

TUSCAN WATER DISTRICT

Formation History & Community Support

Overview

The Tuscan Water District was formed through a deliberate, multi-year process that began with county leadership in 2015 and concluded with LAFCO approval in 2023 and a recorded Certificate of Completion on February 1, 2024. Throughout that process, TWD's formation was supported by a broad coalition of elected officials, water agencies, agricultural organizations, and community leaders—all of whom recognized the need for a dedicated entity to implement groundwater sustainability projects in the Vina Subbasin.

This document summarizes the key milestones and statements of support that shaped TWD's formation.

Timeline: From Concept to Formation

2015 – County Leadership Initiates the Process. Paul Hahn, then Butte County's Chief Administrative Officer, began collaborative discussions with AGUBC and eligible local agencies to define SGMA governance structures for each of the county's four subbasins. These discussions identified the need for groundwater-dependent landowners in “white areas”—lands not within any existing water district—to have organized representation.

2017 – Board of Supervisors Resolution 17-170. On October 10, 2017, the Butte County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted Resolution No. 17-170, formally supporting AGUBC's involvement in the SGMA process and committing the County to “work constructively, cooperatively and collaboratively with landowners on the formation process of a new eligible local agency.” The resolution passed 4-0 (Supervisors Wahl, Lambert, Teeter, and Vice Chair Kirk; Chair Connelly absent).

2019 – County Water Department Encouragement. On January 14, 2019, Paul Gosselin, Director of Water and Resource Conservation, wrote to Rich McGowan affirming the County's support. Gosselin described the Water District as filling “a critical role in providing surface water to existing groundwater dependent agricultural areas” and identified in-lieu recharge as one of the most promising strategies for basin sustainability. Gosselin is now a Deputy Director at the California Department of Water Resources, where he oversees statewide SGMA implementation.

2020–2021 – Broad-Based Support During LAFCO Application. As AGUBC prepared and submitted its LAFCO application, letters of support were received from across the agricultural, water management, and political spectrum (detailed below).

2023 – LAFCO Approval with Conditions. LAFCO approved TWD's formation by Resolution No. 18 2022/2023, with conditions designed to ensure coordination between TWD and the Vina Subbasin GSAs. Among those conditions, Condition 13 required TWD to enter into memoranda of understanding with the GSAs, and Condition 18 established the GSP consistency determination process for TWD-proposed projects.

2024–2025 – Formation Completed and MOUs Executed. TWD's Certificate of Completion was recorded on February 1, 2024. On January 28, 2025, TWD executed MOUs with both the Rock Creek Reclamation District GSA and the Vina GSA, formalizing TWD's role as a “GSA

partner” responsible for implementing projects and management actions consistent with the Vina Subbasin GSP.

Letters and Statements of Support

Community Leaders (LAFCO Hearing Testimony, 2023)

Jane Dolan, former Butte County Supervisor: “I don’t fear this district. I know and respect these landowners.” Dolan testified that TWD’s formation was the culmination of decades of county water policy development and that the Board of Supervisors had long called on groundwater-dependent agricultural users to step up and show leadership.

Priscilla Hanford, former Regional Water Quality Control Board member: “Any effectiveness of this move forward depends on opening ourselves to a degree of trust that has been in all too short supply.” Hanford stated that after personally meeting with LAFCO staff and reviewing all conditions, she stood in support of TWD’s formation with the conditions as proposed.

Water Agencies and Special Districts

Durham Irrigation District (April 16, 2020): DID Board Chair Matt Doyle wrote that it was “imperative that groundwater users within the sub-basin whose lands are not within existing water or irrigation districts have the means to manage and protect their groundwater resources.”

Western Canal Water District (April 6, 2020): WCWD General Manager Ted Trimble expressed support for TWD’s formation, noting that WCWD itself “formed back in 1984 for similar purposes” and applauded “the foresight of landowners wishing to take a more active role in managing their water resources.”

Rock Creek Reclamation District (May 11, 2021): RCRD Board Chair Hal Crain supported TWD’s formation, recognizing that TWD would “play a much-needed role in planning and performing the management actions, and pursuing projects” in the Vina Subbasin. RCRD’s conditions of support were incorporated into LAFCO’s conditions of approval and the January 2025 MOU.

Northern California Water Association (May 7, 2021): NCWA President David Guy wrote that TWD would “further the collective efforts by other water districts in the region to protect and sustainably manage our precious water supplies for both our economy and the environment in Northern California—both now and for future generations.”

Agricultural Organizations

Butte County Farm Bureau (March 31, 2020): “The Butte County Farm Bureau recommends, without reservation, the formation of the Tuscan Water District.” The letter noted unanimous support from the board of directors of the 103-year-old organization and stated that the overwhelming message from groundwater users was that they wanted TWD to be their representative.

California Farm Bureau Federation (April 6, 2020): CFBF President Jamie Johansson, writing on behalf of nearly 34,000 members statewide, stated that TWD’s formation would give groundwater pumpers “all necessary tools in the toolkit of any local area to effectively meet the challenge of long-term, sustainable management under SGMA.”

Family Water Alliance (July 30, 2020): FWA extended “full support” for TWD’s formation, noting that the district would “fill a void” in the Vina Subbasin and provide the ability to plan for and implement sustainability programs that Butte County had stated it would not undertake.

Elected Officials

Assemblymember James Gallagher (April 27, 2020): Gallagher wrote that TWD would ensure groundwater users “are at the table and part of the discussion and decision-making process for Butte County’s groundwater future,” and that the district’s governance by a locally elected board of landowners reflected exactly the local management that SGMA envisioned.

Congressman Doug LaMalfa (May 5, 2021): LaMalfa described TWD as “an effective tool to provide the necessary representation” for agricultural and domestic water users in the Vina basin, and emphasized the importance of inter-coordination between adjacent water districts for sustainable groundwater management.

TWD’s Role: Implementation Partner, Not a Competing Authority

The consistent theme across every letter, resolution, and public statement summarized above is that TWD was formed to fill a specific gap: providing the operational capacity to implement groundwater sustainability projects in the Vina Subbasin. The Vina GSA retains full regulatory and planning authority under SGMA. TWD is not a GSA, has not adopted the GSP, and cannot advance any project to construction without first receiving a GSP consistency determination from the relevant GSA and completing CEQA review.

This complementary structure was not accidental. It was envisioned by county leadership beginning in 2015, endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in 2017, encouraged by the County’s water department in 2019, supported by the agricultural and water management community throughout the LAFCO process, and formalized by the MOUs executed in January 2025.

The Vina GSA retains full authority to plan, regulate, and implement projects under SGMA. Nothing about TWD’s role limits that authority. However, the Vina GSA’s Joint Powers Agreement provides that the Agency “will not have any employees” (JPA Section 12.3)—a staffing model designed for a regulatory and planning body. Building and operating physical water infrastructure—recharge basins, conveyance systems, monitoring networks—requires dedicated project management, engineering oversight, and sustained operational capacity. TWD was formed to provide that capacity, working within the framework that the GSAs and LAFCO have established. This is the structure that county leadership envisioned, LAFCO approved, and the MOUs formalize.