



MID-KINGS RIVER GSA

Groundwater Allocation Policy

(Adopted 12/16/2025)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainable Agency (MKR GSA or GSA) is located within the Tulare Lake Subbasin (Subbasin) which has been designated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as high priority groundwater basin that is subject to critical conditions of overdraft. MKR adopted a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) consistent with the Sustainable Management Groundwater Act (SGMA) to address undesirable results including chronic lowering of groundwater levels and land subsidence. A management action in the GSP includes establishing groundwater extraction allocations based on the Subbasin's sustainable yield in order to mitigate undesirable results while projects are being developed and implemented.

This Groundwater Extraction Allocation Policy (Policy) is part of the projects and management actions being implemented to achieve sustainability of the Subbasin and does not determine or alter water rights under common law or any provision of law (Water Code §10720.5(a)). The Policy is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Water Code Section 10728.6 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 10561(b)(3), 15307 and 15308.

The Policy will be in effect for all groundwater pumpers and users in the MKR GSA. Compliance with the policy is required for the GSA to meet sustainability goals and ensure that the GSA maintains local control over groundwater pumping.

The policy is based on currently available information and is subject to change as additional data becomes available. Changes to the policy will be at the sole discretion of the MKR Board.

2. PARCEL QUALIFICATION AND USE CATEGORIES

Parcel Eligibility for Sustainable Yield Allocation

Allocation of sustainable yield to an individual parcel is based on the number of total acres for that parcel as registered with Kings County. Parcels that are eligible for a sustainable yield are described as follows:

- All parcels listed on the Kings County Assessment Parcel Roll, inclusive of tribal properties, located within the MKR GSA boundaries are qualified to receive an allocation

of a portion of the total MKR GSA sustainable yield. Qualified parcels must be registered in the MKR GSA parcel database, as applicable, and provide an inventory of wells on the parcel. Parcels that are not registered in the MKR GSA parcel database will not receive a sustainable yield allocation and will be subject to a stop pumping notice if they are shown to be irrigated in LandIQ.

- Parcels of 2 acres or less receive a de-minimis allocation of 2 AF/year, unless they are registered as a qualified parcel. A parcel of 2 acres or less must register as a qualified parcel if it contains an extraction facility that pumps more than 2 AF/year.
- Parcels located within the City of Hanford will not receive an individual allocation as the City is responsible for the majority of the water supply. The GSA understands that there are private wells located within the City and the on-going operation of these wells will be addressed with the City. Any pumping by landowners within the City limits will be included in the overall value. The City will receive a groundwater pumping allocation based on an average historical pumping since 2015. This value will be negotiated with the City each year.
- Parcels that are supplied by public water system, including the communities of Armona and Home Garden, will not receive individual allocations. The GSA will identify these parcels as part of the allocation process.

Parcels in other GSAs within the Tulare Lake Subbasin or other groundwater subbasins cannot be designated as qualified parcels within MKRGSA.

Parcel Eligibility for Transitional Allocation

The transitional allocation is considered a buffer that allows landowners who have existing irrigated lands to continue pumping at successively lower pumping rates towards the Sustainable Yield allocation. The transitional allocation decreases to zero by 2040 and landowners will only be able to pump up to the sustainable yield allocation after 2040.

Parcels that are eligible for a transitional allocation include all parcels that were shown to be irrigated anytime between 2015 through 2024 based on Land IQ Crop Data. Landowners denied eligibility may appeal the decision to the MKR GSA Board.

3. ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY AND 2026-2030 AMOUNTS

Section 3 summarizes specific allocation policies and procedures for the period 2026-2030, including specific allocation amounts for each year.



Determination of Sustainable Yield

Sustainable yield is the total groundwater pumping in acre feet per year (AF/yr) that will maintain the basin in a sustainable condition after the year 2040. This value is based on a projected future groundwater balance derived from a groundwater model of the Tulare Lake Subbasin developed in 2020 (Wood, 2020). A new model is in development that may update this value. This new model may be used as the basis for allocations for the 2030-2035 Allocation, but it is not used for this 2026-2030 allocation cycle. The sustainable yield methodology and amounts will be periodically evaluated and are subject to adjustment.

The total estimated sustainable yield from the 2020 Wood Model was projected at 350,000 AF/Y. This value was derived from a historical analysis of pumping and other hydrogeologic factors over a base period of 1997-2016. The model predicts that, at this level of pumping, the total change in aquifer storage becomes zero and groundwater levels stabilize to an equilibrium level. The sustainable yield is distributed to all qualified parcels as a unit allocation in acre-feet per acre (AF/Acre).

