

**TURLOCK SUBBASIN GROUNDWATER
SUSTAINABILITY PLAN
DRAFT PROGRAM
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
PUBLIC WORKSHOP
AUGUST 25, 2022**



TURLOCK GROUNDWATER

Funding for this project has been provided in full or in part from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68) and through an agreement with the State Department of Water Resources.



PUBLIC WORKSHOP AGENDA



- Purpose of Public Workshop
- Background
- Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)
 - Proposed Project and Study Area
 - Environmental Analysis
 - Alternatives Analysis
- Next Steps - CEQA Process
- Schedule
- Public Comment



PURPOSE OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP



Receive public and agency input on the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)

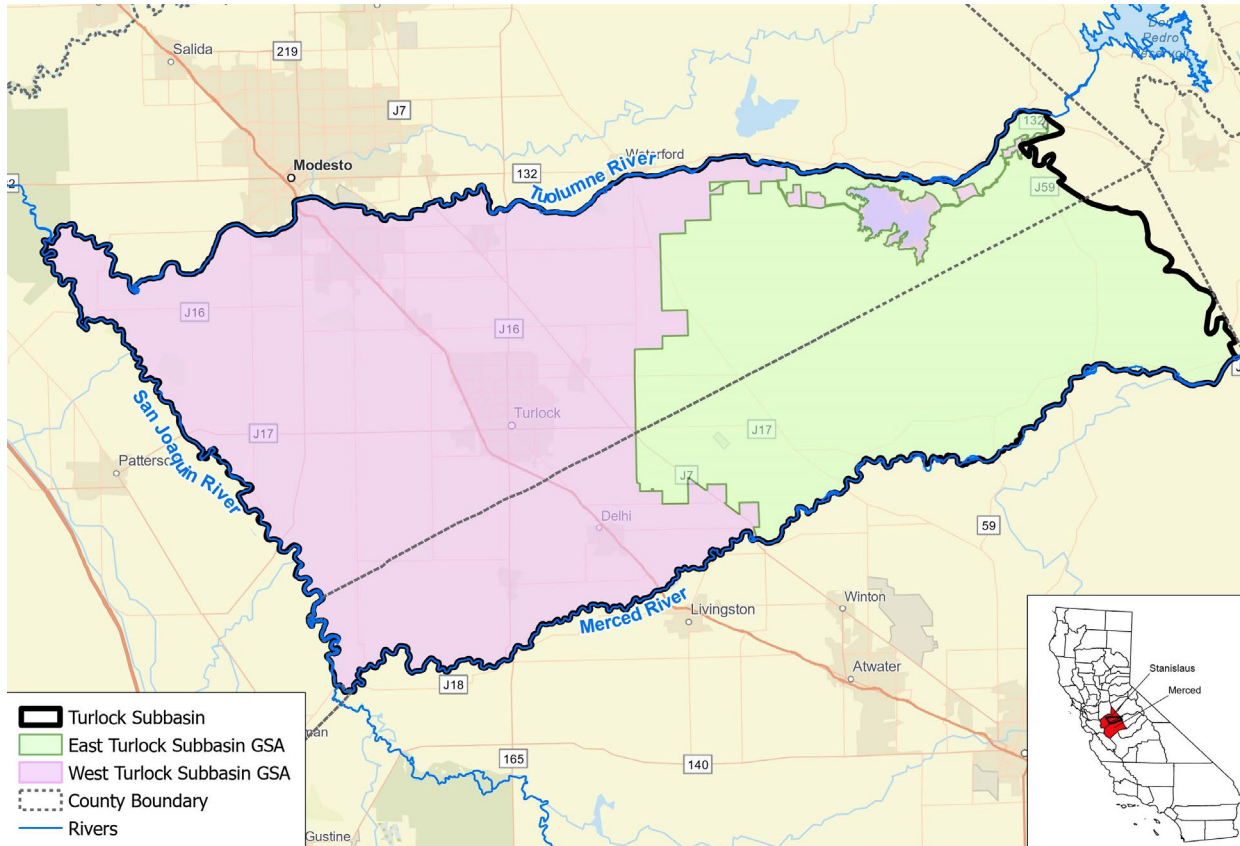
- West Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (WTS GSA), as the lead agency, and the East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (ETS GSA), as a responsible agency, will consider comments received in preparing the Final PEIR
- Input can be provided by:
 - Speaking at this public workshop
 - E-mail or mail

