

Official Notice And Ballot Information Guide East Turlock Groundwater Sustainability Agency's SGMA Operational Assessment

Why Did You Receive This Ballot?

Properties located within the boundaries of East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency ("ETSGSA"), must comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act ("SGMA"), and are at an elevated risk from undesirable results stemming from lowering of groundwater levels, reduction in groundwater storage, depletion of interconnected surface water, and other factors related to management of the Turlock Groundwater Subbasin. Property owners are being asked to vote on a proposed funding measure to replace the GSA's current fee program and support implementation of the Turlock Subbasin GSP. Please read the following information and then complete the enclosed ballot.

Your vote on this ballot measure is important because only returned ballots will be counted. Your ballot is your opportunity to participate in deciding whether or not local funding should be approved for improved water resource management and SGMA compliance for the properties within ETSGSA.

Why Is a Funding Measure Needed?

SGMA mandates that ETSGSA develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan ("GSP") to define and achieve sustainability within its jurisdiction. The GSP was developed and submitted to the State in January 2022. While the State has up to two years to evaluate the GSP, ETSGSA is tasked with carrying it out immediately. Implementing the Turlock Subbasin GSP and continued compliance with the requirements of SGMA will require additional resources, and therefore require additional revenue in the coming years. ETSGSA has continued to operate at the highest level of effectiveness within the current budget; however, this budget is no longer sufficient to cover the costs of sustainable groundwater management in the Turlock Subbasin.

About East Turlock Subbasin GSA

ETSGSA is a joint powers authority formed in November 2021 to manage groundwater resources in the eastern portion of the Turlock Subbasin, in accordance with SGMA. The GSA comprises approximately 137,000 acres, primarily irrigated agricultural land, and is responsible for complying with SGMA, implementing the GSP, and achieving Subbasin sustainability by the year 2042. ETSGSA is located in both Merced and Stanislaus Counties, bounded to the North by the Tuolumne River, and to the South by the Merced River. The GSA's western border lies east of Turlock, and its eastern border lies at the start of the Sierra Nevada Foothills.

What Benefits Would this Assessment Provide?

If it is successful, this proposed assessment would provide numerous benefits to parcels within ETSGSA related to the protection of groundwater resources.

This assessment would support improved water supply management, which has considerable implications for the region's stability and economic output. These efforts strive to ensure availability of groundwater for all parcels and avoidance of "undesirable results" listed in the GSP, including lowering groundwater levels, reduction in groundwater storage, depletion of interconnected surface water, and others.

Another benefit this assessment would provide is compliance with SGMA and avoidance of State intervention. If ETSGSA is unable to meet the requirements of SGMA, the State may determine that it must temporarily take control of managing the Subbasin. This intervention would severely limit local input, require well registration and meter installation, and likely include charges of \$100 - \$300 per well and pumping fees of \$40 - \$55 per acre foot paid directly to the State. ETSGSA's operational efforts intend to maintain local control.

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How was the Assessment Determined?

The total annual cost of the benefits to be funded by the assessment is allocated to each property based on the estimated special benefit received. The benefit to each parcel of property was estimated based on property type (irrigated or non-irrigated) and parcel size. An Engineer's Report describing the proposed improvements, method of assessment, budgets, and the proposed assessment for each parcel is available for review online at <https://turlockgroundwater.org/etsgsaprop218>.

How Much Is the Proposed Assessment?

The total proposed assessment for your property for fiscal year 2023-24 is printed on the Official Ballot included with this notice and information guide. The proposed rates for fiscal year 2023-24 and future years are summarized below:

Irrigated Parcels	\$ 17.75 per acre
Non-Irrigated Parcels	\$ 1.54 per acre

The total assessment for each parcel is determined by taking the number of acres according to the Assessor's lien roll for each County and multiplying this acreage by the appropriate rate based on property type. If the measure is approved, the total estimated amount that would be raised for fiscal year 2023-24 is approximately \$1,746,537. If you have questions about the calculation of the proposed assessment or your parcels, please call (800) 273-5196 and you will be routed to the appropriate representative.

Will the Assessment Increase in the Future?

