

**INTERVIEW INVITATION/REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT OF SOFTWARE TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A  
PUMPING MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IN THE  
EAST TURLOCK SUBBASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY**

January 25, 2024

The East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (“ETSGSA”) is issuing an Interview Invitation/Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to qualified firms/professionals for the development of software to support the implementation of a Pumping Management Framework to quantify consumptive groundwater use and support implementation of groundwater demand reduction strategies. This software will serve a crucial role in ETSGSA’s efforts to implement the joint Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (“GSP”) pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (“SGMA”).

Date of Advertisement: January 25, 2024

Deadline to indicate interest and submit questions: 5:00 p.m. on January 31, 2024

GSA to notify respondents regarding interviews: February 1, 2024

**BACKGROUND**

ETSGSA is a Joint Powers Authority (“JPA”) formed in 2017 in response to the requirements of SGMA. ETSGSA’s member agencies include Ballico-Cortez Water District (“BCWD”), Eastside Water District (“EWD”), Merced County, Merced Irrigation District, and Stanislaus County. ETSGSA developed a GSP in cooperation with the West Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (“WTSGSA”). ETSGSA serves more than 153,000 acres, of which approximately 85,000 acres are currently irrigated, primarily by groundwater. There is a population of less than 5,000 people within ETSGSA’s boundaries. Surface water sources within ETSGSA’s boundaries include the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers and Sand, Mustang, and Dry Creeks. Collectively, the use of groundwater in the Turlock subbasin exceeds the annual recharge, but the GSP contains a plan to be sustainable before 2042, in compliance with SGMA.

ETSGSA is working to improve groundwater management by implementing SGMA compliance activities including monitoring and annual reporting, addressing data gaps through model refinement and investigations, developing a groundwater extraction measurement and management framework, planning and implementing recharge projects, and development of a Multi-benefit Land Repurposing (“MLRP”) program.

**ABOUT THE PUMPING MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Pumping Management Framework, as outlined in the GSP, will provide a suite of administrative procedures, programs, and policies that describe how ETSGSA and WTSGSA plan to quantify and monitor groundwater extractions. The Pumping Management Framework is envisioned to consist of four Management Actions, referenced below, that will be implemented in an adaptive manner as determined by the Turlock Subbasin GSAs to meet the Turlock Subbasin’s sustainability goal.

ETSGSA’s immediate need is for a qualified firm/professional to develop or adapt existing software to quantify consumptive groundwater use within ETSGSA’s boundaries to support ETSGSA’s Groundwater Extraction Reporting Program, which is one of its Management Actions. ETSGSA has contracted with Land IQ to provide remote sensing data estimating consumptive groundwater use within ETSGSA’s

boundaries. The data generated by Land IQ will include evapotranspiration (“ET”) and precipitation data reported on a field and parcel basis. ETSGSA also intends to allow for the voluntary reporting of metered groundwater extraction data by landowners as an alternative to estimating groundwater use via ET data.

The proposed software should be able to accommodate and/or support development and implementation of the following additional Management Actions, if adopted in the future:

**Groundwater Quantification and Pumping Management Program:** The development of a Groundwater Quantification and Pumping Management Program that would enable the monitoring of groundwater use and enable oversight of pumping as needed to stay within the Subbasin’s sustainable yield. We note that at this time, the sustainable yield is not yet known. The GSA intends to establish pumping reduction targets that would apply to irrigated parcels to decrease pumping over time to reduce known overdraft, while also collecting the data needed to better define the Subbasin’s sustainable yield and implement the GSP to achieve sustainability by 2042.

**Groundwater Extraction Fee Program:** ETSGSA plans to develop and propose a volumetric fee based on groundwater use, in compliance with Proposition 218. The ETSGSA Board expects to start exploring options for such a fee in April 2024.

**Groundwater Pumping Credit and Trading Program:** ETSGSA plans to develop policies that may contain credit, transfer and/or trading concepts to provide operational flexibility for groundwater pumpers.

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDENTS**

Respondents shall indicate their interest in participating in the interview process via email to ETSGSA’s Pumping Management Program Lead, Savannah Tjaden, at [stjaden@formationenv.com](mailto:stjaden@formationenv.com), with copies to ETSGSA’s General Manager, Mike Tietze, at [mtietze@formationenv.com](mailto:mtietze@formationenv.com) and the Technical Advisory Committee Chair, Sarah Woolf at [sarahwoolf@me.com](mailto:sarahwoolf@me.com). Any questions regarding this RFQ shall be submitted in writing by **5:00 p.m. on January 31, 2024.**

The email notifying the GSA of the respondent’s interest shall include attachments that summarize the following:

- A brief summary the respondent’s proposed team and their experience and qualifications;
- A brief summary of work on similar projects, and available information about the platform developed by the Respondent and its use by other GSAs; and
- A Schedule of Charges for the proposed project.

