

# **Regional Water Management Group**

LOCATION: Online (ZOOM)

## **MINUTES**

Monday, February 28, 2022 1:30 pm

### **1. The meeting was called to order at 1:33 pm, by Tom Wheeler, chairman.**

Those present included:

Tom Wheeler – Madera County  
Jeannie Habben – Madera County  
Kristi Robinson – Water Wise/Triangle T  
Jacob Roberson – RWMG Coordinator  
Keith Helmuth – City of Madera  
Angela Islas – SHE  
Jason Rogers – City of Chowchilla  
Brandon Tomlinson – Chowchilla WD  
Carl Janzen – Madera ID  
Gretchen Heisdorf – Root Creek WD  
Don Roberts – Gravelly Ford WD  
Stephanie Anagnoson – Madera County  
Sam Cunningham – Madera County  
Melanie Aldridge – Madera WD  
Jennifer Morales – DWR

Clyde Wheeler – Indian Lakes  
Joe Fiss – Greystone Equities  
Jack Rice – MAWA  
Mary Sholler – North Fork Rancheria  
Eddie Mendez – Madera County  
Jenny Nunez-Rodriguez – Madera County  
Emily Garcia – Madera County  
Jacklynn Kouzougian – Greystone Equities  
Wendy Rash – USDA NRCS  
Rogell Rogers – Sustainable Conservation  
Aysha Massell – Sustainable Conservation  
Taylor Broadhead – Sustainable Conservation  
Pete Stapp – Coarsegold RCD  
Jean Okuye – East Merced RCD

### **2. Review & Approval - Agenda & Minutes**

- A motion to approve the February agenda was made by Carl J; Gretchen H second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to approve the January minutes was made by Carl J; Gretchen H second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

### **3. Approval – Resolution No. 2022-02**

- A motion to approve meeting resolution no. 2022-02 was made by Carl J; Gretchen H second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Public Comment**

- Items of interest were mentioned by Jacob R (for more information, reach out to Jacob):
  - The CAL FIRE California Climate Investments Forest Health Grant Program is currently accepting applications which are due no later than 3 pm on March 4<sup>th</sup>. With this program, CAL FIRE seeks to significantly increase fuels management, fire reintroduction, treatment of degraded areas, and conservation of forests. Project activities may include forest fuels reduction, prescribed fire, pest management, reforestation, biomass utilization, conservation easements and/or land acquisition through the Forest Legacy Program, and research through the Forest Research Program.

- The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is accepting application for its Prop 1 Restoration Grant Program. Applications are due by 4 pm on March 4<sup>th</sup>. This funding is intended to implement the three broad objective of the California Water Action Plan: more reliable water supplies; the restoration of important species and habitat; and a more resilient, sustainably managed water resources system (water supply, water quality, flood protection, and environment) that can better withstand inevitable and unforeseen pressures in the coming decades.
- The Madera/Chowchilla RCD is hiring an Agricultural Conservationist/Project Assistant part-time with schedule flexibility. The application deadline is March 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The State Water Resources Control Board has begun to accept applications for its Wastewater Arrearage Program through April 1<sup>st</sup>. Residential and commercial debt accrued from March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, through June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, is covered by this funding opportunity. Wastewater customers cannot apply for funding directly, but they will receive a credit for their eligible debt from their wastewater agency within 60 days of the agency receiving funding. An applicant workshop recording and presentation slides are available online.
- Madera County, Madera/Chowchilla RCD, and Madera County Farm Bureau are hosting an agriculture plastic container recycling event on March 28<sup>th</sup> in the Farm Bureau's parking lot. Pesticide containers must be triple rinsed and inspected before disposal; 30 or 55-gallon drums must be cut in half or quarters lengthwise (top to bottom); caps, labels, and bungs must be removed; no bulk cage type containers; and no trash or poly pipe will be accepted.
- The CAL FIRE Wildfire Resilience Block Grant is now accepting applications through April 1<sup>st</sup>. \$10 million in funding through this program is available to support private forestland owners. Applicants are limited to counties, resource conservation districts, special districts, and 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that have the capacity to deliver a forestry-based assistance program. The purpose of this opportunity is to meet the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force Action Plan goals 1.09 – 1.15 by providing funding to regional applicants who serve as aggregators to provide technical and financial assistance to groups of nonindustrial forestland owners (3 – 5,000 acres) in a specific region.
- The Department of Conservation has announced the release of the 2022 Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program Guidelines and Solicitation Notices. Applications are due April 1<sup>st</sup>, and awards will be announced in mid-May. This program seeks to increase regional capacity to repurpose agricultural land to reduce reliance on groundwater while providing community health, economic wellbeing, water supply, habitat, renewable energy, and climate benefits. This new program includes three different

grant types: Regional block grants, Statewide support entity grants, and Grants for tribes.

- The California Department of Forestry and fire Protection is accepting applications for its Rural Fire Capacity Grant Program. Applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 pm on May 4<sup>th</sup>. This is a cost-share program (50%) and there is roughly \$1.5 million available in funds, with \$500 - \$20,000 awarded per project. This funding is provided to organize, train, and equip fire departments in rural areas and rural communities to prevent and suppress fires. Training of local fire forces in both wildfire and structural fire techniques is a primary goal of this grant. The program should include a basic training program of at least 40 hours. In addition, an advanced training course of at least 40 hours should be developed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **5. Discussion & Action - Financial Report/Warrant Approvals**

- February 2022 Financial Report
  - Carl J reported that there was an income of \$13,125 for the month and we spent \$2,000. This leaves us with \$33,870.05 at the end of the month. We have 5 members that have not paid their dues yet. Keith H mentioned that the City of Madera has not received the invoice yet, and Carl mentioned he will check on that to see who it was sent to and get back to Keith. Jacob R also added that the invoices were mailed out to all members on January 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - A motion to approve the financial report was made by Carl J; Gretchen H second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.