Groundwater pumping across the Tulare Lake Subbasin varies greatly with some areas having limited groundwater use. Therefore, the sustainable yield should be available for the areas that are utilizing the water. The sustainable yield for each GSA was determined using the average groundwater pumping use between water years 2021 and 2022. These years were selected as they represent drought years with a consistent data set for groundwater pumping. MKR accounted for approximately 36% of groundwater pumped and therefore was assigned 36% of the sustainable yield which amounts to approximately 126,000 AF.

Currently pumping per aquifer is limited but additional information is being gathered through the MKR Well Registration program. At this time, the sustainable yield is not assigned per aquifer. Instead, the pumping is limited to the set allocation as long as undesirable results defined by the GSP are not occurring.

The sustainable yield will be allocated annually. Landowner's sustainable yield allocation may be carried over for the next four (4) calendar years, subject to a 5-year rolling retirement. Under exceptional circumstances, an extension may be granted at the sole discretion of the MKR GSA Board. Again, pumping may be limited by undesirable results occurring in the vicinity.

Use of Sustainable Yield

The sustainable yield may be used by a landowner on any owned registered parcel owned by the same landowner. In addition, the sustainable yield is transferable to any other registered qualified parcels within the MKR GSA without penalty. The sustainable yield may be transferred outside of the MKR GSA once all of the following conditions are met:

1. Sustainable Yield can only be transferred into the GSAs bordering MKR.
2. All transfers must be registered with and approved by both MKR GSA and the receiving GSA on an annual basis. The registration process will involve, at a minimum, identification of compliance with all requirements, clearly identifying the farm unit, and the amount of water to be pumped.
3. The parcel receiving MKR GSA sustainable yield must be contiguous to a registered parcel within MKR GSA. In addition, both the parcel within MKR GSA and the receiving parcel must be part of the same farm unit.
4. Only the sustainable yield amount for the registered parcel within MKR GSA that directly borders the surrounding GSA is eligible for transfer. The sustainable yield for other parcels owned by the same landowner is not eligible for transfer outside MKR GSA.
5. The well where the pumping is occurring for the water to be transferred must be metered and meter data is required to be reported to both GSAs.
6. The parcel receiving MKR GSA sustainable yield must be in active agricultural production during the time the water transfer occurs.
7. Under no circumstances can transferred water be moved outside of the farm unit.
8. The GSA reserves the right to limit the total amount of water that can be transferred annually.
9. The MKR GSA may revoke, at its sole discretion, the ability to transfer water out of the GSA, if the pumping well is located in an area subject to actions identified in the Management Plans.

Emergency Supply

A landowner that needs emergency water supply due to issues with wells, conveyance systems, etc. should immediately contact the GSA. Each of the situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Determination of Transitional Pumping

Transitional pumping is a declining block of total groundwater pumping (in AF/y) that reduces overdraft from a set current value to zero by 2040. It is anticipated that the transitional pumping will decrease in five-year blocks. MKR GSA recognizes that some landowners require transitional water to achieve sustainability by 2040. Therefore, transitional water will be allocated to landowners eligible to receive sustainable yield.

Transitional water will be allocated annually. Only landowners that are in full compliance with all applicable MKR GSA policies and regulations and whose account are in good standing will receive a transitional allocation. Transitional water must be used in the year it is allocated and does not



carryover year to year nor is the water transferable. In addition, transitional water may only be put to beneficial use within the boundaries of the MKR GSA.

The transitional allocation is based on the difference between the average groundwater pumping between water years 2021 and 2022 and the calculated sustainable yield. The transitional allocation from 2026 to 20240 is presented on Table 1.

Again, these transitional pumping values will be modified in the areas across the GSA where GSP defined undesirable results are occurring. Management Plans are being prepared separately to address the undesirable results.

4. ANNUAL PUMPING LIMITS AND FEES

The Sustainable Yield Allocation and Transitional pumping amounts will be allocated annually but are intended to remain consistent for five-year periods. The entire five-year allocation is not available at the beginning of the period but rather allocated each year and will be enforced on an annual basis. MKR GSA may modify the groundwater allocations at any time as additional data is available and/or to prevent or minimize undesirable results.

In any given year, landowner pumping is monitored quarterly using LandIQ data on evapotranspiration for each qualified parcel and estimated surface water deliveries to each parcel. Landowners with meters may submit quarterly pumping reports as a substitute for the LandIQ analysis. An annual groundwater pumping report based on LandIQ data is produced for each landowner at the end of the year. The evapotranspiration values will be set to zero for landowners that present appropriate documentation to the GSA that a property has been fallow. Landowners with meters may also contest the Annual LandIQ pumping report and reconcile their accounts at the end of each calendar year.