GSP BACKGROUND



- In 2014, Governor Brown signed into law the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
 - Establish a statewide goal for achieving long-term groundwater sustainability by 2042.
- GSAs are tasked with developing and implementing locally developed groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) for all groundwater basins designated by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as medium or high priority
 - GSPs are planning documents that provide a road map showing how groundwater basins will, through implementation of projects and management actions (PMAs), will reach long-term sustainability
- Turlock Subbasin was designated as a high priority groundwater basin (but not critically overdrafted) by the DWR with implications under SGMA
 - WTS GSA and ETS GSA jointly prepared a GSP (adopted on January 6, 2022)

TURLOCK SUBBASIN



Turlock Subbasin

- 544-square-mile (348,160-acre) area in the northern San Joaquin Valley
- Approximately 80 miles south of Sacramento in Stanislaus and Merced counties
- Bounded on the north by the Tuolumne River, on the south by the Merced River, and on the west by the San Joaquin River.
 - The eastern subbasin boundary is defined by crystalline basement rocks of the Sierra Nevada foothills.
- Part of the larger San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin

CEQA BACKGROUND



- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review
 - Not required for the development/adoption of a GSP
 - Is required for implementation of GSP projects and management actions (PMAs)
- A program-level CEQA document (e.g., program environmental impact report, or PEIR) is appropriate
 - Streamline future project-specific CEQA analyses by project or management action proponents
- Types of PMAs implemented under the GSP represent the “proposed project”



OBJECTIVES



- CEQA requires that an EIR contain a “statement of objectives sought by the proposed project.”
- The objectives of the Turlock Subbasin GSP are to:
 - achieve the sustainability goal for the Turlock Subbasin by 2042
 - avoid undesirable results over the remainder of a 50-year planning horizon.
- “Sustainability goal”:
 - Ensure a reliable and sustainable groundwater supply that supports population growth, sustains the agricultural economy, and provides for beneficial uses, especially during drought.
 - Achieved through implementation of the PMAs that propose structural and non-structural actions to enhance regional water supply and avoid undesirable results

"PROJECT" DEFINITION



- Projects - defined in the GSP and PEIR as physically constructed (structural) features designed to recharge the groundwater system by:
 - constructing injection wells
 - using surface water diverted from Merced and Tuolumne Rivers
 - promoting conjunctive use, or
 - reducing demand for groundwater
- Project categories:
 - direct recharge
 - in-lieu recharge
 - combination



“MANAGEMENT ACTIONS” DEFINITION



- Management actions – defined in the GSP and PEIR as non-structural programs to incentivize voluntary actions that help achieve the sustainability goals of the Turlock Subbasin GSP
- Management actions are implemented as needed to mitigate overdraft (within jurisdictional areas)
- Management action categories:
 - demand reduction strategies
 - pumping management framework
 - domestic well mitigation



SCOPE OF DRAFT PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT



- The Turlock Subbasin GSP is a planning level document: “concepts”
 - The GSP describes a number of PMAs, but does not outline specific construction activities or detail the specific operations and maintenance (O&M) activities
- The PEIR presents a summary of typical construction and O&M activities common to the development of groundwater recharge opportunities, including:
 - Typical direct and indirect impact mechanisms
 - General construction activities
 - Example features resulting from construction
 - Example O&M activities

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



- Draft PEIR analyzed environmental impacts to all resource areas in the Turlock Subbasin
- As a program-level CEQA document, the analyses are generally qualitative and conservative
 - Rely on existing plans, reports, desktop (versus field) surveys, open access databases, maps, and models
 - Inferences from similar groundwater recharge projects
- Assume that all PMAs would be implemented