Please provide a brief summary to help the GSA understand the proposed project team and the nature of the existing software portals the Respondents have implemented for other GSAs.

## **Interview Day Logistics & Agenda**

Up to three respondents will be selected to participate in presentations and interviews with the GSA’s Technical Advisory Committee. Interviews will be conducted on Tuesday February 6<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Cortez Hall (12937 North Cortez Avenue Turlock, California 95380).

- **8:00 – 8:50 Land IQ Presentation on ET**
- *8:50 – 9:00 Wrap up & Break*
- **9:00 – 10:00 Interview #1**

- 10:00 – 10:15 Wrap up & Break
- **10:15 – 11:15 Interview #2**
- 11:15 – 11:30 Wrap up & Break
- **11:30 – 12:30 Interview #3**

*All Respondents are welcome to attend the Land IQ presentation. Interviews will be conducted separately.*

Each presenter will have approximately 1 hour to present to and answer questions from the ETSGSA Technical Advisory Committee (“TAC”). Please plan to leave approximately 15 minutes for questions and discussion. Cortez Hall is equipped with internet access, and an HDMI cable will be provided to allow presenters to display their laptops on a larger screen or to log onto existing internet portals or resources.

If requested, ETSGSA will provide a Zoom link for interviewees who wish to present remotely or include remote participants.

The presentation shall include the following:

- A brief description of the company background, qualifications, and experience in related software development projects.
- A brief description of the project team (the project manager and key staff), including any subcontractors, and their anticipated roles.
- A brief description of the company’s general software development process and practices.
- Introduction to the interviewee’s groundwater accounting software.
  - When was it built?
  - How was development funded?
  - Who is currently using the software? What was the reception from GSAs and users?
- Discussion of the team’s experience developing and deploying the groundwater accounting software in other GSAs, including any lessons learned the interviewee would like the TAC to consider.
- Overview of current and planned groundwater accounting software functionality.
  - Primary workflows that will be required from the software by Summer of 2024 include:
    - The account setup and user onboarding process.
    - How users can view and engage with ET data at the field, groups of fields, and parcel level.
    - Estimating groundwater use from ET data.
    - Administrative tools to support GSA staff with customer support.
    - Ongoing data management and updating data on the platform.
  - Secondary workflows are envisioned to be implemented in 2025 and include:
    - Tracking a groundwater allowance or pumping limit including the potential to carryover, pool and trade/sell unused credits.
    - Administering a volume-based groundwater use fee program.
    - Allowing for the submission of groundwater extraction data (well meter data) as an alternative to ET data.
    - Processing appeals to ET data groundwater use using well meter data.
    - Management of fallowed fields.
    - Possible integration with ongoing efforts to strategically retire land through the Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program.
    - Functionality for GSA program tracking and management.

*The presentation does not need to go into detail about secondary workflows. An indication of “Complete”, “In development”, “Planned/Under Consideration”, or “Not Built” is sufficient.*

- For any planned functionality, include an expected timeframe in which the functionality will be available.
- The interviewee’s general approach to implementing the interviewee’s software product in ETSGSA including a high-level estimate of a timeline and costs. Please note that if selected as the preferred consultant, ETSGSA will request a full proposal to be developed with GSA staff and TAC input.

The schedule for the selection process for beginning work is envisioned as follows:

- February 6, 2024 – Interviews will be conducted. Regular ETSGSA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting to immediately follow. The TAC will select a preferred consultant.
- February 7, 2024 - The TAC will notify the selected Preferred Respondent and invite the Preferred Respondent to develop a proposal to complete the work.
- March 7, 2024 – The Preferred Respondent will submit a proposal to complete the work. GSA staff will be available to answer questions prior to the March 7 deadline.
- March 12, 2024 – The proposal will be brought before the TAC by the Preferred Respondent for consideration and recommendation to the Board.
- March 28, 2024 – The contract with the Preferred Consultant is brought before the Board for consideration and approval.
- April 1, 2024 – Start of development work.

The implementation schedule for software development to support the Pumping Management Framework is envisioned as follows (subject to change):

- Summer 2024 (targeting June 2024) - Rollout of the software to ETSGSA growers and stakeholders.
  - The initial rollout will focus on educating users on ET (consumptive use) concepts and providing access to Land IQ ET data.
- By December 2024 the software is envisioned to quantify and communicate to users their total groundwater use from ET data for the 2024 irrigation season (March – October).
- ETSGSA plans to develop policies related to groundwater use and develop and propose a volumetric fee structure in parallel with software development.
- By March 2025, the software is envisioned to support the implementation of proposed volumetric fees based on groundwater use.

Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- The team’s technical qualifications and experience in successfully implementing similar software platforms (20%).
- The team’s capacity to complete the work within the timeframe required (20%).
- The software’s primary and secondary workflow alignment with the GSA’s program objectives, ability to adapt to future requirements, and likelihood of successful implementation and user acceptance (30%).
- Estimated costs (30%).