Landowners total pumping inclusive of landowner developed credits (Section 5) will be limited to a total cap of 3.0 AF/ac annually.

Table 1
Groundwater Allocation
2026 – 2040

Sustainable Yield (AF/ac)	Transitional Allocation (AF/ac)	Total Allocation (AF/ac)
WY26-WY30		
1.43	1	2.43
WY31-WY35		
1.43	0.6	2.03
WY36-WY40		
1.43	0.3	1.73

Pumping Fees

The pumping fee for the sustainable yield, transitional allocations, and recharge credits will be set by the MKR GSA Board annually.

Landowners who pump above their total groundwater pumping allocations are subject to an additional overdraft penalty (referred to as overdraft pumping) of \$500 per AF for pumping above sustainable yield plus transitional and recharge credits. In addition, the following year's allocation will be reduced by the amount of the overdraft.

5. LANDOWNER DEVELOPED CREDITS

Landowner developed credits may be developed through landowner water banking or recharge projects or other approved projects that help mitigate one or more undesirable results of the Tulare Lake Subbasin. Recharge and banking projects must comply with the MKR Groundwater Recharge Policy.

In order to protect the Subbasin from undesirable results, a percentage of any landowner water banking or recharge projects will remain with MKR. The amount of leave behind is defined in the Groundwater Recharge Policy.

Landowner developed credit transfers between landowners of qualified registered parcels must be documented and in accordance with adopted policy.



All transfers purchased from outside of MKR boundaries must be approved by both GSAs with jurisdiction and comply with all applicable regulations of both GSAs. MKR will develop a separate policy and procedures for transfers from outside of the MKR jurisdictional boundaries. All landowner developed credit will be maintained in the MKR water accounting system.

6. TRANSFERS

Qualified parcels may receive credit if there is an allocation transfer from another parcel within the MKR GSA. The allocation for the receiving parcel will increase, while the allocation for the generating parcel will decrease. Landowners that receive a sustainable yield allocation but do not irrigate all parcels may transfer that allocation to other parcels within the MKR GSA. This will enable landowners who fallow some of their parcels to move allocation for that year to parcels that are actively irrigated. The receiving parcels will still be subject to potential curtailments as described in the Management Plans. Any proposed transfer of allocation must be submitted for approval by MKR GSA. Only sustainable yield and recharge credit are eligible for transfer; transitional allocations are prohibited from being transferred across parcels.

7. WATER USE

The default priority of use will be as listed below. A landowner must notify the GSA to change the priority of use. The priority of use order can only be revised once per water year. That revised order will become the default for the landowner until they notify the GSA again.

1. Sustainable Yield Carryover
2. Sustainable Yield Allocation
3. Landowner Developed Credit
4. Transitional Groundwater Allocation
5. Overdraft Pumping

8. ALLOCATION CURTAILMENT

Under specific circumstances, acreage may be subject to curtailment of the approved pumping allocation and require further reduction in pumping below the Table 1 values in accordance with water level, subsidence or water quality management plans.

9. SGMA PENALTIES AND CIVIL REMEDIES

Any landowner or operator who violates the provisions of the herein Policy and Procedures is subject to the criminal and civil sanctions set forth in SGMA. MKR GSA may commence or sustain any civil action or proceeding, either at law or in equity, to enforce any of the provisions

of the GSPs, or any policy and procedures promulgated therefrom, or to enjoin or restrain any violation thereof, or to collect any sums of money, including penalties, fees, charges and/or assessments, on behalf of the MKR GSA. The provisions of this Section 7 are to be supplementary and complementary to all of the provisions of SGMA, other state law, and any law cognizable at common law or in equity; and nothing herein shall be read, interpreted or construed in any manner so as to bar or limit MKR GSA from seeking any remedy to which it may otherwise be entitled.

10. ENFORCEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Any penalties or fines imposed shall be subject to the procedures set forth in the “Policy and Procedures for Collecting Delinquent Fees, Assessments, or Charges”.

11. ACTION AGAINST MKR

Nothing contained in the Policy and Procedures shall constitute a waiver by MKR GSA or stop MKR GSA from asserting any defenses or immunities from liability as provided in law, including but not limited to those provided in Division 3.6, Title 1 of the Government Code.