### **6. Discussion – Proposition 1 Disadvantaged Community Involvement Funding**

- San Joaquin Valley
  - Self-Help Enterprises and Chowchilla Management Zone – Projects 12 and 13
    - Jacob R mentioned that he sent in the extension request for this project, and it is still being reviewed by DWR as of January 27<sup>th</sup>.
    - Jacob also mentioned the data sharing agreement for one of the grant deliverables. SHE and CMZ agree that not doing a formal agreement is OK with this, and so is DWR. Jacob said that just including a verbal agreement in the minutes for this meeting would be sufficient. The data will be uploaded to GeoTracker. Tom W commented that he would like the group to vote on this to make it official.
    - A motion to approve the data sharing agreement was made by Carl J; Kristi R second; all voted; Motion passed unanimously.
- Chowchilla Nitrate Control Program
  - Kristi R reported that they sent out mailers regarding domestic well testing to the Chowchilla zip code (93610) and the El Nido zip code (95317). They sent out a total of 2,265 mailers to homes. To-date they have received a pretty good response from those mailers, and they are going to continue

to send out mailers a few more times. CMZ also has a few public meetings coming up.

## **7. Discussion – Proposition 1 IRWM Implementation Funding**

- Mountain Counties and San Joaquin Valley Counties
  - Indian Lakes and Parkwood
    - Eddie M reported that they are still waiting on the meter order. Eddie spoke with the vendor a few weeks ago and all the meters still have not been received. Tom W asked if the vendor knows an estimated time for the order completion, and Eddie answered the only update he has is for the Parkwood meters since they will be installing the brass meters there, and those meters are expected to be fulfilled first. No expected date right now.
      - Clyde W asked if there was a deadline for this project and if the order delay is going to cause any issues with getting the project done on time for Indian Lakes, and Eddie answered that the current deadline is December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year, but Eddie will be submitting an extension request to DWR. The DWR funding coordinator has already been notified about this. The extension request will be sent to DWR after the Parksdale project is completed in mid-March so any leftover funding can be requested to be rolled over to the meter projects along with the extension request at the same time. The extension request will be for one year, making the deadline December 31, 2023.
  - City of Madera
    - Keith H reported that the design for this project is continuing, which is about 60% complete.
  - Parksdale
    - Eddie M mentioned that this project is nearing completion and will be done in the middle of March. Any leftover funding from this project will be rolled over into the meter projects for Indian Lakes and Parkwood. If there is leftover funding, the request to roll it over to the meter projects will be included with the extension request.
    - Eddie also added that the materials to finish this project have been received which put it on a brief hold, but they are going to resume work this Wednesday and they should be finished in the next few weeks assuming there are no electrical delays.
  - City of Chowchilla
    - Jason R reported that they had a meeting with the state on the draft agreement where the state noticed some dates were wrong which are now being revised. The City of Chowchilla is currently waiting on the draft funding agreement to come back to them from DWR.

## **8. Discussion – Domestic Wells – Prop 68 Funding**

- Stephanie A reported that the Madera County GSA has some draft documents circulating in the Madera Subbasin for the technical memo that describes the domestic well inventory. Stephanie is about to send that to the Chowchilla Subbasin as well for people to review. Luhdorff & Scalmanini has also chosen

some locations for the monitoring wells which is part of the grant, and they are investigating those locations. Luhdorff & Scalmanini will present at this meeting next month on their end results and the recommended locations for the monitoring wells.

#### **9. Discussion – NRCS Cost-Share Pilot Program for Recharge Projects**

- Jacob R introduced Aysha M with Sustainable Conservation and mentioned that Aysha, Rogell R, and Wendy R will be presenting on a cost-share pilot program for recharge projects with the NRCS. The presentation slides are attached at the end of these minutes.
- For more information on the NRCS Cost-Share Pilot Program for Recharge Projects, please visit the program's website at <https://suscon.org/nrcs-recharge-pilot/>
- Carl J asked a question regarding the 15-year contract for this project - what if someone is awarded and spends all this money for doing recharge, but we are still in a drought in the next 15-years, where is that person/farmer at regarding the completion of this project? Wendy answered that if someone receives money for building or constructing a recharge basin, NRCS expects that basin to be in place for 15-years. They expect it to not be destroyed within those 15-years and to be operational when flood waters are available for recharge. The contract is complete once the applicant completes the project to USDA's satisfaction. NRCS does acknowledge that during the 3-years for this pilot program, we may experience a continuous drought those 3-years. On-farm recharge is an annual payment under this program. If no water is available during the term of the contract, the contract will basically just be canceled out due to the conditions (drought) being uncontrollable. If there is no water available, then the conservation practice cannot be done, and the applicant will not be penalized in any way for that.

#### **10. Discussion – Creek Fire / Forest Management / Watershed**

- Tom W reported that some of the forest management projects up in the Sierra Forest have been allowed to continue, but groups are still fighting against other projects which is not allowing those projects to continue. Tom is hopeful that these issues will be settled soon, and the projects will be allowed to continue moving forward.
- Tom W also mentioned that the group sponsored a tour a few months ago, and they were surprised how many small pine trees were beginning to grow back after the Creek Fire. Many of the small pine trees were 6" – 8" tall.
- Jacob R will be putting together a flyer/newsletter about the Creek Fire tour sponsored by the Madera RWMG, and the group members will receive that before the March meeting so they can vote on it before Jacob begins to disburse it.

