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MONTEREY

Water Quality Alliance gets environmental award

The Agriculture Water Quality Alliance was honored Tuesday with the state's highest environmental honor.

It was awarded a 2005 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award in the category of Ecosystem and Watershed Stewardship.

The alliance, a regional partnership spearheaded by the agriculture industry and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, works to reduce agricultural runoff and protect the sanctuary and its watersheds.

Since 1999, the agricultural alliance has worked to reduce the runoff of agricultural-related sediments, nutrients and pesticides from a six-county region draining to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

More than 1,000 farmers and ranchers have participated in water quality education programs, developed water quality plans for their individual properties and implemented conservation management practices. Approximately 450,000 tons of soil are prevented from reaching the sanctuary annually.

Alliance partners include the sanctuary, the Central Coast Agriculture Water Quality Coalition representing six county Farm Bureaus, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, six Resource Conservation Districts, and the University of California Cooperative Extension.

For information, visit www.awqa.org