

Lower Tule River Irrigation District Surface Water Allocation Policy

Background

One of the purposes of the Lower Tule River Irrigation District is to enhance the groundwater resources that underlie the District through the importation of surface water. The District overlies the Tule Subbasin Groundwater Basin, which has been defined by the State of California as being in a state of critical overdraft. Since its formation in 1950, the District has imported as much surface water as possible to offset the use of groundwater for irrigation purposes and to replenish the aquifer through direct recharge via sinking basins, river channels and unlined canals. The District's efforts are funded through assessments and water charges paid by landowners in the District.

In 2014, the State of California passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which regulates the use of groundwater in the State of California. Groundwater Sustainability Plans, under SGMA, are to be implemented by January 1, 2020. As part of the SGMA process the District has determined that imported surface water should be allocated to landowners on an annual basis. The goal is to allow equal and proportional access of imported surface water to all landowners in the District.

The Board of Directors of Lower Tule Irrigation District therefore adopts the following Policy:

Policy

1. Allocations will not apply during flood releases and uncontrolled season or at any other time the District does not have a storable and schedulable supply.
 - Water that does not count towards the District's final allocation will be made available on a first come first serve basis to growers.
 - Fixed District allocations will be allocated to growers.

2. Initial allocation to occur annually on March 1 with continual updates throughout the water season.
3. Transfer of allocations are not permitted. Allocations can only be transferred to lessees under Lease agreements. Upon approval of the District, allocations can also be transferred to other common ownership entities who have an existing joint commercial interest.
 - Landowners will be sent a water order form every January, asking if they want their allocation, or allow their lessee or other entity ownership to use it, or do not want it. This form will be due back to the District by March 1. Proof of lease/lessor, or common ownership relationship will be required.
 - If a landowner does not want, or cannot use their allocation for the year, the District will re-allocate proportionally to all other landowners.
 - Landowner must identify whether the lessee must use the allocation on specified land or can use it on other lands owned/leased by lessee.
4. Allocations will be made to total assessed acres. Non-farmed lands, whose property's historical consumption has been met by precipitation and sustainable yield will have the option of opting out of receiving and paying for this allocation.
 - Lands without a turnout from a District facility will receive their allocation as additional groundwater credit in their groundwater account.
5. Overuse of allocation will not be allowed. District staff will monitor use and will terminate use to those who have no remaining allocation.

The District Board will update this policy as conditions warrant, based on operational and policy issues identified as the policy is implemented.