



Water and Resource Conservation

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Richard McGowan  
30 Independence Circle  
Chico, CA 95973

Re: Water District Formation Status

Dear Rich:

In 2017, the Butte County Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution in Support of the Agricultural Groundwater Users of Butte County (AGUBC) Involvement in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Resolution 17-170). The Resolution reads in part, "if, and when, the Agricultural Groundwater Users of Butte County desire to move forward with creation of a new California Water District or other type of eligible local agency with the dual purpose of: a) SGMA responsibility, and b) exercising powers and duties as a special district as authorized by the Water Code for water purveyance and ancillary activities, Butte County will work constructively, cooperatively and collaboratively with landowners on the formation process of a new eligible local agency for involvement in SGMA issues." In 2018, the AGUBC and the County began collaborating on the formation of a Water District. The discussions have been very productive. Due to the Camp Fire, a lot of time has passed since we last met. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on some of the considerations to form a Water District.

To recap, the AGUBC is scoping the objectives for a Water District under the Water Code. It is my understanding that the Water District would have among its primary responsibilities to:

- receive and distribute surface water to agricultural landowners
- conduct groundwater recharge projects
- protect water rights
- participate in implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act locally

These initial objectives are consistent with Resolution 17-170 and would be beneficial to the successful implementation of the groundwater management plans. As you know, one of the major County initiatives is to identify and implement recharge projects. One of the most promising options is in-lieu recharge by providing available surface water to groundwater dependent areas. The Water District would serve a critical role in providing surface water to existing groundwater dependent agricultural areas. We anticipate the Water District working in close partnership with Butte County to scope and implement viable projects.

I understand that the AGUBC is considering a number of options in regards to the service boundary and enabling authority for the Water District. I do not believe that any of the options would be inconsistent with County interests.

The other consideration for district formation is that of timing. This is a good time to begin the process for district formation since it will take significant time to work out the details of the scope, extent, and objectives of the new Water District and complete the LAFCo process. The subbasins in the Butte County are on track to complete Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) by the January 2022 deadline. Having a Water District formed to inform promising management actions and recharge projects during plan development will be valuable. After the GSP is completed, the Water District would a valuable local entity to continue to explore and implement strategies for effective groundwater management in its jurisdiction.

We had discussed having the County be the lead agency in the special district formation process. The Water District formation process requires an environmental review. I met with Butte County Development Services. There are not many examples of environmental documents for special districts. The last special district formed under Butte County was the Resource Conservation District. We are going to investigate the environmental document used to form the RCD and environmental documents used for other special district formations. I do not anticipate that the environmental review will be a major undertaking, yet it will afford the benefit of transparency.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration on the formation of the Water District.

Regards,



Paul Gosselin, Director

Cc: Christina Buck, DWRC, Assistant Director  
Darren Rice  
Todd Turley  
Ed McLaughlin