



Tehama County
Wednesday, November 12, 2025 8:30
AM
Groundwater Commission
Meeting Minutes

Tehama County Board of Supervisors
Chambers
727 Oak Street, Red Bluff, CA 96080
<https://tehamacounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
Board Chambers

8:30 AM

Commissioners: Martin Spannaus, City of Corning; Jeff Godwin, City of Red Bluff; Hal Crain, City of Tehama; Kris Lamkin, El Camino Irrigation District; Todd Hamer, Los Molinos Community Services District; Martha Slack, Rio Alto Water District; Liz Merry District 1; Adam Englehardt, District 2; Seth Lawrence, District 3; Michael Ward, District 4; David Lester, District 5;

Justin Jenson, Flood Control/Water Resources Manager; Lena Sequeira, Administration

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance / Introductions

Present	Commissioner Kris Lamkin, Commissioner Michael Ward, Commissioner Hal Crain, Commissioner Martin Spannaus, Commissioner Adam Englehardt, Commissioner David Lester, Commissioner Liz Merry, and Commissioner Jeff Godwin
ABSENT	Commissioner Todd Hamer, Commissioner Martha Slack, and Commissioner Seth Lawrence

Public Comment

Frank Andres Came up to give update on his well measurements. There is one well he has being monitored by DWR and has other residents who are going to also have their wells monitored by DWR.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - August 13 2025 25-1970

a) Waive the reading and approve the minutes of the regular meeting held 8/13/2025

RESULT: APPROVE

MOVER: Michael Ward

SECONDER: Liz Merry

AYES: Commissioner Lamkin, Commissioner Ward, Commissioner Crain, Commissioner Spannaus, Commissioner Englehardt, Commissioner Lester, Commissioner Merry, and Commissioner Godwin

ABSENT: Commissioner Hamer, Commissioner Slack, and Commissioner Lawrence

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - September 10 2025 25-1971

a) Waive the reading and approve the minutes of the regular meeting held 9/10/2025

RESULT: APPROVE

MOVER: Michael Ward

SECONDER: Liz Merry

AYES: Commissioner Lamkin, Commissioner Ward, Commissioner Crain, Commissioner Spannaus, Commissioner Englehardt, Commissioner Lester, Commissioner Merry, and Commissioner Godwin

ABSENT: Commissioner Hamer, Commissioner Slack, and Commissioner Lawrence

3. Groundwater Recharge Presentation by LSCE 25-1974

A resident commented on projects currently taking place and shared their opinion regarding recharge locations. The resident requested reports outlining how recharge project locations were selected.

Englehardt stated that he would also like to review the requested reports.

Teasdale presented budget information specific to the Red Bluff area in relation to grant time restrictions and explained the deadline for expending funds. He noted that an extension to utilize the grant funds was not approved. As a result, projects were identified that could be implemented within the remaining timeframe. He stated that the District is partnering with the RCD to complete these projects. Teasdale reviewed project details and provided an update on their current status.

Englehardt asked about the possibility of purchasing materials in advance for future use.

Teasdale confirmed that materials would be purchased ahead of time for later implementation.

Discussion followed regarding the costs and resources associated with the proposed projects. The group also discussed reconvening the Recharge Ad Hoc Committee to assist in making decisions regarding expenditure of funds.

Kevin, representing the RCD, provided a brief overview of the previously mentioned projects, noting that they are aimed at supporting groundwater sustainability. He stated that \$400,000 has been allocated for these efforts, which must be expended by March 31, 2026. He acknowledged the challenges associated with completing the work within the given timeframe and reviewed the efficiencies and benefits the projects are expected to provide.

Englehardt commented on the process and shared his perspective on partnering with the RCD.

Kevin reflected on his experience performing this scope of work.

Merry asked whether the RCD would like the commissioners to share contact information with local growers.

Kevin responded affirmatively and provided clarification.

Jenson commented that, in his opinion, this approach has the potential to provide the least expensive available water. He clarified that growers are not technically purchasing water, but rather reducing usage and leaving more water in the aquifer.

Will Anderson with LSCE presented a PowerPoint presentation on groundwater recharge, providing an update on the current status of projects. He began with the Los Molinos Subbasin, reviewing project updates and outlining next steps.

Discussion occurred regarding project formalities and associated water rights.

Anderson continued presenting on recharge assessments and described the partnership with GEI to divert floodwater for recharge. He reviewed related data and outlined the next steps required for approval.

Discussion followed regarding the floodwater diversion process and the agencies or entities that would be involved.

Anderson presented an overview of annual data, noting that the Los Molinos Subbasin is experiencing fewer groundwater challenges compared to other areas.

Slack asked whether the diversion efforts would be affected following implementation of the Sikes Reservoir project.

Anderson clarified and further explained the process for flood diversions. He provided an update on the current status of permitting and outlined the next steps.

Anderson discussed recharge plans that are pending approval, noting that the wells proposed for use already exist and are currently production wells.

Crain asked whether there are additional potential recharge projects under consideration.

