



# Stanislaus County Water Advisory Committee

## Minutes

January 29. 9:00 a.m.

Stanislaus County Farm Bureau

### Members Present:

Caitie Diemel  
Navjot Athwal  
Tom Orvis  
Sean Roddy  
Rod Vilas

Jim Mortensen  
Cooper Rossiter  
Rachelle Antinetti  
Katie Staack  
Terry Withrow

Tim Sanders  
Daniel Bays  
Louis Brichetto  
Edward Tobias

### Members Absent:

Larry Byrd  
Joseph Day

Vince Dkyzeul  
Christy McKinnon

- I. Call to Order at 9:00 am (The entire meeting can be viewed at [Water Advisory Committee - Groundwater Resources - Environmental Resources - Stanislaus County](#) and by selecting the video option for January 29, 2025, Water Advisory Committee Meeting)
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Public Comment
- IV. Roll Call

**V. Action Items (subject to formal vote):**

A quorum of voting members was present

- I. Approval of September 25, 2024, Meeting Minutes  
Motion: Jim Mortensen  
Second: Tim Sanders

**VI. Informational Items (not subject to a formal vote):**

- I. **Robert Kostlivi** – Robert Kostlivi discussed Proposition 4 having passed, allocating \$10 billion for critical water infrastructure, wildfire prevention, and financial resilience projects across the state. This funding will go toward repairing aging dams and expanding groundwater recharge efforts.

The distinction between directives from the County Board of Supervisors and those from the Environmental Resources Department was discussed. A past meeting on November 13 led to some confusion regarding a staff member's statements, and the department acknowledges that clearer communication is necessary moving forward. They will ensure that distinctions between county-level decisions and environmental resource directives are made clearer in the future.

Proposition 218 and proposed water pumping fees were addressed. There has been pushback from the agricultural community due to high costs, with concerns raised at an Ag Advisory Committee meeting. Officials want to ensure that all voices are heard and that the financial impact of these fees is carefully considered.

[Essential Funds Approved for Recharge Facilities - Valley Ag Voice](#)

[CA Election Results: Voters approve Prop. 4 Environment Bond - CalMatters](#)

- II. **Mike Tietze** – Mike Tietze presented on the proposed ETSGSA Prop 218 groundwater use fee, outlining its purpose, structure, and implementation.

The ETSGSA must fund compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), including the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and Groundwater Demand Reduction Plan. Failure to implement these plans could result in state intervention, which would impose mandatory metering, pumping limits, additional fees, and penalties. To maintain local control, ETSGSA has an agreement with TID to receive up to 35,000 AF/year of replenishment water, supporting groundwater recharge and sustainability efforts.

The sustainability strategy aims to reduce groundwater demand through land repurposing and rotational fallowing programs with incentive payments. Additionally, increasing water supply via recharge projects and TID replenishment water is a priority. The proposed groundwater use fee will help fund these initiatives alongside grants and cost-sharing with WTSGSA.

The fee revenue will be used for projects that increase surface water supply, such as purchasing replenishment water and funding transitional water programs. It will also support groundwater demand reduction through the Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) and rotational fallowing incentives. Additionally, funds will be allocated for well mitigation efforts to protect domestic wells from declining water levels.

<https://turlockgroundwater.org/prop-218-groundwater-use-fee>

- III. Margaret Caligaris, Trihydro Corporation** – Margaret Caligaris presented funding options for implementing the Delta Mendota (DM) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The GSP, along with the Well Metering Monitoring and Reporting Program (WMMRPG) and Pumping Reduction Plan (PRP), was adopted in 2024 and will be implemented starting in 2025.

Key funding needs include GSP administration, groundwater monitoring, data collection, pumping reduction workshops, and the Domestic Well Mitigation Program. Stanislaus County must contribute to a mitigation fund, paying annually from FY26 to FY28. Additional costs include well registration fees

and expenses related to GSP administration and legal requirements, with Stanislaus County covering 95% of the shared Delta-Mendota Subbasin costs that are allocated to the Northwestern Delta-Mendota GSA and Merced County pays the remaining 5%.

To recover costs, a one-time well registration fee is being considered, along with other possible fees based on groundwater extraction volume. Potential funding sources include service fees, state grants, and Prop 218 assessments.

The funding plan is expected to be finalized by December 31, 2025, with outreach beginning in early 2026. Funds will be collected by the end of 2026 to meet GSP and PRP goals, and fee structures will be reviewed regularly to adjust for changing costs and new grant opportunities.

#### **IV. Marina Deligiannis, Stantec – County Drought Plan Update (SB522)**

Marina Deligiannis could not attend this meeting, and plans on presenting this update at a later meeting.

#### **V. Julia Berry – Updates from the Stanislaus East Mutual Water Company CA Mutual Benefit Corporation, formed November 2022.**

Berry presented on the Stanislaus East Mutual Water Company, which was formed in 2002 to support growers in the non-district East management area who lack access to surface water. The company currently serves less than 11,000 irrigated acres out of the 38,000 acres in the region, with some growers receiving water through OID's tenure program and possible future access through MID's groundwater replenishment program. However, many growers remain entirely dependent on groundwater, raising sustainability concerns. Berry emphasized the importance of managing groundwater effectively, particularly as the Modesto Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is being reviewed, with potential groundwater allocations and mitigation efforts planned for 2027.

To address long-term water challenges, Berry stressed the need for a whole-basin approach, encouraging all growers—including those with surface water

access—to participate in bringing more water into the basin. She highlighted concerns about some growers not using available surface water efficiently and the need for better infrastructure. While she initially considered seeking county support for infrastructure funding, forming a new water district now appears to be the most viable solution. Berry urged growers to stay engaged in upcoming public workshops and collaborate on efforts to improve water access and sustainability in the non-district East area.

**VI. Margaret Caligaris, Trihydro Corporation – Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Plan Periodic Update and 2024 Amendment**

The 2024 ESJ Subbasin updates primarily involved incorporating new data sets and general data management efforts. The January meeting was canceled, so there are no current updates regarding plan renewal. More information may be available after the next meeting in early February.

**V. Round Table Discussion:**

The discussion revolved around the ongoing challenges of managing water resources, particularly the tensions between East and West areas regarding water access and management. Participants express frustration over the lack of collaboration and the state's increasing involvement in local water issues. The committee discussed the need for flexible policies that allow landowners to adopt solutions like voluntary fallowing, recharge, and groundwater credits to navigate unpredictable water availability. Additionally, there was concern about the mismanagement of wells, with some advocating for a shift in well construction practices to mitigate issues like groundwater depletion and cones of depression. The discussion emphasized the importance of working together, both locally and with the state, to solve water-related problems for the long-term benefit of the community.

**VI. Meeting adjourned at 10:55 am**

**VII. Scheduling of Next Meeting:**

Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.  
Meeting location: Stanislaus Farm Bureau,  
1201 L St. Modesto, Ca