



Photo: South System Improvement Project construction

Welcome to the District's new General Manager!

Steve Schwabauer will lead the District's efforts to achieve groundwater sustainability in the critically overdrafted Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin and implement the District's 2021 Strategic Plan. His responsibilities include securing external funding to leverage



groundwater charge revenue designated for improvements to the District's surface water distribution system, which will allow the District to maximize use of Mokelumne River water to recharge groundwater. Steve joins the District from the City of Lodi, where he served for 24 years in leadership roles, including City Manager and City Attorney. Mr. Schwabauer has a law degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Davis. He has lived in Lodi for more than twenty years and enjoys the Lodi wine country, biking, and hiking in the Mokelumne watershed.

District and Partners Awarded \$5 Million Irrigation Energy and Water Efficiency Grant

Award will result in mini-grants to 30 growers up to \$200,000

Utilizing funding from the recently passed groundwater charge, the District partnered with the Stockton East Water District and the South San Joaquin Irrigation District to secure a \$5 million grant from the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program's Block Grant Pilot Program, administered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. This grant will facilitate a new program designed to provide approximately 30 grants directly to landowners, of up to \$200,000 each, to support on-farm improvements for energy and water efficiency. Grant recipients in the District and Stockton East must install improvements to connect to the District's surface water system for irrigation water. The new program places a strong emphasis on assistance to small farms and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The partners anticipate execution of an agreement with the State in early 2024 and will release the request for applications soon thereafter. Stay tuned for more information!



Did You Know?

Comparing On-Farm Recharge, Recharge Basins, and In-Lieu Recharge

The District is actively engaged in three different methods to replenish groundwater in the critically overdrafted Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin: **on-farm recharge**, **recharge basins**, and **in-lieu recharge**. The success of these approaches depends on District surface water distribution system improvements necessary to deliver the water to willing landowners. All methods result in adding more water to the groundwater basin to offset pumping, which helps stabilize groundwater levels.

1

On-Farm Recharge (also called “Flood-MAR”): The District collaborates with willing growers to flood vineyards or other agricultural fields during the dormant season, typically November through February. The District pays landowners for use of their land during the flooded periods and provides the water. Either the landowner or the District can perform the operation of the field flooding.

2

Recharge Basins: The District builds basins on vacant land, including berms, to retain surface water which will slowly infiltrate into the groundwater basin. The District owns land or executes long-term leases, pays for land improvements, provides water, and pays for basin operation and maintenance. Recharge basins allow the District to operate the project year-round (significant in wet years, such as 2023) and easily control project operations.

3

In-lieu Recharge: Landowners purchase surface water from the District and use it for crop irrigation in lieu of pumping groundwater. In-lieu recharge is the most efficient and effective means of accomplishing recharge because landowners use their own infrastructure to accomplish recharge.

Landowner Spotlight

Larry and Toni Miller exemplify individual action to recharge groundwater. In 2023, the Millers leased eight acres of fallow farmland to the District for a groundwater recharge basin and purchased District surface water to irrigate their walnut orchard instead of pumping groundwater (in-lieu recharge). The District greatly appreciates the efforts of landowners like the Millers who understand the importance of landowner efforts to achieve groundwater sustainability.





TAKE ACTION

The District is actively seeking:

- 1 Additional landowners with vineyards, particularly along the South System main pipeline, to enter into on-farm recharge agreements
- 2 Additional lands with highly permeable soils, located close to District conveyance facilities, to create additional recharge basins
- 3 Substantially more landowners to use surface water for irrigation to achieve groundwater sustainability

“ If you own such lands and are interested in a sale or long-term lease to the District, please contact us! ”

The District would like 4,000 acres on the South System and 1,500 acres on the North System to use surface water, in addition to the 1,000+ acres on the Tracy Lake system.

If you are interested in using surface water for irrigation, please contact Steve Schwabauer, steve@nsjwcd.com.

South System Improvement Project (Phase 2) Almost Complete!

The \$2 million South System Improvement Project (Phase 2) replaces the South System mainline from Harney Lane South to Pixley Slough. The District completed the southern half of the project in July and will complete the northern half by December 2023. The project removes capacity restrictions in the bottom portion of the South System, as well as adds modern automated control structures and meters to deliver water for irrigation and groundwater recharge. The District leveraged District-wide groundwater charge and Improvement District #3 revenue with a California Department of Water Resources grant to fund this project.

Communication Improvements

The District launched a website at the end of October: www.nsjwcd.com. The new website is ADA-compliant and organized to help the public find District information, including an online appeal form. The District also established new email accounts for employees to help improve communication:

General Manager Steve Schwabauer:
steve@nsjwcd.com

District Secretary Shasta Burns:
shasta@nsjwcd.com

Winter 2023-24 Newsletter

North San Joaquin Water Conservation District
PO Box E
Victor, CA 95253

Join our Board Meetings!

www.nsjwcd.com

WHEN: 2 pm, usually the last Monday of the month

WHERE: Lodi Grapes Festival grounds, Barrel Room

NEXT MEETINGS: November 27 & December 18, 2023

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THANK YOU

The District appreciates your patience with the groundwater charge landowner appeals process

The District is grateful to landowners for understanding the 23-24 appeals process is taking longer than expected as the District implements a new administrative structure, improves the bookkeeping system, and implements back-office adjustments to ensure organizational sustainability. The groundwater charge for the 23-24 fiscal year will appear on your property tax bill, if your property is subject to the charge. If you believe the charge is in error because you do not use groundwater, contact the District and file an appeal. The website includes an online appeal form and a PDF that can be printed, completed, and mailed. If you have questions, please contact Shasta Burns at shasta@nsjwcd.com.

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