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



- The Draft PEIR identifies no impact or less-than-significant impacts on the following resource areas:
 - Energy Resources
 - Mineral Resources
 - Population and Housing



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



- The Draft PEIR identifies less-than-significant impacts on the following resource areas after incorporation of mitigation measures:
 - Aesthetics and Visual Resources
 - Air Quality
 - Biological Resources
 - Geology, Soils and Paleontological Resources
 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - Hazards and Hazardous Materials
 - Hydrology and Water Quality
 - Noise
 - Recreation
 - Transportation
 - Wildfire



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



- The Draft PEIR identifies potentially significant and unavoidable impacts to the following resource areas:
 - Agriculture and Forestry Resources
 - Air Quality
 - Biological Resources
 - Cultural Resources
 - Land Use and Planning
 - Tribal Cultural Resources
 - Utilities and Service Systems and Public Services



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



- Impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation measures that would:
 - minimize degradation of visual quality and avoid effects of project lighting;
 - require project-specific air quality analysis for certain recharge projects and minimize dust from fallowed lands;
 - minimize disturbance of sensitive species, natural communities, and wetlands and waters;
 - require paleontological and geotechnical investigation and design recommendations;
 - require site-specific health and safety plans;
 - implement water quality protection measures and site-specific modeling to prevent adverse groundwater changes;
 - implement technological, noticing, and timing requirements for construction noise;
 - require replacement of impaired or eliminated recreation facilities; and
 - require preparation of a traffic management plan.
- Implementation of the mitigation measures would be the responsibility of the PMA proponent(s).

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS



- CEQA requires that an EIR describe and evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to a project be considered
- Potential alternatives were screened based on their:
 - ability to feasibly attain most of the basic Turlock Subbasin GSP objectives
 - feasibility within the limits of SGMA
 - ability to reduce or eliminate any significant environmental impacts of the implementation of PMAs under the Turlock Subbasin GSP



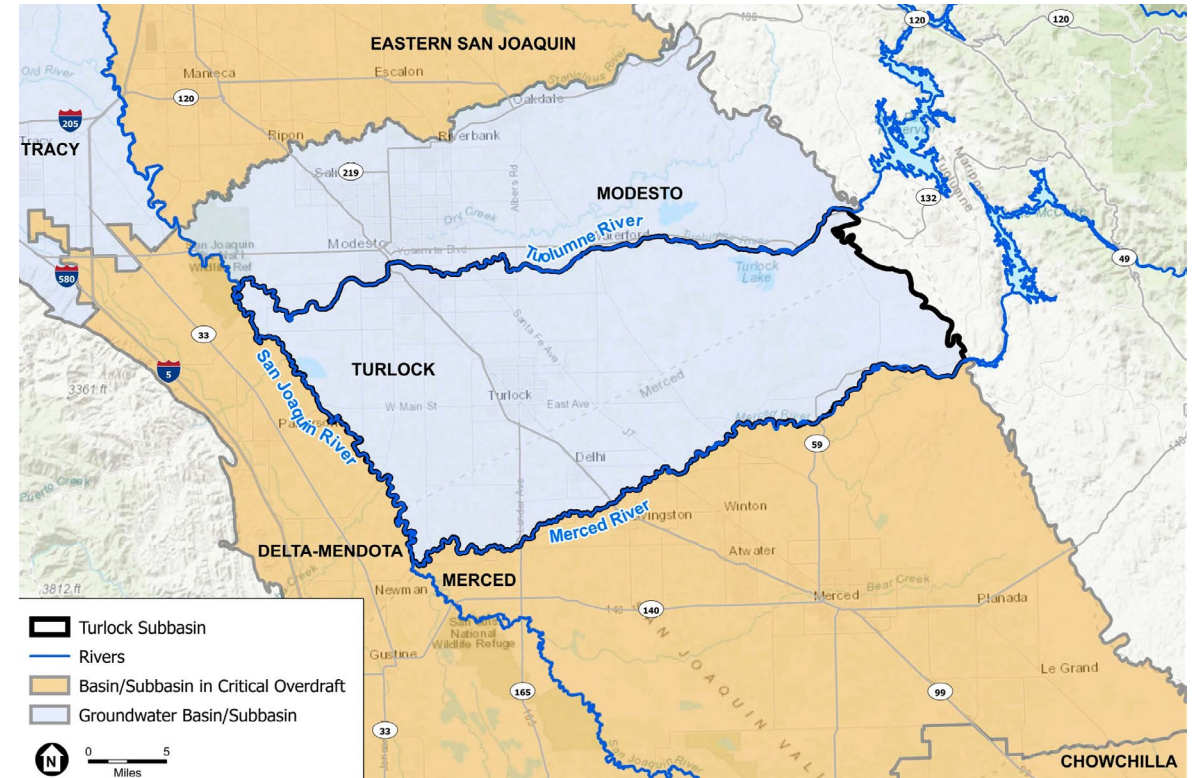
ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS