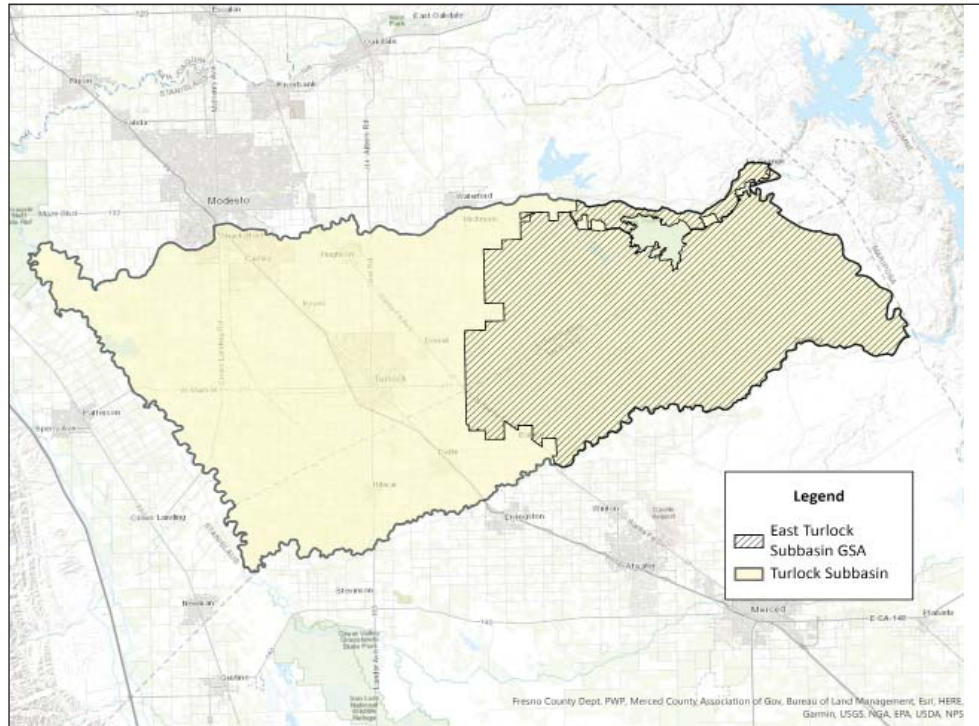
If the assessment is approved by property owners, it cannot be increased beyond the approved rates.

Existing Assessments and Fees and County Property Tax Bills

If the assessment is approved by property owners, and the Board assesses properties based upon this new assessment, then the existing ETSGSA Fee roll will be retired and the current fee would no longer be charged. Parcels within Eastside Water District ("EWD") would continue to pay their current assessment, and EWD would pay this new assessment on their behalf. Once the current EWD assessment expires in 2025, EWD property owners would then be charged for the new assessment directly along with all other property owners in ETSGSA. If successful, ETSGSA may elect to begin billing parcels directly for this new assessment in Spring of 2024. Charges are expected to be placed and collected on County-issued tax bills in the future.

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Turlock Subbasin Boundary

Cost of Groundwater Sustainability in Nearby Areas

Per acre rates to support the operational efforts of GSAs vary greatly across California. These proposed rates are within the range of typical rates in other GSAs and do not exceed the cost of the proportional special benefit conferred on each parcel, in compliance with Articles XIII C and D of the California Constitution.

What This Measure Would Provide

If approved by property owners, the proposed assessment would provide funding for compliance with SGMA and related State requirements and improved water resource management. Approval of this assessment would:

- Support improved water resource management within ETSGSA.
- Support compliance with SGMA, including monitoring and reporting, and actions to implement the GSP and achieve Subbasin sustainability.

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The Need to Improve Groundwater Management in ETSGSA

The California Department of Water Resources (“DWR”) designated the Turlock Subbasin as a “high priority” subbasin, initiating the application of SGMA requirements. Development of a GSP was the first major step in this process, which was completed in January 2022. The GSP determined that several sustainability indicators require attention: chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction in groundwater storage, depletion of interconnected surface water, degradation of water quality, and land subsidence. Addressing these indicators and complying with State-mandated requirements are the focus of ETSGSA's operational efforts.

