McMullin Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT THE PROP 218 ASSESSMENT

What is a Proposition 218 Election?

Proposition 218 is a Constitutional Initiative approved by the voters of California in November 1996. It requires new or increased fees and assessments to be approved by affected landowners.

Why is MAGSA having a Proposition 218 assessment election?

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) became law in 2014, requiring local agencies to develop and implement a plan to achieve groundwater sustainability by 2040. The McMullin Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MAGSA) was formed in 2017 by landowners to locally comply with SGMA.

The State did not provide any funds to comply with SGMA, which is why MAGSA has sought funding through Proposition 218 elections and an aggressive pursuit of financial aid through grants.

The McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project is a key strategy to bring in surface water to improve groundwater levels and to achieve groundwater sustainability by 2040. The per-acre assessment will pay for the construction of this project.

What are the consequences of a failed election?

If this water supply project is not built, the alternative to meet the required overdraft reduction targets is to use a more drastic demand-side solution, which is to limit the amount of groundwater each landowner can pump to irrigate crops.

Without adequate funding to implement the requirements of SGMA, MAGSA would also risk losing control over groundwater management to the State. If the State was to intervene, it would impose costly fees and use demand-side solutions, like pumping restrictions.

Do I currently pay fees to MAGSA?

Yes. As a landowner within MAGSA, you currently pay a maximum of $19.00 per acre for all parcels that are greater than two acres within the territory of MAGSA. The existing fee was calculated based on estimated costs to cover the cost of agency management, preparation of a required update to MAGSA's Groundwater Sustainability Plan, and groundwater monitoring. The cost of service is divided by the lands within MAGSA to calculate the $19 per-acre fee.

Why doesn't MAGSA use the current fee to pay for the construction of the Expansion Project?

The current fee was approved by landowners to only be used for the cost of agency management, preparation of an update to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, program administration, project development, and groundwater monitoring. The funds are not allowed by law to be used for any other purpose.

What costs will the proposed assessment cover?

MAGSA proposes to levy a special benefit assessment to fund the design, construction, financing, operation, and maintenance of the McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project. Assessment revenues shall be used exclusively for:

- Project planning, design, and permitting
- Construction of flood capture and conveyance facilities
- Financing costs and debt service
- Operation and maintenance of Project facilities
- Capital replacement and contingency reserves related to the Project

Assessment revenues shall not be used for general MAGSA administration or SGMA compliance costs. Assessment revenues shall be deposited into a segregated fund and shall not be commingled with other MAGSA funds.

How much is this new assessment?

Your maximum assessment for FY 2026-2027 can be calculated as follows:

$32.85/acre x your total acreage in MAGSA = $ your proposed maximum assessment

The assessment is proposed to increase annually by approximately 0.5% through fiscal year 2041-2042.

How will this new assessment be collected?

The $32.85 per-acre assessment will be included on landowners' Fresno County tax bills beginning fall 2026. This assessment is in addition to the existing $19 per-acre fee. MAGSA has applied and will continue to apply for grants to support the agency's work.

How was the assessment determined?

The assessment is the result of a detailed budget analysis and an independent Professional Engineer's Report. The budget is based on the costs associated with the Project.

When will the assessment take effect?

The charges will commence July 2026 and added to Fresno County tax bills beginning fall 2026.

Will the assessment end?

Yes. The assessment will be levied annually for 15 years. After 15 years, the assessment will sunset. A renewal of the assessment after the 15 years will require a new Proposition 218 election.

How is the agency's Board accountable to the public regarding expenditures?

The Board adopts an annual budget, reviews and authorizes payment of expenses at regular public meetings.

Who will be paying this assessment?

Landowners in MAGSA with parcels greater than two acres.

Does this assessment pay for improvements on adjacent landowners' fields?

No. The assessment only pays for the costs to construct the canal, diversion points off the canal, and for operation and maintenance of the canal and facilities.

Can revenue be generated through other means?

