long plays in source water for sunflower irrigation on his family's Yolo County farm.

ing beneficial uses, such as fishing, swimming and wildlife habitat. It also requires that sources of pollutants be identified and then limited. (Total maximum daily load [TMDL] limits must be established for each pertinent pollutant in regulated waterways.) As a result, California compiled a list of 509 impaired waterways and began efforts to clean them up.

The California Water Code, adopted in 1982, also requires those who discharge wastewater into California's streams and rivers to submit a report to the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Industries and municipalities have been submitting the waste discharge reports, but all

## Letters

### Climate debate heats up

Too much space was spent on global warming in the May-June 2002 issue. The editorial points out how little we know about global climate change. The authors also say that global climate change will occur in longer periods than 50 to 100 years. Faced with that uncertainty they propose we should "emphasize measures that reduce the apparent driving forces behind global climate change." The "scientists" pushing the global warming idea never seem to consider factors such as increased output of energy from the sun or subtle changes in the earth's orbit. They concentrate on activities of man as the driving force. The earth has been much colder (glaciers) and warmer than it currently is. Industrial mankind wasn't around for those changes. I suggest we recognize that global climate change occurs but science hasn't yet discovered all of the possible causes and certainly can't interpret the interactions of all the possible causes.

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*Bryan Weare ("Global climate change will affect air, water in California," Cal Ag 56(3):89-96) responds:*

*The reader states that scientists "never seem to consider factors such as increased output of energy from the sun or subtle changes in the earth's orbit." This is incorrect. The Hadley model, as well as many others, has taken into account our best understanding of solar output changes over the time frame of decades to centuries. Solar orbital changes work only on much longer times of many thousands of years.*

*Second, the reader notes that the earth's climate has been colder and warmer than it currently is, and that these changes occurred long before industrial mankind. Nothing in the review article suggests that climate change does not exist on longer glacial time scales. However, human activity is apparently leading to relatively large changes in climate at a rate much faster than has been seen in the recent geological past or is likely without human intervention. Of course climate is always changing. The important policy factor is whether or not the rate of change is exceeding our ability to accommodate it without large disruptions in our social and economic institutions.*