#### **11. Discussion – Drought Working Group**

- Jenny N reported that during the last drought work group meeting for Madera County, DWR presented some goals that have been developed for domestic wells and groundwater wells. They also shared the [California drought website](#)

which has a lot of resources for people to use relating to the drought. Here is the list of website tools that DWR shared during the drought work group meeting:

- [California's Groundwater Live](#)
- [SGMA Data Viewer \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [California Water Watch](#)
- [Workbook: DWR Drought Risk Explorer - Rural Communities \(March 2021\) \(ca.gov\)](#)

## **12. Discussion – 2022 IRWM Implementation Grant Prop 1 Round 2 Funding - 29:35**

- Jacob R reported that there is no money allocated for the Madera Region in the SJRFA – there was an agreement signed by all SJRFA regions in August 2019 with money allocated to each region out of the \$31 million allocated to the SJRFA before round 1. Madera was allocated \$1,689,093 and used it all in round 1 (\$1,689,635). Carl J added that it was a good idea for us to use up all the funding in round 1 due to the delays we have been experiencing so far with material shortages.
- Jacob also mentioned that he is still waiting for the MCFA coordinating call to be scheduled. Funding allocated to MCFA was split evenly between the 9 regions prior to round 1 (just like for SJRFA). Each region got \$1,146,232.67 and Madera used \$551,450 in round 1, leaving us with \$594,782.67 for round 2.
- Jacob commented that DWR is looking to do two separate deadlines for the round 2 funding, with one deadline in October 2022 and another in February 2023. Tom W would like the group to apply in October 2022 and to begin advertising that we have the \$594,782.67 in funding available to apply for in the MCFA. Carl J asked if the Oakhurst pipeline project would be eligible for this funding, and Jacob answered that it would but the amount we have available to apply for in round 2 may not cover the full cost to implement the pipeline extension. DWR's Multibenefit and Urban Drought Relief Program funding is what we applied for to fund the design of the pipeline extension, and that design project may not be finished in time for the round 2 funding since the two deadlines may happen prior to the completion of the design project.
- Jennifer M commented that she is available to us for help with DWR programs and applications. She is the DWR rep for the Fresno area. She is also willing to review any other projects we want to turn in applications for with other agencies besides DWR.

## **13. Discussion – IRWM Project List – 2022 Call for Projects**

- Jacob R mention that he will send an email out on March 3<sup>rd</sup> to start the 40-day period for the 2022 IRWM Project List Call for Projects, and it will close on April 12<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm. Members will vote on projects to add them to the project list during the April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **14. Report – Sustainable Groundwater Management – SGMA**

- Stephanie A reported that the Chowchilla Subbasin has revisions underway based on the letters from DWR calling the planning incomplete so they are trying to fill on those gaps which they have started to work on. For the Madera

Subbasin, they have not received any letters from DWR yet since it is on a delayed track compared to the Chowchilla Subbasin. The Delta-Mendota Subbasin did receive a letter from DWR. They are working on figuring out how to address the gaps identified in that letter.

- Stephanie also mentioned that the Madera County GSA has a rate study underway for recharge, land repurposing, and part of the domestic well mitigation.
- No new updates for the City of Madera GSA or the City of Chowchilla GSA. Kristi R reported that Triangle T GSA is working with the Madera County GSA to get everything in the letters from DWR addressed.

#### **15. New/ Suggested Members for the Madera RWMG**

- No new members suggested. Jacob R asked if there are any GSAs in Madera County that he should reach out to regarding joining the Madera RWMG, and Tom W asked attendees to send any ideas over to Jacob.

#### **16. Future Agenda Items**

- Pete Leffler with Luhdorff & Scalmanini will be reporting next month on the Prop 68 project with Madera County GSA under “Discussion – Prop 68 Funding” on the agenda.
- Tom W asked for Aysha and her team to join the meeting next month if they are available to provide updates on the cost-share pilot program that they presented on today. Tom would just like an update on what agencies are trying to participate in the cost-share program and what projects they are looking to do with the funding. Tom would like to keep them on the agenda for the next 2 months. Aysha M added that applications for this cost-share pilot program are due April 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **17. Next Meeting**

- Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 1:30 pm on Zoom for now until COVID restrictions are lifted and allow us to meet in person.

#### **18. The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 pm.**

# NRCS Launches NEW Pilot Groundwater Recharge Program

2/28/2022 presentation to Madera RWMG by:

