

For Discussion Purposes Only

The Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee includes Michael Gallo, Gino Pedretti, and Eric Swenson. Recommendations are for discussion purposes only and do not reflect Board action. These recommendations were verbally made to the MSGSA Board at the January 12, 2023 Board Meeting.

Strategic Planning Ad-Hoc Committee Report

The Strategic Planning Ad-Hoc Committee is working on recommendations for establishing an allocation approach for irrigated agriculture that would take effect by water year 2026.

Non-agricultural land uses that use groundwater (such as residential, commercial, industry) will be addressed in separate policy conversations.

As previously discussed with the Board, allocations for irrigated agricultural lands would initially include a two-tier allocation (1) a per-acre quantity of Sustainable Yield, and (2) a per-acre quantity of Transition Water. The Transition water is expected to decrease to zero over some period of time.

The allocation approach would use a 5-year rolling bucket concept that provides flexibility for growers to manage change across time.

We recognize three primary types of agricultural lands designated by the County Assessor's Office that have fundamental differences in their historic function and use of groundwater: irrigated agriculture, managed wetland habitat (including duck clubs), and non-irrigated agriculture.

Because of variances in these land use functions, coupled with the MSGSA's intent to achieve significant reduction in the consumptive use of groundwater as represented in the Merced Subbasin GSP, this committee is recommending a different allocation approach for each agricultural land use function. At the time of initial allocation, land use designations would be locked to land use designation that existed between January 2015 and January 2020.

Currently, the committee is discussing the following:

- For irrigated lands designated by the Assessor's Office as either *Farming, Trees and Vines, Poultry, or Dairy*:
 - A per-acre allocation of both Sustainable Yield and Transition water will be made
 - Allocation quantities would apply to the entire gross parcel acres
 - Grouping of or sharing among like-designated parcels would be allowed under to be developed rules.
- For irrigated lands managed as wetlands (such as *Non-Contract Duck Clubs* or lands with Easements):
 - A per-acre allocation of will only be offered to parcels that choose to Opt-in
 - Sustainable Yield allocation quantities would apply to the entire gross parcel area
 - Transition Water allocation would be granted only for a parcel that recently (between January 2015 and January 2020) or currently pump groundwater for habitat purposes and only to the acres historically irrigated with groundwater as a form of managed wetland habitat
 - No Transition water would be available for a parcel that has not recently or currently pumped groundwater

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- Grouping of or sharing among like-designated parcels would likely be allowed under to be developed rules.
- For non-irrigated lands designated by the Assessor's Office as *Grazing*:
 - A per-acre allocation will only be offered to parcels that choose to Opt-in and will be recognized as only a stand-alone parcel.
 - Only Sustainable Yield would be offered, no Transition Water would be available
 - An Opt-in option will be open during the initial allocation process, and then offered once every 5 years, in coordination with the GSP update timing.
 - Allocations could not be shared with any other parcel
 - Extraction wells must be located within the parcel being irrigated.
- The GSA will establish a process to appeal allocation determinations to allow for consideration of special circumstances.

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