MAGSA has and will continue to apply for grants to support the work of the agency. Costs for the ratepayers could potentially be reduced through grant funding. The following grant has been awarded to the McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project to date:

- $10 MILLION – State Water Resources Control Board Prop 1 Stormwater Grant

How do I vote in the Prop 218 election?

Landowners will receive a ballot in the mail with detailed instructions.

How can I learn more about the Prop 218 assessment election and McMullin Flood Capture Expansion Project?

Visit www.mcmullinarea.org/prop218 to learn more about the Prop 218 assessment election and the McMullin Flood Capture Expansion Project and register for MAGSA's upcoming informational landowner meeting or webinar.

ABOUT THE MCMULLIN EXPANSION PROJECT

What is the McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project?

The McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project is one of the water supply projects identified in MAGSA's Groundwater Sustainability Plan that will use Kings River floodwaters to replenish the groundwater supply and help secure the future of farming within MAGSA.

The Project consists of an 11-mile canal for water distribution. It is designed to capture high-flow flood releases from the Kings River system. Landowners adjacent to the McMullin Flood Capture Expansion Project canal will have the opportunity to conduct groundwater recharge in their fields using a method called on-farm recharge.

How will MAGSA access Kings River floodwaters for the Project?

Through agreements with the Terranova Project, Kings River Conservation District, and the James Irrigation District, floodwaters will be diverted from the Kings River at the James Weir.

Who will construct the Project facilities?

MAGSA will hire a contractor through an open bid process for the construction of the project. The bid must be within the budget for the project and covered by the per-acre assessment.

How much recharge capacity will the Project provide?

According to research conducted on the Kings River flows, floodwaters from the Kings River are available 2 out of every 7 years on average based on historical data. The Project will capture and deliver these excess floodwaters through canals and pumps to farmland for groundwater recharge on fields throughout the project area. The current Terranova Project consists of 5,000 acres of farmland that recharged over 18,000 acre-feet of excess floodwater during the 2023 wet year. The McMullin Flood Capture Expansion Project will add an additional 7,500 acres available for immediate groundwater recharge along the canal alignment, with future capacity for up to 40,400 acres.

Who owns the water?

The water will be added to the groundwater supply and will assist in reducing the overdraft. To the extent any landowner assists in the effort (now and into the future), they will receive certain additional credits against possible future allocations.

Is this Project necessary to achieve groundwater sustainability?

Constructing the McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project is a key strategy for MAGSA to accomplish groundwater sustainability. As an area that only has groundwater as its source of water supply, it is critical to have the ability to bring in water from outside of MAGSA's area during wet years to replenish the groundwater supply.

What does the Project mean for me as a landowner in MAGSA?

With state law requiring groundwater to be sustainable by the year 2040, the Project is an investment in your future as a farmer in MAGSA. As a farmer in an area that only has groundwater as its source of water supply, it is crucial that surface water supply projects are built.

Why not wait and build this Project in a few years?

Delaying this project puts all landowners within MAGSA at risk of having to reduce their groundwater use through restrictions on groundwater pumping. MAGSA must comply with groundwater overdraft reduction targets to meet state groundwater sustainability requirements. MAGSA met the first required target of a 10% annual reduction of groundwater overdraft by 2025. Much more aggressive actions need to be taken to achieve the next target of a 30% annual reduction of groundwater overdraft by 2030. The Expansion Project positions MAGSA landowners with the ability to accomplish this more ambitious 30% reduction target.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Will MAGSA have an allocation?

MAGSA's Groundwater Sustainability Plan has considered allocations (pumping restrictions) being implemented by the year 2030 if the groundwater overdraft reduction 2030 target is not being achieved.

Why does MAGSA not have groundwater credits?

MAGSA will implement groundwater credits once an allocation has been set.

What other water supply projects is MAGSA working on?

In addition to the McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project, MAGSA is working on the Aquaterra Water Bank to bring in additional surface water supplies. MAGSA is in the final stages of the required environmental review process for the Aquaterra Water Bank.