



Pixley Irrigation District Surface Water Allocation Policy

Background

One of the primary purposes of the Pixley 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 1958, 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. The lack of access to a reliable surface water supply for Pixley means that providing water to landowners through both direct and in-lieu recharge in wetter years becomes a method for stabilizing access to water for the landowners of 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, and consistent with the provisions of the California Water Code that are applicable to Irrigation Districts related to distribution of water resources among District lands, the District has determined that imported surface water should be allocated proportionally to lands within the District on an annual basis.

Historically, proportional distribution of the District's available surface water has presented a challenge in that not all the lands in the district have direct access to surface water. However, with the development of a GSP as required by SGMA, distribution of surface water on a District-wide proportional basis can now be accomplished by coordination with a groundwater allocation system. The approach taken in this Surface Water Allocation Policy is designed to provide proportional access of imported surface water to all lands in the District and not just those with access to the District's distribution system. To meet this goal, the surface water is allocated to all lands as an additional groundwater credit (i.e., in addition to allocated native safe yield available to lands as of right). Surface water actually delivered to lands with access to the canal system and consumed by those lands through crop production would then be accounted for as a debit against allocated groundwater credits. This surface water allocation system is intended to be coordinated with the management actions called for in the GSP, in order to account for various loss and other factors associated with groundwater use.

Policy

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

1. Allocation of surface water will occur annually on January 1 based on the prior year surface water supply received by the District.
 - Allocation will be made in the form of groundwater pumping credits.
 - The amount of the allocation will be a maximum of 90% of prior year surface water deliveries to account for evaporation and the ability to meet the goals of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.
 - The Board will address a variety of factors related to meeting the goals of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan before finalizing the allocation. As an example, if minimum thresholds of groundwater elevations have been exceeded, the leave behind factor may have to be greater and less water will be allocated.
 - Once the allocation is made, bills will be sent out at a per acre-foot rate set by the Board of Directors. If, in the future, the water costs become part of the land-based assessment, there will be no bills sent out with the allocation.
2. Allocations will be made to total developed, assessed acres. Class 6 lands will not receive an allocation.
3. Use and transfers of groundwater pumping credits must follow the rules and procedures adopted in the Pixley ID Groundwater Sustainability Plan adopted under per SGMA regulations.
4. When surface water is made available, the District will make it available for irrigation purposes on a first come first served basis.
 - Each acre-foot of water consumed (ETc) by a landowner's crop through surface water delivered will result in an acre-foot of groundwater credit reduction from their groundwater account
 - Any water not delivered as irrigation demand, will be recharged by the District
 - Taking surface water will be on a voluntary basis
 - The price to access surface water will be set by the District and may be based on the approximate cost to pump groundwater, or other factors as deemed appropriate by the Board.
5. During flood release and unlimited uncontrolled season operations, based on the amount of water available to the District, the District may make water available to landowners for purchase by the landowner, for on-farm recharge.

- Groundwater pumping credits generated by a landowner for on-farm recharge will be credited to the individual landowner's groundwater credit account, per the rules defined in the Groundwater Sustainability plan for landowner recharge credits and will not be included in the future allocation of surface water credits on a District wide basis.

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