Specifically, the improved groundwater management activities include:

- Groundwater level monitoring.
- Groundwater level monitoring network maintenance and expansion.
- Annual reporting.
- Groundwater model updates.
- Data management and identification and fulfillment of data gaps.
- Five-year GSP update.
- Water supply accounting.
- Pumping management and regulatory framework development and implementation.
- Land repurposing program planning.
- Groundwater recharge master planning.
- Domestic well mitigation program.
- Identification and implementation of management actions in the event of minimum threshold (“MT”) exceedances.
- Well registration, metering, and management.
- Development of financing strategies, including potential grant funding pursuits and pursuit of funding for projects related to East Stanislaus Integrated Regional Water Management (“IRWM”).
- Groundwater recharge assessment tool (“GRAT”) refinement and use to identify optimal recharge project locations.
- Proposition 218 fee and assessment program development.
- Community and stakeholder outreach and engagement.
- Inter-basin coordination and planning.
- Administration, including coordination, Board secretary, legal services, and other services and supplies.

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Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. at Cortez Hall, 12937 Cortez Avenue, Turlock CA 95380. You are invited to attend the public hearing.

Tabulation of the returned ballots will commence after the close of the public input portion of the hearing. The results of the tabulation are expected to be announced at the Tuesday, April 2, 2024 public hearing.

Method of Voting

To complete the enclosed ballot, mark the oval next to either "Yes" or "No," sign the ballot, place it in the provided postage-paid return envelope and mail it to:

East Turlock GSA
731 East Yosemite Ave, Suite B, PMB 318
Merced CA 95340-8039

Only official ballots that are signed and marked with the property owner's (or authorized representative's) support or opposition and are received before the end of the public input portion of the public hearing on April 2, 2024, will be counted.

Ballots are weighted by the amount of the proposed assessment and will be tabulated accordingly. The assessment shall not be imposed if, upon conclusion of the public hearing, weighted ballots submitted in opposition of the assessment exceed the weighted ballots submitted in favor of the assessment. If a majority of weighted ballots returned are in support, the assessment may be levied for fiscal year 2023-24 and would be continued in future years to fund GSA Administration and GSP Implementation Services.

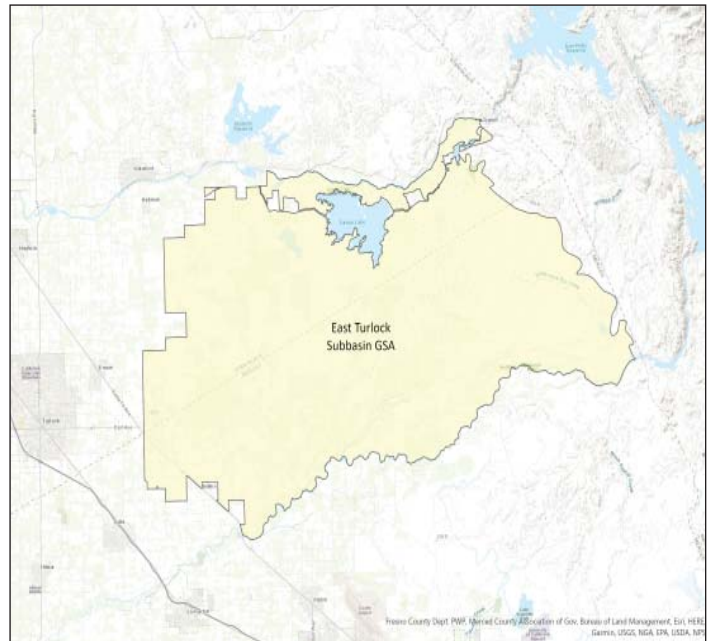
If you lose your ballot, require a replacement ballot, or want to change your vote, call (800) 273-5167 for another ballot. See the enclosed ballot for additional instructions.

Public Accountability Safeguards

If approved by property owners, the funds from this assessment can only be used for sustainable groundwater management improvements that benefit properties in the assessment area. The funds cannot be used for other purposes. The revenues and expenditures will be regularly audited by an independent auditor and the results presented at a public meeting.

Additional Information

If you have questions regarding the proposed assessment, your ballot, or the services provided by ETSGSA, please call: (800) 273-5167. Your call will be directed to the appropriate party.



East Turlock Subbasin GSA is responsible for SGMA compliance and water resource management within its jurisdiction.

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