Discussion followed regarding project details and potential water quality concerns associated with recharge efforts.

Jenson asked Anderson to explain the benefits of Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) compared to surface water application for recharge.

Anderson responded that, particularly in the identified locations, placing more water into the aquifer improves the ability to use it later. He explained that surface recharge can result in water loss, including through evaporation, whereas directing water deeper into the aquifer increases the likelihood of future recovery.

Discussion followed regarding review of related reports.

Jenson commented that staff are working on creating a section of the website where related data will be publicly available.

Ward asked whether a map of project locations could be provided.

Anderson stated that he would distribute a map.

Anderson then provided an update on the Thomes Creek project.

Discussion followed comparing the number of annual diversion days at Thomes Creek to those at Elder Creek.

Ward asked whether any recharge occurs beyond flood diversions.

Anderson responded that additional recharge is possible and explained the circumstances under which it may occur. He noted that he could not quantify the percentage but confirmed that some additional recharge does take place.

Anderson also provided an update on grant funding for groundwater recharge in the Red Bluff Subbasin. He stated that the effort is ongoing and that the same GEI system successfully used in Los Molinos will be utilized. He reviewed the estimated acre-feet anticipated from stormflow diversions.

Discussion occurred regarding project costs. It was explained that grant funding will cover assessments aimed at maximizing potential diversion points. This was followed by discussion related to water rights associated with the proposed diversions.

Jenson discussed water volume and availability during flood diversion events. He noted that the District is working with DWR to obtain a higher diversion ratio in order to increase overall diversion totals.

Discussion followed regarding diversion allowances.

Anderson reviewed surface water use in the Red Bluff Subbasin, outlining potential project availability. He noted that currently contracted surface water supplies are not being fully utilized for in-lieu recharge.

Discussion occurred regarding estimated annual in-lieu recharge and its potential impact on addressing groundwater overdraft.

Anderson then provided an update on the Corning Subbasin, including the Simpson Road multi-benefit project. He reviewed the recharge sites that were evaluated and determined to be viable.

Discussion occurred regarding potential recharge and associated projections.

Lester asked about the amount of lateral flow that may not ultimately reach the aquifer. Anderson responded that it varies by site, but generally the flow follows a pathway that moves away from the creek.

Jenson commented that additional time and continued monitoring will be necessary to better understand the results as the work progresses.

Ward asked about beneficial use related to the recharge efforts.

Anderson explained that recharge itself does not qualify as beneficial use, but storing water for later use does. He described the process and noted that a monitoring system is in place to track stored water.

Anderson provided an update on the status of recharge projects in the Corning Subbasin.

Discussion followed regarding recharge rates and flow directions.

Anderson highlighted a project near the Rolling Hills Casino, noting that the tribe has a long-term plan to create a recreational water feature. The plan includes incorporating existing dry wells to capture excess water for aquifer recharge. He explained that this is a slower, long-term project aimed at putting water into the aquifer through the dry wells.

Crain asked about the installation of dry wells.

Anderson responded that no dry wells would be installed this season, as the work must align with the tribe's long-term plans. He noted that engineering work is ongoing to integrate the wells into their plan, so there will likely be no benefits this winter.

Anderson provided an update on the California Olive Ranch project along the Tehama-Colusa Canal, explaining that the project would utilize 215 water when available.

Discussion followed regarding the annexation and approval of the Kirkwood Water District.

Anderson explained that 215 water refers to water that can be sold at a reduced rate when there is excess supply.

Crain asked whether these allocations are typically available during the winter.

Anderson noted that, in some cases, allocations may occur as late as April or May.

Discussion followed regarding purchasing and allocation of water.

Munson, with the LSCE grant team, reviewed processes related to purchasing water and how the contracting is handled.

Anderson provided an update on the Stony Creek diversion project, outlining next steps and projected diversion rates.

Discussion followed regarding project permitting, the timeline to bring the project online, and the schedule for flood diversions. The group also discussed the status of fish screens for all projects. Anderson explained the role of the Department of Fish and Wildlife in the process and noted that certain activities could be delayed due to regulatory restrictions.

Public comment

A resident shared their opinion on groundwater recharge through diversions.

Anderson responded, explaining how the projects have been prioritized and providing estimated benefits by water district.

Englehardt asked about project deadlines.

Anderson answered that the Corning Subbasin grant has been extended through the end of next year, while Red Bluff was not extended and has a deadline of April 30, 2026.

Anderson reviewed estimated annual recharge amounts, noting that they may fluctuate from year to year.

Ward requested copies of the original applications.

Jenson stated that Ward could email the request and staff would provide copies if available.

Crain asked about obtaining data on the recharge budget by subbasin.

Anderson replied that some of that information would be included in the RCD portion of the reporting.

Discussion followed regarding the data package to be made available on the website.

Public Comment Continued

A resident asked about monitoring wells for the discussed projects and how LSCE would distinguish between regular recharge and project-specific recharge.

Anderson explained that each site with a five-year plan must have a monitoring plan. Existing wells in the area are being used, and recharge impacts will be compared and quantified to assess each project.

