

Spring 2024 ETGSA News Update

East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

The Proposition 218 SGMA Operational Assessment Passed!

ETSGSA's Proposition 218 SGMA Operational Assessment passed following a vote during a Public Hearing and Special Meeting of the Board of Directors on April 2. The assessment imposes a per acre fee on irrigated and non-irrigated land to fund the operation of the GSA so we sustain groundwater as a reliable water supply and maintain local control over its management. Of the 859 ballots mailed to landowners, 335 were returned and counted, with one invalid ballot received (not marked yes or no). The result was a weighted assessment vote of \$920,485.76 in favor and \$229,970.80 against. After announcement of the results, the Board unanimously passed Resolution 2024-01, which authorizes the levy and collection of the ETSGSA SGMA Operational Assessment to fund the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget shortfall and the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget. The Board also unanimously voted to adopt the ETSGSA SGMA Operational Assessment Appeal Process Policy. Under this policy, landowners that feel their parcel has been incorrectly designated as irrigated can appeal to have it reclassified as non-irrigated and pay the lower assessment rate if they agree not to pump groundwater except for domestic and stock use. (Owners of parcels that are irrigated only with surface water can also apply to have their parcels re-designated as non-irrigated.) Landowners within the GSA should expect to receive an invoice for a supplemental assessment in May 2024. The supplemental assessment will cover the period from April to June 2024 and will be mailed directly by ETSGSA. Eastside Water District (EWD) will pay this assessment for its members, and landowners outside of EWD must pay their assessment directly to ETSGSA. ETSGSA will also mail all landowners a copy of the Appeals Process Policy with their supplemental assessment. For more information, please visit the Prop 218 Landing Page using the QR code provided or contact the ETSGSA Board Secretary, Karen Whipp.

The Proposition 218 Groundwater Use Fee Study is Starting

An additional Proposition 218 process is being started to evaluate the water supply projects, recharge projects and demand reduction management actions needed offset overdraft and achieve the sustainability goals in our Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), and the extraction fees required to fund them. ETSGSA plans to set groundwater use reduction targets and implement the extraction fees in tiers that include a base rate

for using an estimated sustainable groundwater allocation for each parcel, and escalating surcharge fees for groundwater use above that amount. The surcharge pumping tiers will be phased out over time to decrease pumping to long-term sustainable levels. Groundwater use will be measured using evapotranspiration (ET) data from fly overs that will be analyzed by a company we have hired called Land IQ. The GSA will hold public workshops throughout the remainder of 2024 to inform our members and to receive valuable feedback. We expect that the Proposition 218 Groundwater Extraction Fee ballot process will occur in early 2025, with the adoption of groundwater use fees occurring during the 2025 growing season if the ballot measure is successful.

Groundwater Accounting Platform and Rules and Regulations Development

To help manage groundwater use and support our proposed fee program, ETSGSA is developing a Groundwater Accounting Platform which is expected to be launched on a trial basis in June of 2024 and rolled out for official use during the 2025 growing season. The Platform will allow growers to view and track their estimated consumptive groundwater use as measured monthly through ET. While growers are creating accounts and learning how to navigate the platform in 2024, ETSGSA's platform consultant will develop and incorporate additional functionality for the 2025 growing season. We will be establishing groundwater accounting rules and regulations concurrently with platform development. The rules and regulations for groundwater accounting will cover topics such as:

- The creation and pooling of water accounts;
- Groundwater credits, trading and carryover rules; and,
- Calculation of consumed groundwater that accounts for precipitation and surface water delivery.

The ETSGSA Board expects to adopt Groundwater Accounting Rules in early 2025. ETSGSA will host a series of workshops this summer to help growers use the platform and seek feedback to guide the establishment of rules and regulations. The tentative schedule for the groundwater accounting workshops is provided on the next page.



Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program Grant

ETSGSA has assembled its project team and is beginning development of a Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) Plan. This work is funded by an \$8.89 million grant by the California Department of Conservation. MLRP's vision is to promote the development of strategic approaches to agricultural land repurposing that reduce groundwater demand while increasing recharge and providing other beneficial land use opportunities. ETSGSA's approach focuses on integrating repurposing practices into working lands to allow agricultural activities to continue. An effective MLRP is critical for ETSGSA to meet our groundwater demand reduction goals, avoid state intervention, and ensure a robust regional agricultural economy for the future. A scoping workshop with our partner agencies is tentatively scheduled for June; please stay tuned to learn how this program can benefit you and how you can get involved.

Stay Current on ETSGSA News and Events



Please provide your email to
Karen Whipp
kareneastsidewater@att.net
and visit the **Turlock Groundwater website**
(QR code above)
to stay current on all ETSGSA news and events.

Upcoming Workshops

May 14

Land IQ Evapotranspiration Workshop

9:00 - 11:00 am
Cortez Hall, Ballico

June 25

Groundwater Accounting Platform Launch and Account Creation

9:00 - 11:00 am
Location TBD

**July/
August**

Groundwater Use Fees: Fee Study, Usage Tiers and Pricing

Time TBD
Cortez Hall, Ballico

**October/
November**

Land IQ Evapotranspiration Workshop

Time TBD
Cortez Hall, Ballico