Wendy Rash, Water Quality Specialist, NRCS

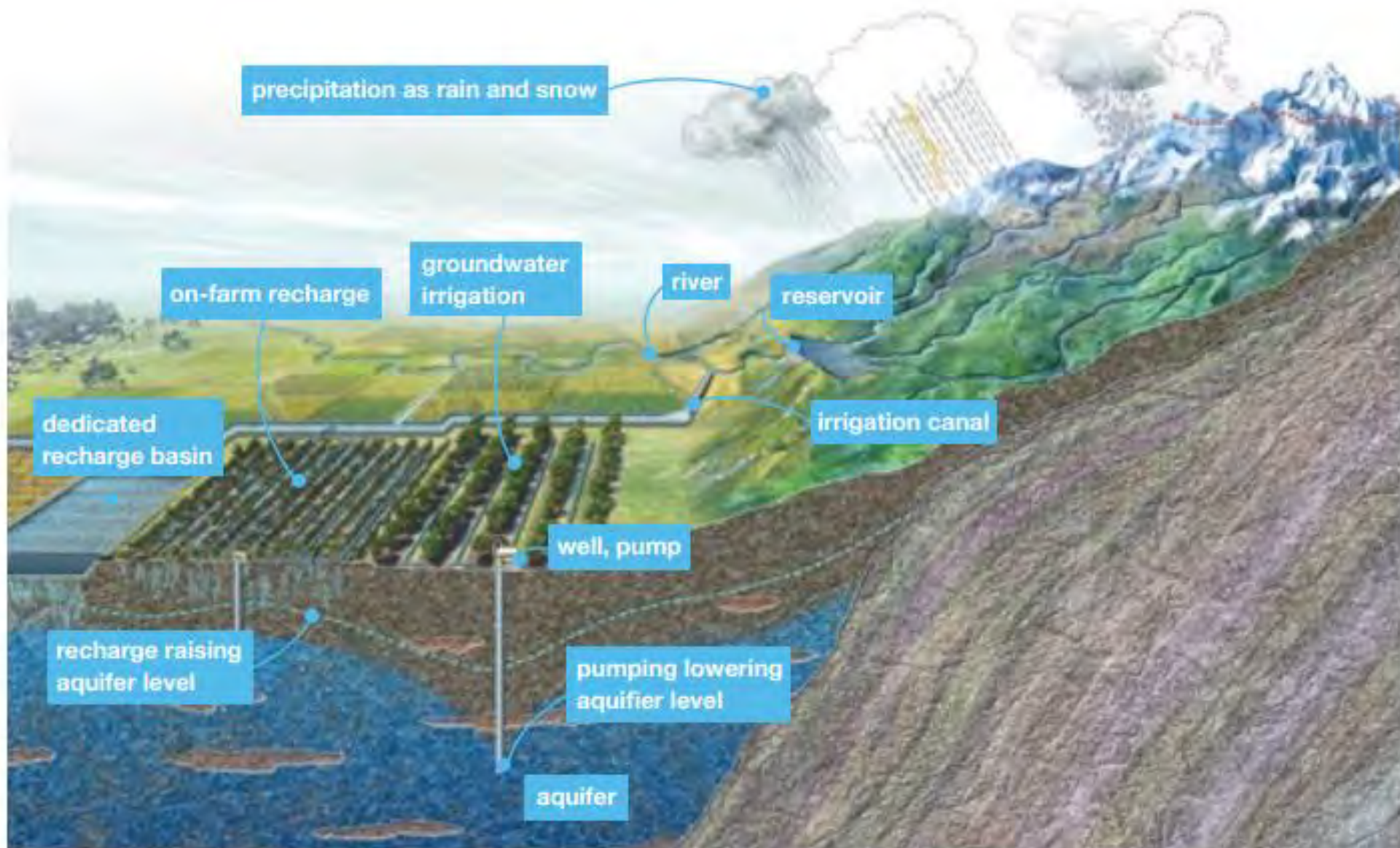
Rogell Rogers, Agronomist, Sustainable Conservation

Aysha Massell, CV Water Program Director, Sustainable Conservation



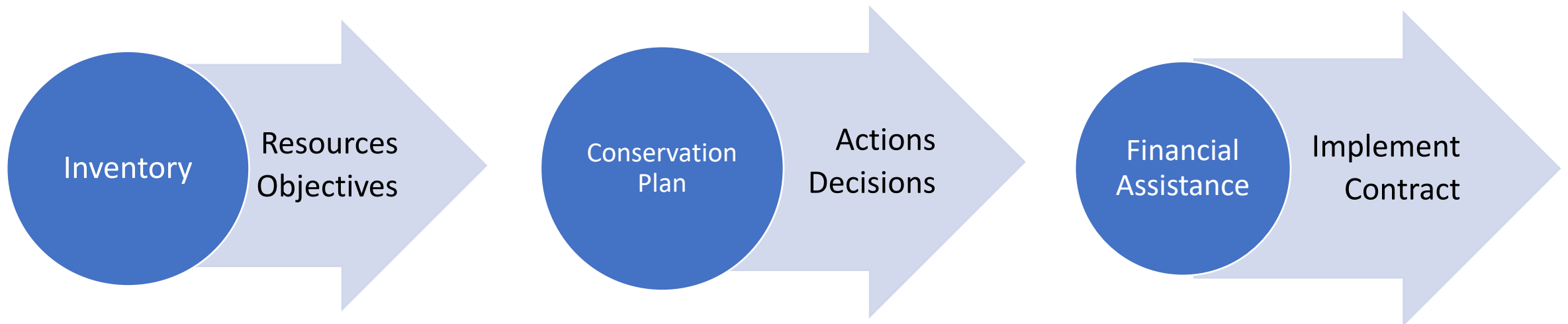


# Overview of recharge



# NRCS Financial assistance programs

- Federal dollars through the Farm Bill Conservation Title
- EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentives Program



# Why a recharge pilot program?

- NRCS Planning Process
  - Resource Concerns
  - Conservation Practices
- Groundwater depletion recognized by NRCS as a Resource Concern
- Interim Conservation Practice Standard developed
  - Must be field tested before being adopted
  - Is it effective at addressing the resource concern?
  - How does it work within our programs?

