
State Water Resources Control Board

August 2, 2024

Mr. Lance Batistich
Classic Farms



CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OF GROUNDWATER LOCAL COOPERATIVE SOLUTION FOR CLASSIC FARMS

Dear Mr. Batistich:

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopted an emergency regulation that went into effect on February 1, 2024, that establishes emergency minimum flows in the Scott River and Shasta River watersheds (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, §§ 875-875.9) (Regulation). Under the Regulation, local cooperative solutions by individuals or groups may be proposed by petition to the Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director) as an alternative means of reducing water use to meet or preserve the emergency minimum flows, or to provide other fishery benefits, in lieu of curtailment. Section 875, subdivision (f)(4)(D) describes three types of local cooperative solutions that are specifically available for overlying or adjudicated groundwater diversions for irrigated agriculture: Best Management Practices, Graduated Cessation Schedule, and Percent Reduction. The Deputy Director may approve a proposal submitted by an individual or group, provided that it meets the specific requirements of the applicable groundwater local cooperative solution type and satisfies the metering and inspection requirements.

Summary of Proposal

The State Water Board received a groundwater local cooperative solution proposal from Lance Batistich (petitioner) that involves reducing water use from eight groundwater wells that irrigate a total of 615 acres using the Percent Reduction groundwater local cooperative solution option. The petitioner provided two separate Percent Reduction proposals for the Orofino Ranch and Spencer Ranch properties.

- Orofino Ranch: At the Orofino Ranch property, the petitioner proposes to reduce water use by 32 percent from four groundwater wells that irrigate a total of 432 acres. The petitioner proposes to achieve the water use reduction with the following water conservation actions:
 - Reduced irrigated acreage by dry farming or fallowing fields; and
 - Replacement of the nozzles on wheel lines with a smaller size to decrease the amount of water applied during each irrigation set.

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | ERIC OPPENHEIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Spencer Ranch: At the Spencer Ranch property, the petitioner proposes to reduce water use by 34 percent from four groundwater wells that irrigate a total of 183 acres. The petitioner proposes to achieve the water use reduction with the following water conservation actions:
 - Reduced irrigated acreage by dry farming or fallowing fields; and
 - Replacement of the nozzles on wheel lines with a smaller size to decrease the amount of water applied during each irrigation set.

The proposal was posted to the State Water Board's webpage for local cooperative solutions associated with the Regulation on June 21, 2024. A further description of the site and water reduction measures is provided in the application submitted for this proposal. The petitioner has selected to not work with a Coordinating Entity and agrees to grant property access to State Water Board staff with 24-hour notice to verify compliance with the proposal.

Groundwater Metering

A groundwater local cooperative solution must include a description of metering in place for groundwater well extractions and a proposal to meter, record, and report such extractions to the Deputy Director or the Coordinating Entity, as applicable. If a meter has not been installed prior to the start of the irrigation season, the petitioner may submit a time schedule as part of the proposal that describes and substantiates the efforts, actions, and timelines for meter installation. The Deputy Director may waive the metering requirement for groundwater wells irrigating less than 30 acres or upon a determination that metering in a particular instance is not feasible.

The petitioner has fully installed meters on the four irrigation wells at Orofino Ranch. The proposal includes a plan to collect data and maintain a log that will be submitted to the State Water Board each month for the entire irrigation season. The petitioner has not yet fully installed meters on the four irrigation wells at Spencer Ranch. Meters have been partially installed on two of the wells, and the petitioner has requested funding from the State Water Board to install meters on the remaining two wells. The petitioner has agreed to monitor and report water usage monthly for at least five years following meter installation. The State Water Board has approved the funding and directed UC Davis (as contractor) to assist the petitioner with the meter installation.

Approval

The Division of Water Rights has reviewed the groundwater local cooperative solution proposal and finds that it meets the requirements of Regulation section 875, subdivision (f)(4)(D), and is approved with the following conditions:

- The petitioner shall collect and maintain a log of water usage data from the time the two partially installed groundwater meters become fully installed through the end of the 2025 irrigation season. Data for the 2025 irrigation season shall be submitted to the State Water Board by the 10th of each month for the preceding month.
- The petitioner agrees to collect, maintain, and provide data and associated records related to the two State Water Board funded meters for at least five years from the date of installation.

The groundwater local cooperative solution proposal is hereby approved, as conditioned. Any failure to implement the proposal or violation of the conditions of this approval are subject to enforcement as a violation of the Regulation. Additionally, violations of other provisions of the Regulation (e.g., surface water curtailment) may result in termination of this approval.

If you have questions regarding this approval, please contact Division of Water Rights staff via email to: ScottShastaDrought@waterboards.ca.gov or by leaving a message on our dedicated phone line at: (916) 327-3113.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erik Ekdahl", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Erik Ekdahl
Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights