

## Responses to Questions for East Turlock Subbasin GSA (ETSGSA) Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan (MALRP) Request for Proposals (RFP)

1. Is the MALRP intended to cover the entire Turlock Subbasin, or just the ETSGSA portion thereof?

***Response: The MALRP will be developed for the entire Turlock Subbasin and potential projects throughout the entire subbasin will be potentially eligible for the program. It is envisioned that most of the repurposing projects will be implemented in the eastern portion of the subbasin where the need for groundwater demand reduction is the greatest.***

2. Are there any other GSA-specific activities or initiatives that the MALRP development will need to interface with (e.g., other SGMA projects/management actions), and if so what types of coordination are anticipated to be needed?

***Response: The MARLP planning process will need to interface with the planning and implementation of recharge projects and demand management actions that overlap with this program. Please assume a coordination meeting will occur monthly and that consideration of this coordination will need to be considered during drafting of the MALRP.***

3. Related to Task 1:

- a. The MLRP Regional Block Grant Application lists partner Entities and Collaborating Entities and describes their role, with further details provided in letters of commitment/support. Many of these descriptions include activities that appear in the RFP scope of work under Task 1, including:
  - i. “developing and implementing permitting strategies” and “providing stakeholder outreach and engagement” (Merced and Stanislaus Counties)
  - ii. “Helping to guide MALRP scoping and development” (TID)
  - iii. “helping to guide the MALRP scoping and development process”, “outreach and assistance for engagement” and “identifying and prioritizing opportunities for area-appropriate project types and incentives” (EWD)
  - iv. “Refining the GRAT and other geospatial analysis tools to evaluate the best locations for implementing different land repurposing strategies for optimal recharge, flood attenuation, and habitat benefits” and “assisting in identifying regional and programmatic strategies to streamline permitting” (Sustainable Conservation)
  - v. “identifying suitable sites for project implementation”, “supporting project permitting efforts”, and “conducting education, outreach, and engagement of stakeholders: (EMRCD)
- b. Given the above Partner and Collaborator contributions list in (a) above, are there aspects of the RFP scope of work that have already been completed, in part or in whole, by the partners/collaborator? Is the selected consultant’s role anticipated to be more coordination than technical work related to MALRP development?

***Response: The MALRP consultant will be the primary lead responsible for developing a MALRP for the Turlock Subbasin. This will include coordination, support and review of work by the project team during plan development. A scoping meeting will be convened after consultant selection to finalize the division of responsibilities between the MALRP consultant and the other project team members, and the scope of work and cost of the work by the MALRP***

*consultant may be adjusted at that time. Additional guidance is presented below. RFP respondents are requested to clearly outline the assumptions and limitations incorporated into their proposals.*

*We offer the following additional information to help clarify the roles of the partners/collaborators:*

- *Merced and Stanislaus Counties will perform an advisory role throughout the MALRP development process that includes outreach to constituents, ensuring strategies included in the MALRP are aligned with county policy and land use planning objectives, and participation in a Project Steering Committee review.*
- *WTSGSA and its member, Turlock Irrigation District (TID) are ETSGSA's partner in development of the MALRP. They will perform an advisory role to help develop and review the plan and provide specific information regarding implementation of repurposing strategies within WTSGSA as well as site selection, design and scoring criteria for MLRP strategies involving solar power development.*
- *Eastside Water District (EWD) is a member of the ETSGSA Joint Powers Authority. EWD will help with outreach efforts to their members to help inform the development of MALRP strategies, the project prioritization and scoring framework, and an appropriate landowner incentive structure. EWD will also engage with their members to identify potential areas where repurposing strategies can be implemented along Dry Creek, Sand Creek, and Mustang Creek.*
- *Sustainable Conservation will be the lead partner on spatial analysis to identify optimal areas for implementation for optimal MLRP strategies, and will also be responsible for revising the existing Turlock Subbasin GRAT as a tool for site selection and scoring of candidate sites for various strategies included in the MALRP. They will also provide a key technical and strategic support role for development of MRLP strategies, the site selection and prioritization process, and the permitting plan.*
- *East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (ESRCD) and East Merced Resource Conservation District (EMRCD) will provide technical and strategic input into development of the MALRP repurposing strategies, outreach programs and implementation strategies. They will lead outreach and engagement targeted to growers in their communities. This outreach will be used to gather information that will help inform the development of the MALRP.*
- *A community engagement partner will be selected to lead outreach and engagement efforts to disadvantaged communities, tribes, small grower operations and other underserved communities.*
- *Formation Environmental staff will lead the initial scope development and project role definition in cooperation with the MALRP Plan Consultant, act as the grant manager on behalf of ETSGSA, act at the primary point of contact with the Department of Conservation and act as the primary ETSGSA point of contact for the project team.*

*The MALRP plan consultant will provide the following scopes of work:*

- *Coordinate the work of the project team and integrate the information provided by partners/collaborators into the MALRP.*
- *The MALRP consultant will be responsible to compile, prepare, and edit the MALRP, and to circulate drafts for appropriate review cycles.*

- **Lead development of a permitting plan, engineering standards/BMP sheets for land repurposing strategies, and development of a project evaluation, scoring and selection approach.**
- **Support technical analysis to identify, describe and refine viable MLRP strategies.**
- **Support the economic evaluation and selection of MLRP strategy incentives.**

c. Can the individual MOUs with each partner be provided for review?

**Response: Contracting documents with partners/collaborators are still being executed; however, draft scopes of work are attached. Please note that some of these scope of work are for preliminary engagement to begin project planning during the current fiscal year (through June 2024). Complete scopes of work remain to be developed and will be reviewed with the MALRP consultant.**

d. The MLRP Regional Block Grant Application Proposal Summary mentions using “data from existing models and satellite data” (among other things) to update and refine the GRAT. What model(s) are envisioned in this regard?

**Response: This work is anticipated to be led by Sustainable Conservation with support from Formation and the MALRP consultant. Concepts for the analysis approach to update and refine the GRAT for MLRP application are still being developed by the project team, and the MALRP consultant will have the opportunity to provide input into this effort. Data that may be used in refinement of the GRAT may include water conveyance infrastructure refinement, regional hydrologic, soil-water balance, or evapotranspiration data, soil and geologic data, agronomic data, and various geospatial analysis indices (e.g., topographic wetness index) to name a few.**

4. Related to Task 2:

- a. The last sub-bullet mentions “Permitting-level designs and descriptions of the land repurposing project approaches included in the MALRP to support project implementation and obtaining site specific permits if needed.” How do these “permitting level designs” differ from, or relate to, the “standard plans, specifications, and implementation requirements for land repurposing strategies identified in the MALRP” that are mentioned under Task 1?

**Response: The design components are the same and are intended as standardized conceptual designs that can be duplicated at various sites and used to inform programmatic permitting strategies and review under the existing PEIR for GSP implementation. For permitting purposes, these design packages are also expected include a description of best management practices (BMPs), and avoidance minimization measures, and general programmatic permitting requirements. The information developed is intended to be used to screen and qualify individual projects to a programmatic permitting approach for the MALRP or to be used to help streamline the permitting process, and to determine if site-specific permits and further design refinements are needed.**

5. Related to Task 5:

- a. The RFP describes on subtask as “Manage development of an Outreach and Engagement Plan By Self Help Enterprises with collaboration by ETSGSA staff and other MLRP partners.” Does this mean that the development of the O&E Plan will be done by SHE under the management of the selected consultant, or does it mean that the selected

consultant will develop the O&E Plan? Is a portion of the Task 5 grant budget allocated to SHE for O&E Plan development?

