

Proposition 218 Election Assessment Proposal Frequently Asked Questions

What is the South Fork Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency?

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is a State law requiring better management and balance of groundwater supplies. The law requires groundwater subbasins be sustainable by the year 2040 through the creation of local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs). In response to this law, the South Fork Kings GSA was formed in 2017 and is responsible for developing and implementing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that will describe localized groundwater issues and identify appropriate solutions.

What is Proposition 218?

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

What am I going to be asked to do?

You will be asked in a special mail election to approve an assessment to fund South Fork Kings GSA's planning and project needs. Ballots will be mailed out in early May.

Why is the South Fork Kings GSA going through this process?

An assessment is necessary to cover the costs to follow the requirements of the new State law. As an unfunded California law, the costs to prepare a Groundwater Sustainability Plan, administer a new agency, and any groundwater projects built will be borne by local landowners.

How does the Agency control costs?

The South Fork Kings GSA Board has minimized expenses where it can by using member agency staff, assistance from community volunteers, and reducing the use of consultants wherever possible. They are also cooperating with related local efforts, like the Irrigated Lands Program, to establish joint monitoring programs.

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. The GSA is audited annually by an independent accounting firm.

Can revenue be generated through other means?

The South Fork Kings GSA has and will continue to apply for grants to support its work. In addition to landowner assessments, groundwater extraction fees or other revenue generating measures may be considered in the future but are not authorized by this election.

What are the consequences if the election does not pass?

The proposed assessment must be supported by landowners. If not, compliance with the new law will still happen but at a higher cost. If the State takes over implementing the law, they will impose a fee structure on groundwater pumpers many times more costly than what is proposed by South Fork Kings GSA. They will also regulate how much groundwater a landowner can pump.

How much would the assessment be?

The South Fork Kings GSA Board has adopted a maximum rate level of \$9.80 per acre for all land within the territory of the GSA. If the election is successful, the Board will review the financial need annually and set an assessment accordingly up to the \$9.80 per acre level.

How will I pay the assessment?

The assessment will be included on your county tax bill.

When will the assessment take effect?

The assessment will be included on Kings County tax rolls beginning in Fiscal Year 2018-19.

Will the assessment end?

It is a 5-year assessment that reflects the 5-year budget on which the assessment is based. Other funding sources may be obtained at some time in the future that may reduce the assessment. The Board must conduct another election if a future higher assessment rate is deemed necessary or to impose a new assessment beyond the five year life of the proposed assessment.

How was the assessment determined?

An Engineer's Report was prepared by a registered professional engineer. To determine the amount to be assessed the engineer had to follow several requirements, not the least of which is that the rate must substantiate a special benefit to the landowner and cannot exceed the reasonable cost of the special benefit associated with that parcel.

Is the City of Lemoore included in the assessment?

Yes. The City of Lemoore will participate in the Groundwater Sustainability Agency cost sharing by agreement on behalf of all property in the City limits and has incorporated the ongoing payments in to their existing rate structure.

What will the funds be used for?

The funds will be used to cover the administration of the South Fork Kings GSA, the preparation of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan, and the initial implementation of the Plan.

What are other GSAs in our area doing to raise funds?

There are six GSAs including the South Fork Kings GSA in the Tulare Lake Subbasin. All of the GSAs are contemplating similar Prop 218 elections.

Who will be assessed and will it be done equally?

Within the service area of the South Fork Kings GSA, all customers are reviewed as recipients of the oversight services of the GSA. Therefore there will be a single customer class that encompasses all property owners within the service area who will be assessed equally.

What are the objectives that guided the rate design?

The rate design process was designed with the following objectives:

- Recovery of funds contributed by member agencies
- Create a reasonable allocation between fixed and variable costs
- Generate adequate funding to fulfill legislative mandates of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

How and when do I cast my ballot?

Ballots will be mailed early May 2018 to the most recent addresses on file with Kings County. Ballots will be mailed to each landowner, and if a landowner owns more than one parcel, the ballot will contain each assessor's parcel number (APN). Ballots will be weighted based on the amount of increase for the specific rate for each parcel. If ballots are hand delivered or sent by mail, they must be received prior to the conclusion of the public hearing that begins at 5:30 p.m. June 21, 2018.

How do I receive more information about the proposed assessment?

The South Fork Kings GSA will continue to provide information via its website, SouthForkKings.org. You may also email Prop218@SouthForkKings.org or call 559.242.6118. We invite you to attend the upcoming Board meeting on April 19. South Fork Kings GSA Board of Directors will hold a public hearing on the proposed rate on June 21 at 5:30 pm at the Lemoore City Council Chambers, 429 C Street, Lemoore, CA 93245.