



NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING PERIOD

Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District PL 83-566 Project

Project Sponsor/Lead Agency:

Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District

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Purpose of Scoping Meeting

The purpose of the scoping meeting is to inform the public, community and interested stakeholders about the Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District PL 83-566 Project and to gather comments and suggestions on the proposed project. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a scoping meeting is an early process used to determine important issues and necessary actions related to the project. The sponsor is the Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District (MSIDD) and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Arizona will be the lead federal agency for NEPA. Farmers Conservation Alliance is a consultant working on the project.

Meeting Information

An in-person scoping meeting will be held for this project, and a recording of the meeting and the presentation slides will be available after at <https://watershedplans.org/maricopa-stanfield-idd>. The time and location of the scoping meeting is as follows:

In-person Scoping Meeting

June 10, 2025

10:30-11:30am

Maricopa Library & Cultural Center, Maple Room, 18160 N Maya Angelou Dr., Maricopa, AZ 85138

Project Location

The project is located in Pinal County, Arizona. MSIDD was established in 1962 as a governmental subdivision and municipal corporation of the State of Arizona to supply irrigation water for agricultural users within its service area, encompassing approximately 103,686 acres. The principal crops grown in MSIDD include cotton, grains, alfalfa, feed grain for dairies, nursery trees, and vegetables.

MSIDD operates a large canal system to supply water irrigators within the District. The canal system consists of two main open channel canals (Santa Rosa Canal and East Main Canal), open channel laterals, and pipelines. The canal system conveys both surface and groundwater. The associated groundwater system consists of a network of groundwater wells, well pumps, and appurtenant features.

The Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment (Plan-EA) project will be focused on areas within MSIDD's boundaries.

Project Description and Purpose of Project

The purpose of this Plan-EA is to increase irrigation water supply for farms located in the MSIDD service area. The need is to reduce irrigation water shortages and associated crop damages resulting from the reduction or loss of Colorado River surface water supplies delivered to MSIDD through the Central Arizona Project (CAP).

MSIDD is facing growing shortages in water supply due to severe drought conditions at the local, regional, and watershed levels. These conditions have resulted in reduced surface water allocations from the CAP which have decreased irrigation water delivery in the District and agricultural yield in MSIDD farms. The Tier 2a shortage declaration in 2023 required a reduction of 592,000 acre-feet of CAP deliveries for Arizona under the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP). As a result, the District has faced annual reductions of approximately 145,000 acre-feet of CAP water since 2022, resulting in irrigation shortages and reduced agricultural production value in the District. In response to reduced water supplies, some farmers have increased fallowing of fields. This decreased crop cover has resulted in increased dust production and reduced local air quality. To help mitigate the water supply reduction and resulting effects to resources across the CAP region, the DCP Committee determined that the desired mitigation would be to produce 70,000 acre-feet of groundwater.

In addition, MSIDD has had to stop using a key canal, the Santa Rosa Canal, to convey groundwater through their District. In 2020, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, which receives CAP settlement water via the Santa Rosa Canal, filed a lawsuit against MSIDD and others because the pumping of groundwater into the canal reduced the quality of CAP water delivered to the Ak-Chin Indian Community. To resolve

the dispute, MSIDD agreed to decouple the District's groundwater wells from the Santa Rosa Canal by May 2026. Without using the Santa Rosa Canal, MSIDD lacks conveyance infrastructure to deliver groundwater from District wells effectively and efficiently to irrigators across the District. Due to this agreement, new conveyance infrastructure will be necessary to continue serving all District irrigators with water from District groundwater wells.

Pinal County ranks among the top agricultural regions of the U.S., with contributions in cattle, cotton, and milk production. Agricultural production depends on the availability of a reliable water supply for irrigation. The loss of CAP water is projected to result in economic losses for the region.

Multiple alternatives have been preliminary identified and are proposed to be analyzed in the Plan-EA. The alternatives include a No Action Alternative and Action Alternatives such as additional groundwater wells and associated conveyance, infrastructure efficiency improvements, alternative sources of water supply, on-farm irrigation improvements, and others. These alternatives will be analyzed based on their anticipated viability of meeting the purpose and need and program requirements, as well as effects to natural, cultural, and human resources. Any additional alternatives that are identified during the scoping phase will also be analyzed based on these criteria.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Pub. Law 83-566)

MSIDD is seeking federal funding through Pub. Law 83-566. Federal investments through Pub. Law 83-566 need to comply with both the NEPA and NRCS program requirements, which are outlined in the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines for Water and Land Related Resources Implementation Studies and Federal Water Resource Investments (PR&G). NRCS, as the lead federal agency, will meet the requirements of both NEPA and the PR&G through the watershed planning process.

Project NEPA and PR&G Analysis

NEPA requires a complete analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed project, as well as the consideration of additional alternatives. The PR&G requires additional analyses, such as an economic analysis and inclusion of effects to ecosystem services, to meet the requirements of the NRCS program. Public scoping is the first step in the NEPA process and is required under Pub. Law 83-566. Under this step, NRCS provides information to resource agencies, interested stakeholders, and the public to inform them of the need for NEPA and PR&G analyses, and to learn of any information or concerns relevant to the analyses.

Resource Concerns and Potential Environmental Impacts

Resources issues and potential environmental impacts of the project will be analyzed as part of the Plan-EA. Potential resource issues that may be analyzed in the Plan-EA include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural Resources
- Endangered and Threatened Species
- Invasive Species
- Wetlands
- Prime and Unique Farmlands
- Land Use
- Water Resources

- Soils

Public Involvement

As part of the Plan-EA process, a public participation plan has been prepared, outlining outreach activities. Meetings and media outreach will be conducted to provide ample opportunity for public participation, including informational meetings and feedback opportunities. The scoping meeting is the first major opportunity for public participation in the Plan-EA process.

Scoping Period

The scoping process is part of a systematic approach to obtain input from stakeholders about the project. The scoping process helps to ensure that the level of analysis for the proposed project is appropriate, identifies resource concerns that should be included for analysis, provides an opportunity for feedback on preliminary alternatives, identifies other potential alternatives, and helps to anticipate any significant impacts that may result from the project.

Public input helps MSIDD and NRCS make informed decisions and determine project funding. You are encouraged to participate in the planning process by attending meetings, reviewing project materials, and submitting questions and comments during official comment periods by email to msidd.comments@fcasolutions.org, online at <https://watershedplans.org/maricopa-stanfield-idd>, via phone at (541) 716-6085, or by mail:

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