4. Well Mitigation Presentation

25-1973

Jenson presented on the Well Mitigation Program, requesting the group focus on key details where input is needed to make a recommendation to the Board by next month's meeting. He highlighted that both this program and Demand Management will require a series of local legislative actions after plan approval, which could take up to six months.

Englehardt requested clarification that today's discussion is only to familiarize the group with the concept and that a more detailed discussion would occur next month.

Jenson confirmed, stating that no approval is being sought today.

Jenson continued, explaining who is involved in making decisions and the purpose of the discussion. He noted that there are no additional working group or ad hoc meetings associated with this plan; final decisions will be made by the Groundwater Commission to forward to the Board for approval. He reviewed key issues and eligibility criteria for the program.

Englehardt asked if the program would address only domestic wells.

Jenson clarified that there is no distinction between agricultural or domestic well types.

Jenson went over different scenarios, emphasizing fairness in the process and the goal of using existing resources to make the program efficient. He noted that the program is planned to begin January 1st, but required legislation will take approximately six months to implement. He explained that the program is a response to approved plans from DWR.

Jenson detailed the initial assessment process to determine if a well is dry and who would conduct the assessment. He explained next steps if a well is determined to be dry, eligibility criteria for applicants, and noted that low-income users may be directed to North Valley Services. He stated that the majority of wells replaced by the District would be for higher-income users.

Ward asked about the income threshold and funding.

Jenson clarified and continued explaining program requirements and stipulations, including reimbursement, documentation, well age, and proration allowances. He provided detailed discussion on the 40-year well lifespan guideline.

Englehardt asked about acquiring property with no well information.

Jenson responded that Environmental Health should have well records for properties after 1985.

Jenson continued reviewing program requirements, discussing the possibility of incorporating access to drinking water within the program. He explained the timeline associated with well replacement, the process after an application is received, and the criteria required to qualify.

He noted that there would be a \$40,000 reimbursement cap, which should cover most domestic wells and some agricultural or commercial wells. Jenson emphasized that the

program does not differentiate well types; the cap is intended to prevent the District from funding large infrastructure projects.

He highlighted that program implementation would take approximately six months after Board approval.

Jenson asked the group to review the information presented and provide input at the next meeting to make a recommendation to the Board.

Discussion followed regarding the cost of potential lawsuits versus the cost of well installation.

Jenson noted that low-income wells would be supported through North Valley, and that funding for those wells is already available.

Englehardt asked about other counties that have implemented caps on well replacement.

Jenson discussed the well mitigation comparison document and explained how it was developed.

Slack asked whether the program outline had been submitted for legal review.

Jenson stated that it has not yet been submitted for legal review.

Merry commented on the replacement of agricultural wells, asking why the District should be assisting large extractors in pumping more water.

Jenson explained the rationale for the wording in the program, noting that the group did not want to exclude agricultural wells in order to also support smaller users throughout the county.

A resident shared their experience with wells in their area and asked whether there would be compensation for new pumps or for lowering pumps due to reduced groundwater levels caused by over-pumping.

Jenson responded that a well would only be considered dry if there is no pumpable water. He further explained that the District would take responsibility for providing short-term access to water in such cases.

A resident commented on the work that has gone into the program and requested refinement of a core principle. They shared their opinion regarding the age stipulation in the program requirements.

Jenson noted that the age limit is something for the Commission to consider.

Discussion followed regarding the 40-year age limit defined in the plan.

A resident spoke about the 40-year age restriction as it relates to their area, requesting that the age threshold be reconsidered. They shared their experience with issues caused by large agricultural wells being installed nearby.

Further discussion regarding the age restriction.

A resident expressed concern about the cost of replacing wells that must be drilled deeper and asked about the source of funding and the expected reimbursement timeline.

Englehardt asked whether a lack of available funds would serve as a cap on the program.

Jenson responded that this is a valid point and noted that there is less risk in mitigating wells when focusing on paying for irrigation efficiency measures.

5. Standing Agenda Items

25-1972

Recharge

Was covered earlier in the meeting.

Grant Status

Jenson noted that some funds were extended while others were not, which is why certain projects are being fast-tracked. He emphasized that the Groundwater Recharge projects should expend a significant portion of the remaining funds.

Discussion followed on obtaining a list of projects from LSCE and scheduling a Recharge Ad Hoc meeting.

Well Mitigation Plan Working Group Update

Was covered earlier in the meeting. Jenson noted there will be no further meetings for this group.

Demand Management

Jenson stated that a meeting for final discussion on legal review has been requested before moving forward and mentioned that the technical memo is available.

Ward requested to see the legal opinion.

Discussion followed regarding the workplan.

Outreach

Jenson stated that two community outreach meetings are scheduled for December 4th and 5th, and provided details on what would be covered.

Englehardt asked to add "surface water interaction" to the standing agenda items and inquired about coordination with the Planning Commission related to SGMA.

Jenson responded that he would need to speak with them before adding the item.

6. Commission Matters

None

Adjourn

11:51am