***Response: SHE or another consultant will lead the development and implementation of the O&E Plan with input from the MALRP consultant and other partners/collaborators. Portions of the Task 5 grant budget are allocated to SHE (or a similar consultant) and other partners/collaborators to develop and implement the O&E Plan. Specific responsibilities of partners/collaborators will be defined during the project kickoff and scoping meeting.***

- b. What is the anticipated role of the selected consultant in the implementation of the O&E Plan?

***Response: As described in the RFP, the selected consultant is expected to participate in two workshops.***

6. The “Exception to Terms and Conditions” evaluation criteria is listed as “Pass/Fail”. Does this mean that any exceptions will merit a failing proposal (even though the instructions to bidders state that the proposal shall include “any proposed exceptions to the terms and conditions”)?

***Response: Bidders should provide any exceptions to the Terms and Conditions provided in the example contracting documents provided with the RFP and an explanation for the reason for those exceptions to provide for timely review and discussion. An effort will be made to accommodate reasonable exceptions where possible and in the best interest of ETSGSA, as determined at ETSGSA’s sole discretion. The ultimate decision regarding whether an exception merits a failing proposal will be made by the Board at the recommendation of ETSGSA legal staff.***

**DRAFT PARTNER SCOPE OF WORK DESCRIPTIONS**

## **Sustainable Conservation Scope of Work Description**

### **Task 1: Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan**

- Provide strategic technical support in developing a Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan (MALRP) including:
  - Providing input on plan objectives,
  - Identification and prioritization of scalable alternatives to irrigated agricultural land use, and
  - Input on development of techniques to quantify delivery of scaled benefits.
- Accelerating Restoration Team (AR) to participate in one day of field reconnaissance to evaluate types of restoration projects applicable to the MALRP strategy.
- Begin updates and refinement of the Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Recharge Assessment Tool (GRAT) to allow evaluation of recharge from stormwater runoff and flood flows using various repurposing strategies included in the MALRP.
- Support the identification and prioritization of viable and high-value alternative land uses and agricultural practices that reduce groundwater demand including:
  - Orchard swale rewilding
  - Recropping to less water demanding crops
  - Integration of cover cropping practices
  - Irrigation efficiency
  - Solar and green energy opportunities.
- Support the identification and development of the tools and data needed to evaluate benefits to Disadvantaged Communities (DACs).
- Support the development of a project scoring and prioritization framework.
- Support the development of a project application process.
- Support the development of a project selection process via a Steering Committee

### **Task 2: Project Development and Permitting**

- Provide strategic technical support in developing a MLRP Permit Management Plan including:
  - Providing input on development of an inventory of permitting requirements for the land repurposing approaches identified in the MALRP
  - Review of the restoration related strategies to provide input on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance strategies
  - Strategic advisement for incorporating programmatic permitting approaches for land repurposing project implementation.

### **Task 3: Project Implementation**

- No work will be performed under this task during Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

### **Task 4: Partner/Collaboration Capacity**

- No work is authorized under this task during Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

### **Task 5: Outreach, Education, and Training**

- Provide a strategic technical support role in developing and implementing a Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Plan including:
  - Review of the Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Plan
  - Support the development of concepts for land repurposing strategies, the project prioritization process, incentive structures, and restoration activities to present to stakeholders during outreach and education activities

- Support evaluating and incorporating stakeholder input into the MALRP
- Participate in up to four stakeholder workshops during Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

**Task 6: Monitoring**

- No work will be performed under this Task during Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

**Task 7: General Program Management and Reporting**

- Participate in a field trip to Capinero Creek with the State Support Entity.
- Participate an in-person preliminary scoping meeting with project partners.
- Prepare for and participate in monthly status update meetings with the Department of Conservation via Zoom.
- Participate in monthly Community of Practice meetings with the State Support Entity via Zoom.