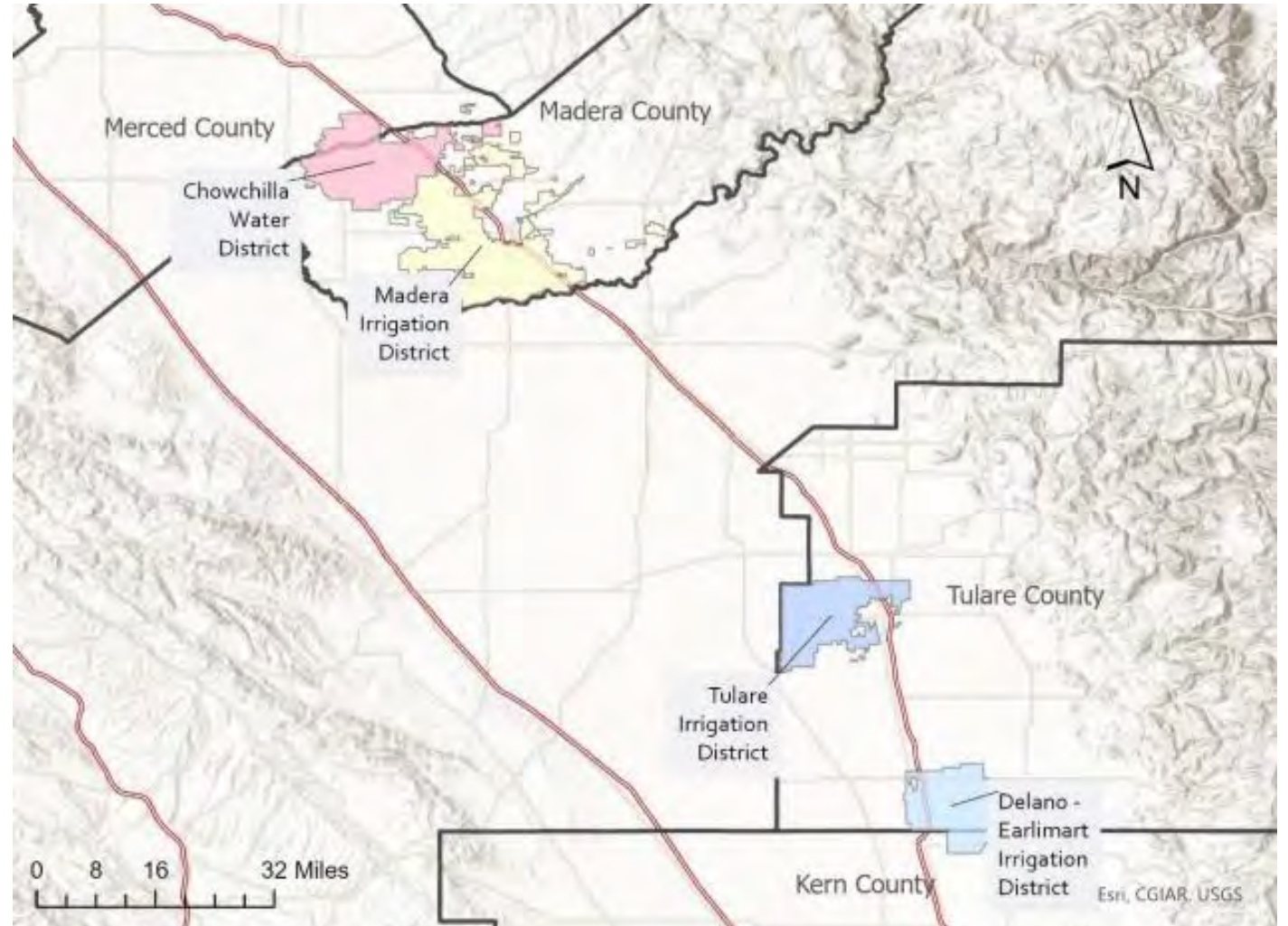
# Recharge Pilot program

- \$2 million total available
- Complete projects will be funded
  - Recharge practices
  - “Supporting” practices

# Program eligibility - Location

Projects must be in one of the following locations:

- Madera County
- Merced County
  - in the Chowchilla Irrigation District boundaries only
- Tulare County
  - in the Tulare Irrigation District or Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District boundaries only
- Kern County
  - in the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District boundaries only



# Program eligibility – Water access

Projects must EITHER:

- have access to recharge water from an Irrigation District OR
- have access and water rights to winter flood water



# Applicant eligibility

- Water Management Entities (WMEs) such as Irrigation Districts
- Farm-scale applicants such as growers and landowners

# Is this program a good fit?

## Choose the recharge practice:

### Recharge trench or basin

- Permanent feature (15 years) – land taken out of production



### On farm recharge

- Management practice in tandem with agriculture



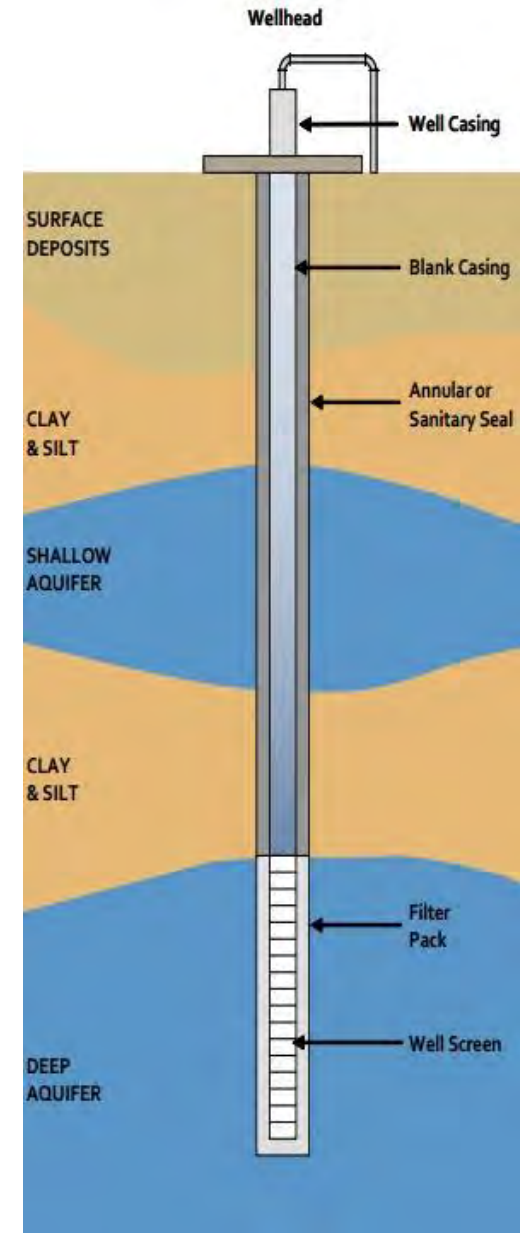


# Is this program a good fit?

## Monitoring:

Is there a nearby well that can be used to monitor changes in groundwater that might be associated with recharge on the site?

