



EASTERN TULE

GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

For Immediate Release:
February 21, 2024

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FRIANT WATER AUTHORITY (FWA) SEEKS MORE MONEY FROM LOCAL GROUNDWATER PUMPING, WHILE DEMANDING THAT LAND SUBSIDENCE CEASE

Porterville, CA – FWA and Arvin Edison Water Storage District have filed a complaint against the Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Agency (ETGSA) for breach of contract in the Tulare County Superior Court.

The complaint seeks damages from ETGSA, along with a declaration from the Court that ETGSA must collect and pay funds to FWA for subsidence along the Middle Reach of the Friant-Kern Canal, while also avoiding or minimizing additional subsidence.

The ETGSA Chairman and Tulare County Supervisor Dennis Townsend commented, “It is unfortunate to see resources, both time and money, expended on litigation matters versus collaborative and solution-oriented approaches. The ETGSA was formed in 2017 to improve groundwater management in the context of significant legacy challenges, including overdraft and land subsidence. The Agency will continue honoring the terms of the settlement agreement and will continue on its path to sustainability.”

The ETGSA, along with the Tule Subbasin and six other critically overdrafted basins covering nearly the entire Central Valley, including the Kern Subbasin, have had Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) deemed inadequate by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). The ETGSA is working diligently toward updating sustainability goals and receiving approvals from DWR and the State Water Resources Control Board. As an example of that, the GSA is on its fourth year of implementing an allocation methodology with charges to its landowners for excess groundwater pumping. Other areas have not yet imposed any allocations or groundwater extraction cutbacks, whatsoever.

The ETGSA General Manager Rogelio Caudillo commented, “All GSAs in this situation are frantically working towards revising yet again the Groundwater Sustainability Plans to be compliant with DWR and State Board standards. Importantly, the ETGSA continues to work with Community Water Center, Self-Help Enterprises, and other non-profit entities serving domestic water needs, to ensure mitigation plans are acceptable. It takes time to correct the years of overdraft conditions that have caused current conditions in the Tule Subbasin. The ETGSA will continue to work with our stakeholders and community leaders to achieve sustainability and ensure domestic well needs are met.”

As noted in the complaint, Tea Pot Dome Water District, Porterville Irrigation District, Saucelito Irrigation District and Terra Bella Irrigation District are all member agencies of the ETGSA, a Joint Powers Authority. These four entities also are member agencies of FWA, a Joint Powers Authority and co-plaintiff in the lawsuit against ETGSA.

Steve Kisling, Vice-Chairman of the ETGSA and President of Saucelito Irrigation District commented, "It is unfortunate to see litigation ensue between the two Joint Powers Authorities with combined member agencies. The financial impact from these decisions is suffered directly by the growers who are incurring charges for the prosecution of the lawsuit and the defense."

Further information regarding the ETGSA and the ETGSA GSP can be found on its website, <https://easterntulegsa.com/>.

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