- The following alternative was considered but rejected in the Draft PEIR:

Interbasin transfer of groundwater from an adjacent groundwater subbasin.

- Seek to achieve the sustainability goal and avoid undesirable results at the expense of another groundwater basin
- Rejected for further consideration in the PEIR.



Adjacent Groundwater Basins

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS



The following alternatives were identified for analysis in the Draft PEIR:

- No Project Alternative.
- Alternative 1 – Specify more narrowly the types of PMAs implemented under the Turlock Subbasin GSP (e.g., the PMAs must provide at least 100 acre-feet of recharge per year).
- Alternative 2 – Eliminate certain aspects of PMAs (e.g., eliminate PMAs that propose the construction of new features).
- Alternative 3 – Exclude entire categories of PMAs (e.g., exclude all direct and in-lieu recharge projects and only implement management actions).

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS



- The No Project Alternative would result in similar impacts to implementation of all types of PMAs under the Turlock Subbasin GSP because other projects would be occurring (e.g., comparatively more or less construction activity).
- Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 in the study area would result in similar impacts to implementation of all types of PMAs under the Turlock Subbasin GSP because Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 include implementation of some PMAs.
 - Impacts could be of lesser magnitude.

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS



- Alternative 3 excludes entire types of PMAs (i.e., direct and in-lieu recharge projects), which would result in the least construction activity than under the other alternatives
- Alternative 3 would be the environmentally superior alternative
- However, Alternative 3 would not fully achieve most of the plan objectives
 - Implementation of all types of PMAs are essential to achieve the sustainability goal for the Subbasin and avoid undesirable results

NEXT STEPS - CEQA PROCESS



- Turlock Subbasin GSAs will consider all comments from agencies and members of the public in preparing the Final PEIR.
- The Final PEIR will include responses to comments on the Draft PEIR.
- The Final PEIR will be prepared in early 2023.



NEXT STEPS - CEQA PROCESS



- PEIR will be available for proponents of future PMAs to use for CEQA compliance when they seek to approve actions that are consistent with the PMAs called for in the Turlock Subbasin GSP
- PMA proponents would evaluate whether this PEIR describes the impacts adequately, or if necessary, the impacts would be evaluated in project-level CEQA documents (e.g., initial study, EIR).

CEQA SCHEDULE



- NOP released – January 7, 2022
- Draft EIR published – July 27, 2022
- Final EIR certified – Early 2023

PUBLIC COMMENTS



Public comment period on the Draft PEIR:

- July 27, 2022 through 5 p.m. on September 12, 2022

The Draft PEIR is available at:

- Turlock Groundwater website: www.turlockgroundwater.org
- Turlock, Merced County and Stanislaus County libraries

COMMENTS



Address comments to:

Turlock Subbasin GSP PEIR Comments
c/o Turlock Irrigation District
PO Box 949, Turlock, CA 95381-0949

Or electronically via email to:

turlockgroundwater@gmail.com

Please use “Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan PEIR” in the subject line.

THANK YOU!



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