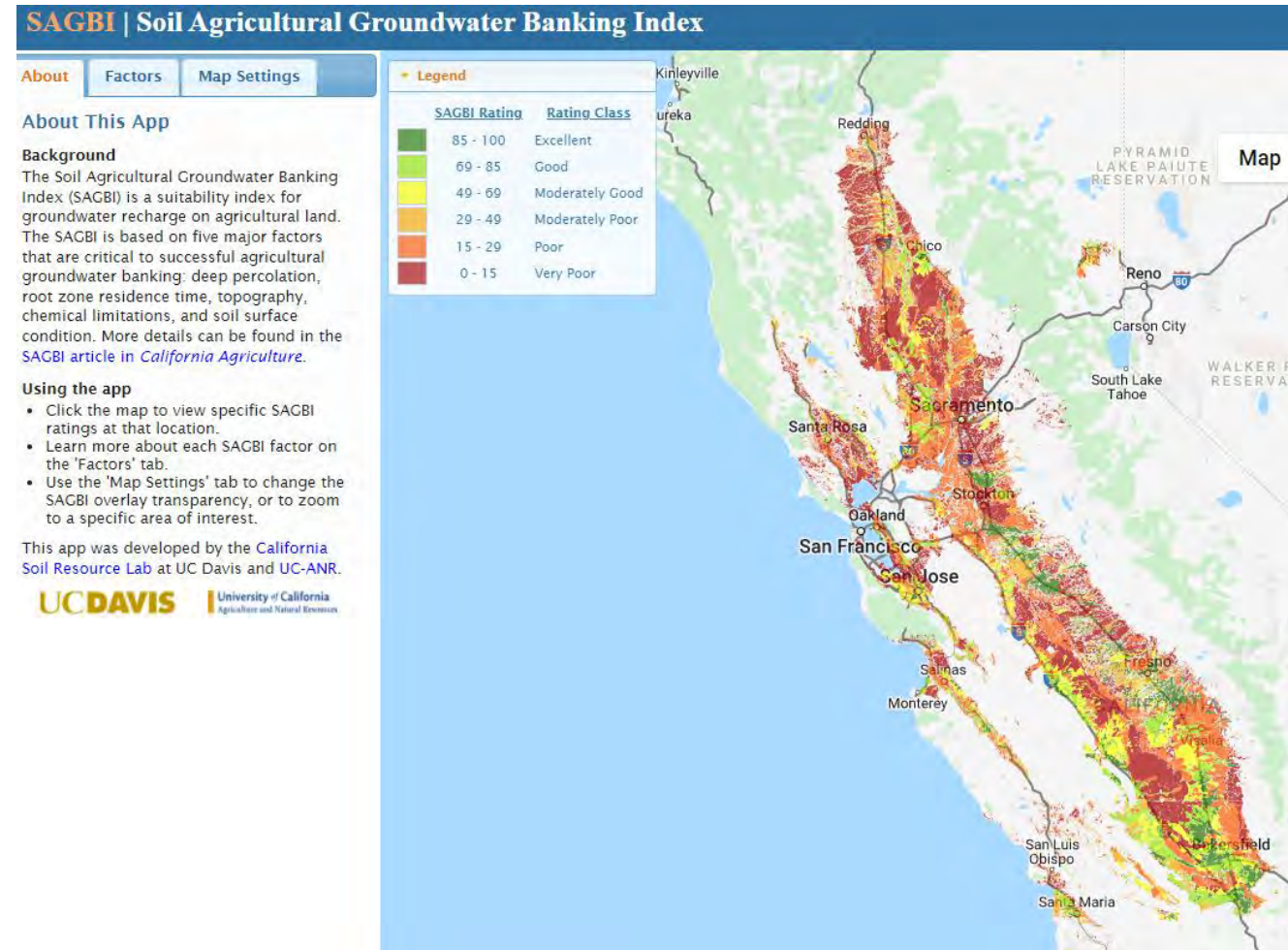
- screened to the appropriate aquifer
- within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the center of the flooded field or 1,000 feet from the edge of the field



# Is this program a good fit?

## Site suitability:

- Has the project area been identified as a high priority recharge area in a GSP?
- Does your site have sufficient saturated hydraulic conductivity (percolation rates) in the top 5 feet of soil?
  - Check your site's suitability using the SAGBI tool here:  
<https://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/sagbi/>

