



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING REGARDING THE
PROPOSED PORTERVILLE IRRIGATION DISTRICT
GROUNDWATER BANKING PROGRAM PROJECT**

Notice is hereby given that the Porterville Irrigation District (PID) will be the Lead Agency and prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Groundwater Banking Program Project (Project). PID has determined that an EIR must be prepared for the Project prior to making any final decision regarding whether to approve the Project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The PID Board of Directors will consider the EIR when determining how to move forward with the Project.

PID is requesting any responsible/trustee/cooperating agency or interested person to participate, review, and provide input on how the Project may affect the environment. If you are an authorized representative of an agency with authorization of facilities that may be affected, PID needs to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Agencies will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals. Please provide the name, address, telephone number and email address of the contact person for your agency.

PID is seeking an examination of scope and content of the goals, objectives, policies, and actions to guide and protect the physical, environmental, economic, and social conditions on lands and in the surrounding communities within the proposed pipeline alignment.

Project Title: Groundwater Banking Program Project

Project Applicant: Porterville Irrigation District
22086 Avenue 160, Porterville CA 93257

Project Location:

The Project is a District Banking Policy (Policy or Program) that would be implemented within the District boundary located approximately 55 miles south of Fresno and 43-miles north of Bakersfield. The program would allow for landowners, within the District, to apply for the conversion of their land to a banking facility. The Project allows for a maximum of up to 120,000 AF of recharge within the District in these banking facilities. As water is extracted, more water can be banked within the District. The land that could be developed as part of the program consists of existing fallowed and active agricultural land.

The District is situated in the southern San Joaquin Valley, part of the Great Valley of California, in Tulare County (County). The Valley is bordered by the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range to the east, the Coast Range to the west, the Klamath Mountains and Cascade Range to the north, and the Transverse Range and Mojave Desert to the south. The City of Porterville lies geographically within the District's management area, but no water banking facilities would be constructed within the urbanized territory that is in the City of Porterville as part of this Project. State Route (SR) 190 runs in an east/west direction along the southern portion of the District's management area. SR 65 runs in a north/south direction approximately 0.3 miles

east of the District's management area. In addition, SR 99, which runs north/south is located approximately nine miles to the west of the District's management area.

Project Description:

The Project is a District Banking Policy (Policy or Program) that would be implemented within the PID district boundary. The Project would allow eligible applicants to apply for the conversion of a portion of their land to a groundwater banking facility. The Project allows for a maximum of up to 120,000 AF of recharge within the District in these banking facilities. As water is extracted, more water can be banked within the District. The land that could be developed as part of the Program consists of existing fallowed and active agricultural land within the District boundary.

Objectives and Goals:

The District is part of the Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Area (ETGSA). The ETGSA drafted their Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) on January 17, 2020. The District developed a Banking Policy in 2019. The District is in the process of revising the Banking Policy, and the draft Banking Policy is available as a supporting document. The District has been facilitating the banking policy on a per project basis since 2016. The District has approved approximately 490 acres in banking facilities since 2016. The banking policy has evolved over time; however, the goals and objectives of the District have remained the same.

The Project's purpose is to facilitate the District's compliance with SGMA. Implementation of the Project would provide benefits to the District, its landowners and water users, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Increase the total groundwater supply available in the District;
- Improve groundwater conditions within the Tule Subbasin (Bulletin 118, Subbasin 5-22.13, hereafter "Basin") and the District;
- Contribute to the reduction of District and landowner costs to produce groundwater;
- Increase the diversification of water supplies available in the District; and
- Facilitate landowners' needs to obtain water for beneficial use in the District.
- Facilitate the District's compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act; and
- Establish adequate protection against adverse impacts potentially resulting from water banking activities.

Potential Environmental Effects: The Draft EIR will describe the significant direct and indirect environmental impacts of the Project. The Draft EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the Project, defined as impacts that could be exacerbated when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The PID anticipates that the Project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will be further evaluated in the draft EIR: Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Tribal Cultural Resources.

These potential impacts will be analyzed and discussed in detail in the Draft EIR, and feasible and practicable mitigation measures will be recommended to reduce any identified significant or potentially significant impacts. The discussion in the draft EIR will also include an alternatives analysis.

The PID anticipates that the Project would not result in significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will not be further evaluated in the draft EIR: Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Energy, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

Public Review and Scoping Meeting:

Comments on the proposed scope and content of the EIR may be submitted in writing to the attention of:

Sean Geivet, District Manager
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Phone: (559) 361-5523
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Amy M. Wilson, Senior Planner, Environmental Project Manager
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Comments in response to the Notice of Preparation will be accepted from September 20, 2024 through October 21, 2024. Persons with questions or requests for information may also use the above contact information.

All written scoping comments should reference Porterville Irrigation District Groundwater Banking Program Project. Please include your name, address, and phone number, and/or email so that we may contact you for clarification, if necessary.

All supporting documents also be found at <https://portervilleid.org/>.

Pursuant to Section 15083 of the CEQA Guidelines, Public Scoping Meetings will be held to solicit public comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The Public Scoping Meetings will be held as follows:

Date: October 17, 2024

Time: 1 P.M.

Place: Porterville Church of the Nazarene, 2005 W. Olive Avenue, Porterville, CA 93257

Newspaper Notice of Preparation Published:

Porterville Recorder, September 20, 2024.

Figure 1 – Project Area Map