12. DEFINITIONS

- a. “2018 -2024 Land IQ Crop Data” means crop and vegetation data generated from 2018 through 2024 from satellite and aerial imagery, land cover classification and analysis, and crop and vegetation mapping.
- b. “Carryover” means the sustainable yield allocation amount remaining unused from a given year that may be used in subsequent years, subject to limitations. Sustainable yield carryover will be retired after 5 years on a rolling basis.
- c. “Civil penalty” means a penalty payment per acre-foot for groundwater extraction above the sustainable yield.
- d. “De minimis extractor” means a person who extracts two acre-feet or less per year. For the purpose of this Policy, a parcel with less than 5 acres of land is considered to host a de minimis extractor unless it is demonstrated otherwise (e.g. extractions exceed two acre-feet per year or for non-domestic use. (See, Water Code §10721(e).)
- e. “Extractions” means removing groundwater through groundwater extraction facilities for reasonable and beneficial use(s).
- f. “Farm Unit” means a defined area of land that’s is managed as a single agricultural operation under single ownership or lease, receiving water through a common delivery system.

- g. “Good standing” means a landowner who has complied with any and all applicable policies, procedures and ordinances of MKR, is current on all applicable fees and penalties, and is not subject to any unresolved violation, late fee, penalty or lien.
- h. “Governmental Entity” means the State of California or any political subdivision thereof.
- i. “Groundwater” means water beneath the surface of the earth within the zone below the water table in which the soil is completely saturated with water. (Water Code §10721(g).)
- j. “Groundwater extraction facility” means a device or method for extracting groundwater from within a basin. (Water Code §10721(h).)
- k. “Imported Water” means any water, surface or groundwater, that enters into MKR GSA boundaries from an external source for direct irrigation.
- l. “Irrigated lands” means lands irrigated by groundwater using a groundwater extraction facility for the active production of plant crops or livestock for market and uses incidental thereto. The 2018-2024 Land IQ Crop Data will be initially used to determine whether a parcel contains irrigated lands for the purpose of this Policy.
- m. “Landowner developed credit” means an amount of water credited to a landowner account for a water project or projects that have been developed by a landowner and have been determined by MKR (through the process outlined in the Groundwater Recharge Policy) to help mitigate one or more undesirable results within the Tulare Lake Subbasin. Projects must be in accordance with the Groundwater Recharge Policy.
- n. “Leave behind” means the portion of water from an approved recharge project that is dedicated to sustainability and is therefore not credited to the landowner’s account or sustainable yield carryover. The specific percentage is defined in the MKR Groundwater Recharge Policy
- o. “Overdraft Pumping ” means groundwater extraction exceeding a landowner’s combined Sustainable Yield Allocation (including carryover), applicable Landowner Developed Credits, and Transitional Groundwater Allocation, which is subject to a overdraft civil penalty.
- p. “Overdraft Pumping civil penalty” means the civil penalty amount due by a landowner of qualified irrigated land at a rate of \$500/acre-foot for any groundwater extraction defined as Overdraft Pumping
- q. “Public Water System” means a system that provides water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances that has 15 or more service connections or regularly serves at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year.

- r. "Qualified registered parcel" means land qualified to receive a sustainable yield allocation because the land meets the following criteria: (a) is a registered parcel; and (b) is in good standing with MKR.
- s. "Qualified irrigated land" means land qualified to receive Transitional Groundwater Allocation because the land meets the following criteria: (a) is a registered parcel; and (b) contains irrigated lands based initially on the 2018-2024 Land IQ Crop Data.
- t. "Registered parcel" means a parcel, 5 acres or larger, registered in the MKR's water accounting program.
- u. "Sustainable yield" means the maximum quantity of water, calculated over a base period representative of long-term conditions in the basin and including any temporary surplus, that can be withdrawn annually from a groundwater supply without causing an undesirable result. (Water Code §10721(w).)
- v. "Sustainable yield allocation" means the maximum quantity of groundwater extraction allotted to landowners of a qualified registered parcel based on the methodology derived from 2020 Wood model.
- w. "Transitional Groundwater Allocation" means an allocation available to qualified irrigated lands allowing groundwater extraction above the sustainable yield allocation, subject to transitional pumping fee.
- x. "Transitional Pumping Fee" means the pumping fee amount due by a landowner or operator of qualified irrigated land at a rate of to be set by the MKR Board for groundwater extraction corresponding to the Transitional Groundwater Allocation.
- y. "Transfer" means groundwater allocation or landowner developed credit sold or otherwise acquired from one landowner and applied to the account of another qualified registered parcel(s) within the same subbasin and GSA jurisdiction.
- z. "Undesirable result" means one or more of the following effects caused by groundwater conditions occurring throughout the basins: (a) chronic lowering of groundwater levels; (b) significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage; (c) significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion; (d) significant and unreasonable degraded water quality; (e) significant and unreasonable land subsidence; and/or (f) depletions of interconnected surface water.