DRAFT

## **General Scope of Work for East Merced Resource Conservation District**

Funds from the East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's (ETSGSA) Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) Block Grant awarded by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) will allow the East Merced Resource Conservation District (EMRCD) to build additional capacity to assist with land repurposing efforts in the region. Under the MLRP Block Grant, EMRCD will provide technical assistance in the development and implementation of a Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan (MALRP). Work completed during Fiscal Year 2023/2024 will include the following:

### **Task 4: Partner/Collaboration Capacity**

- Provide strategic technical support in developing a MALRP including:
  - Providing input on plan objectives,
  - Helping ensure MALRP plan is aligned with grower needs, capabilities, and priorities,
  - Assistance with the identification and prioritization of scalable alternatives to irrigated agricultural land use,
  - Providing input for the development of a project scoring and prioritization process,
  - Providing input for the land repurposing incentive structure, and
  - Providing input on the development of a project application process.
- Provide support in development of a Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Plan that is geared towards growers and landowners, including:
  - A schedule and framework for conducting workshops and field meetings,
  - General surveys and feedback request forms, and
  - A framework for evaluating and incorporating the grower feedback into the MALRP.
- Conduct regular (approximately bi-weekly) field meetings with landowners and growers to
  - Educate growers on land repurposing strategies being developed,
  - Evaluate and develop concepts for potential and repurposing projects,
  - Gain an understanding of grower needs and limitation for land repurposing, and
  - Gain an understanding of appropriate incentives for land repurposing projects.
- Help develop and facilitate two (2) grower focused workshops to:
  - Provide an overview of the MLRP including plan development and implementation timelines,
  - Describe how growers and landowners can become more involved in MALRP development, and
  - Provide a timeline for MALRP development and implementation.

### **Task 7: General Program Management and Reporting**

- Participate in a field trip to Capinero Creek with the State Support Entity.
- Participate in an in-person project scoping and kickoff meeting with the project partners.
- At least one designated person to participate in monthly Community of Practice meetings with the State Support Entity
- Prepare for and participate in monthly status update meetings with the DOC if requested.



## **General Scope of Work for East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District**

Funds from the East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's (ETSGSA) Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) Block Grant awarded by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) will allow the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (ESRCD) to build additional capacity to assist with land repurposing efforts in the region. Under the MLRP Block Grant, ESRCD will provide technical assistance in the development and implementation of a Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan (MALRP). Work completed during Fiscal Year 2023/2024 will include the following:

### **Task 4: Partner/Collaboration Capacity**

- Provide strategic technical support in developing a MALRP including:
  - Providing input on plan objectives,
  - Helping ensure MALRP plan is aligned with grower needs, capabilities, and priorities,
  - Assistance with the identification and prioritization of scalable alternatives to irrigated agricultural land use,
  - Providing input for the development of a project scoring and prioritization process,
  - Providing input for the land repurposing incentive structure, and
  - Providing input on the development of a project application process.
- Provide support in development of a Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Plan that is geared towards growers and landowners, including:
  - A schedule and framework for conducting workshops and field meetings,
  - General surveys and feedback request forms, and
  - A framework for evaluating and incorporating the grower feedback into the MALRP.
- Conduct regular (approximately bi-weekly) field meetings with landowners and growers to
  - Educate growers on land repurposing strategies being developed,
  - Evaluate and develop concepts for potential and repurposing projects,
  - Gain an understanding of grower needs and limitation for land repurposing, and
  - Gain an understanding of appropriate incentives for land repurposing projects.
- Help develop and facilitate two (2) grower focused workshops to:
  - Provide an overview of the MLRP including plan development and implementation timelines,
  - Describe how growers and landowners can become more involved in MALRP development, and
  - Provide a timeline for MALRP development and implementation.

### **Task 7: General Program Management and Reporting**

- Participate in a field trip to Capinero Creek with the State Support Entity.
- Participate in an in-person project scoping and kickoff meeting with the project partners.
- At least one designated person to participate in monthly Community of Practice meetings with the State Support Entity
- Prepare for and participate in monthly status update meetings with the DOC if requested.