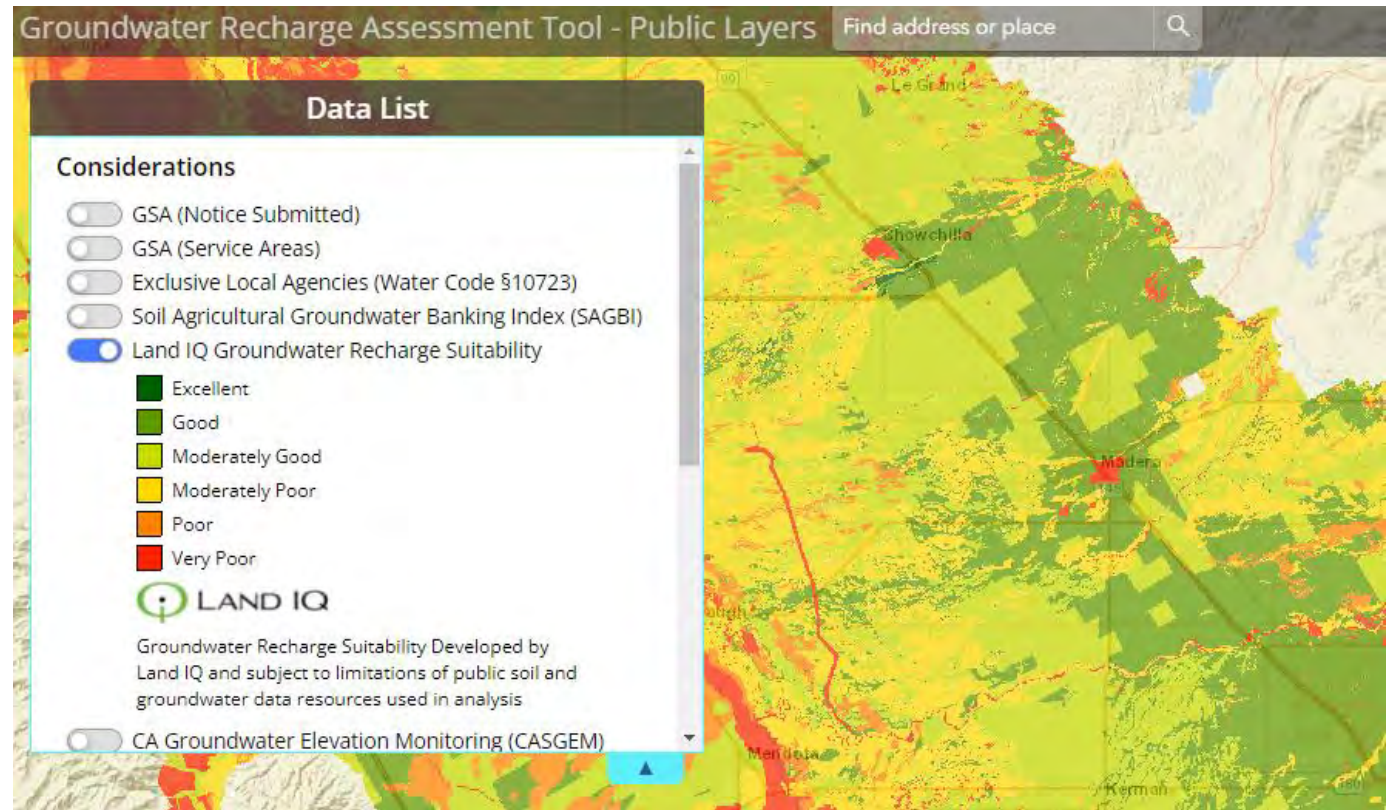


# Is this program a good fit?

Hydrogeologic suitability:

Does your site have connectivity to the aquifer? This information can be found by:

- On-site sub-surface soil investigations (such as deep soil cores, cone penetrometer, or nearby well log data)
- Electromagnetic survey and/or ranking in LandIQ recharge Suitability Tool, available here: <http://gratviewer.earthgenome.org/>

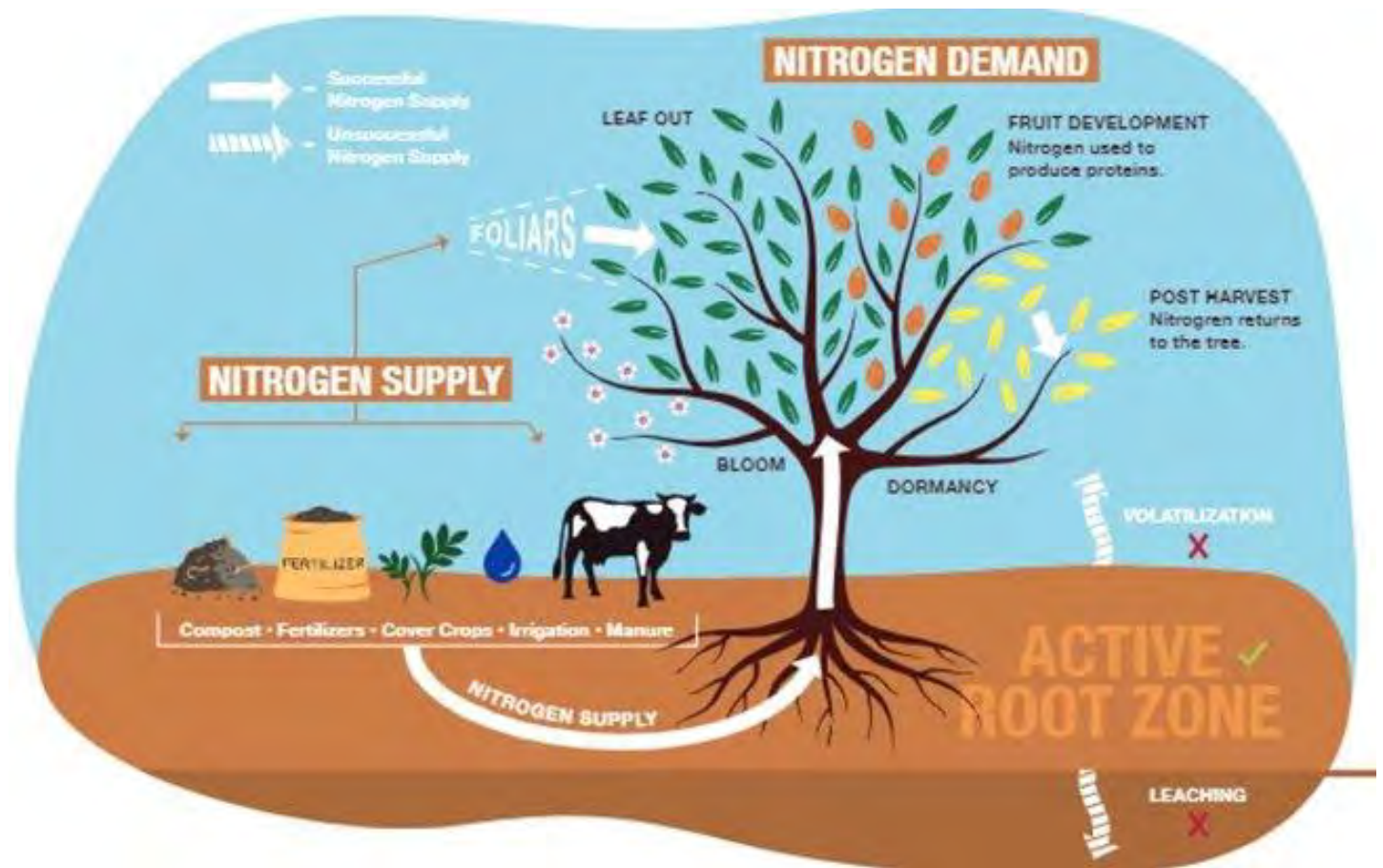


# Is this program a good fit?

For on-farm recharge ONLY (817):

Do you practice excellent nutrient management and integrated pest management?

