

# EPC - ESTRELLA-EL POMAR-CRESTON WATER DISTRICT

September 12, 2016

**MISSION:** The EPC Water District is a proposed public agency consisting of landowners who voluntarily join together to sustainably manage their groundwater in the area generally defined by San Luis Obispo County as the Estrella, El Pomar, Creston sub-areas of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin.

**VISION:** The vision and purpose of the EPC Water District is to collaborate with the other Groundwater Sustainability Agencies in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin to create and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan in compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. We are committed to sound science and effective management. The export of water will be prohibited.

## Dear Landowners:

We are working together to manage our groundwater locally instead of leaving the management of this important resource to the County or the State. The recent ballot measure to establish a basin-wide water district for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin failed, and that defeat leaves many landowners vulnerable to groundwater management by the County or the State, and with little direct input as to that management. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) law applies to us and the State will enforce it. Only public agencies will have a voice in compliance decisions, which means that agricultural landowners will have little to no voice without a district. The best we can hope for with the County Flood Control District (FCD) is to have an advisory committee position which would have no real authority.

The Shandon-San Juan sub-area landowners are currently working on a submission to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to form their own district. It would extend from the eastern boundary of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin west to the general vicinity of Whitley Gardens. We propose to create a district essentially in the majority of the remainder of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. Like the Shandon water district, it would be an "Opt-in" California Water District, meaning that those who wish to remain under County (and potentially State) jurisdiction may do so.

As an "Opt-in" district, landowners will only be included in the district if they choose to do so, as indicated by signing the formation petition and the funding agreement. Should you choose not join the district, your groundwater will eventually be managed either by the SLO County Board of Supervisors as directors of the County Flood Control District or by the State Water Resources Control Board. You will pay assessments via your property taxes in either instance.

The proposed district will be the EPC Water District formed under the California Water District Act (California Water Code Sections 34000 et. seq.). There will be an election for five directors and the initial election will be one vote per acre. Once the district is formed and has its own "equalized assessment book", future board members would be elected on the basis of land valuation, or one vote per dollar of assessed value within the district. Directors must be either holders of title to land within the district or a designated representative of that holder of title.

We are your neighbors and we are convinced that we are better off managing our own groundwater resource. We are prepared to meet with you to discuss our plans and answer your questions. We recognize that we all must comply with SGMA and that we will have to address any shortfall between our basin's recharge and our water use. That means that we will have to measure our water use (meters) and if we have to make reductions in pumping, we will have to come together to make those difficult decisions fair and equitable. With your help, we can better make these decisions than outsiders.

We believe the proposed EPC is a cost effective solution for managing the groundwater basin while complying with the requirements of SGMA. We have prepared budgets and will be sharing the details. We expect our elected board of directors to be diligent in controlling expenses while servicing the needs of our water district members. We can do this by cooperating with other Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) with jurisdiction within the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin to share the cost of writing and enacting the mandatory Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

The GSAs must be in place with funding plans and legal agreements for cooperation in hand by June 2017. We hope to follow closely behind the Shandon-San Juan Water District LAFCO submission, which means that we have no time to waste. Shandon will barely beat the June 2017 deadline. If all goes well, we believe that we can fit in right behind them. This will require some contact with the State to allow for us to qualify but we believe that they will accommodate us if we are showing real progress.

The bottom line is this: Shandon is on a tight timeline to meet deadlines and they are ahead of us. So we need to get going quickly. We need enough participants to justify the effort, so please avail yourself to our meetings and discussions when they are announced. This is likely the last chance to form our own water district. This time it will be a voluntary formation and an agriculture-oriented water district.

We strongly encourage your support and participation.




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