

NEWS RELEASE



Farmington

Groundwater Recharge Program

CONTACTS:

Kevin Kauffman, General Manager
Stockton East Water District
Phone: (209) 948-0333

Pat Dwyer, Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Phone: (916) 557-7802

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 19, 2003

GROUNDWATER RESTORATION FOCUS OF OPEN HOUSE

Farmington Groundwater Recharge Program aimed to reverse overdraft and stop saline intrusion

Stockton, Calif. — The San Joaquin Farm Bureau Federation will host an open house to unveil a locally-lead program to restore the Eastern San Joaquin County Groundwater Basin through short and long-term field flooding agreements with landowners.

The Farmington Groundwater Recharge Program Open House will be held 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday at the Farm Bureau office, 3290 North Ad Art Way, Stockton. The event is co-sponsored Stockton East Water District (SEWD) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

“Eastern San Joaquin County has become increasingly dependant on the region’s finite groundwater supply and this year’s minimal Stanislaus River water deliveries from New Melones Dam underscores why this program is vital to the county’s future,” SEWD General Manager Kevin Kauffman said. “The Farmington Groundwater Recharge Program is our opportunity to begin restoring area groundwater supplies and ensure the region’s economic future.”

The program is a regional effort to recharge the underground aquifer through periodic spreading of up to 35,000 acre-feet of surplus water per year using the flooded-field method. About 25 parcels totaling 1,200 acres are initially planned for participation in the program.

Stockton East Water District and the Corps will monitor parcels enrolled in the program for percolation efficiency, water quality and level changes, and other issues related to identifying the most cost-effective and cost-efficient recharge method. Stockton East Water District will ask landowners of top performing

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sites to enroll the parcel on a rotating cycle, where recharge and prior land use activities rotate on a five- to 10-year schedule. These owners may also have the option to sell their parcel for use as permanent groundwater recharge facilities, Kauffman said.

Subject matter experts will staff information booths at the open house, and will be available to answer landowner questions. Program managers will give a brief presentation, followed by a question and answer period. Landowners who are interested in participating will be met with one-on-one sometime after the open house to evaluate the landowner's interest and the parcel's suitability. Groundwater recharge is planned to begin in early 2004, Kauffman said.

"We want to hear from landowners so that we can match this program to their needs. With their help, we'll raise this effort to the next level and secure reliable water supplies for Eastern San Joaquin County residents and farmers," Kauffman said.

The program is designed to reverse a historic decline in the Eastern San Joaquin County groundwater table due to long-term pumping in excess of natural replenishment, which has led to saline intrusion to the basin from the Delta. This intrusion has led to the shut-down of several wells in the City of Stockton.

Approximately three-fourths of the \$33.5 million project is provided by the Federal government, with the remaining share paid by SEWD and other local sponsors, Dwyer said.

Funding from Propositions 13 and 50 and local agency's water assessments will assist with the local cost share, Kauffman said.

The initial 35,000 acre-feet/year is based on the Farmington Groundwater Recharge and Seasonal Habitat Study, completed in 2001. Stockton East Water District was the lead-local sponsor of the feasibility study with the Corps. Other study participants included Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District, North San Joaquin Water Conservation District, City of Stockton, San Joaquin County and California Water Service Company.

For additional information, contact Craig Moyle at 916-492-0923, ext. 401.

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