If not, recharge is not recommended.



*Nitrogen Best Management Practices, Almond Board of California (2020)*

# Financial assistance

These costs will be reimbursed IF you are selected to receive a contract AND when design criteria are met

## Recharge trench or basin (815)

Trench: \$3.56 per cubic yard excavated

Basin: \$4,191.27 per AF storage capacity <10 ac ft

Basin \$3,993.42 per AF storage capacity  $\geq$ 10 ac ft

Cost share payments will occur only once, after construction is completed according to design standards.

# Financial assistance

These costs will be reimbursed IF you are selected to receive a contract AND when design criteria are met

## On farm recharge (817)

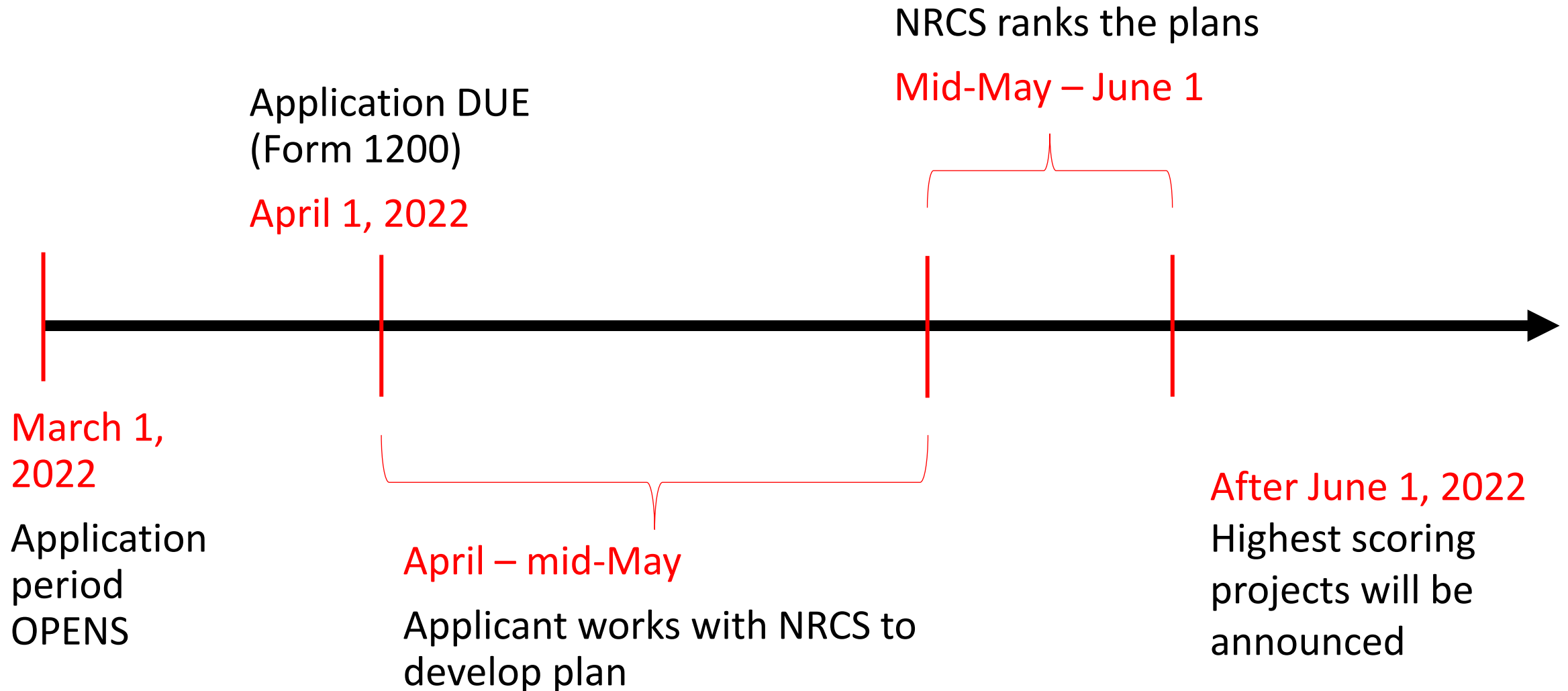
\$99.89 per acre inundated\* <60 acres

\$94.30 per acre inundated\* >=60 acres

Farmers are reimbursed by number of acres inundated with water – this means that if recharge water is NOT available in a given year, then cost share reimbursements will NOT be applicable for that year.

OFR contracts are up to 3 years long and growers are able to get cost share reimbursements for up to 2 out of 3 years, with opportunities to reapply for renewal.

# Deadlines and Timelines



# For more information:

Applications (Form 1200) must be received by the appropriate Field Office by **April 1, 2022**.

Contact your field office to receive the form and get further information.

Madera Service Center	559-674-4628
Merced Service Center	209-722-4119
Bakersfield Service Center	661-281-2765
Visalia Service Center	559-734-8732

## General questions?

wendy.rash@usda.gov

For more information, including program application documents, go to:

<https://suscon.org/nrcs-recharge-pilot/>