



# NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Tulelake Irrigation District Modernization Project  
February 8, 2023, at 1:00 PM

## Project Sponsor/Lead Agency Name and Address:

Tulelake Irrigation District  
2717 Havlina Rd  
Tulelake, CA 96134

NRCS California  
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#4164  
Davis, CA 9516-416

## Contact Person and Phone Number

### **Project Sponsor/Lead Agency Contact**

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### **Prime Consultant**

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## Purpose of Scoping Meeting

To inform the community and interested stakeholders about the Tulelake Irrigation District Modernization Project and to gather community comments and suggestions on the proposed project. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Scoping Meeting is an early process used to determine important issues and necessary actions related to the project. The Natural Resources Conservation Service-California (NRCS-CA) will be the Lead Federal Agency for NEPA and Tulelake Irrigation District will be the lead agency for CEQA.

## Meeting Information

The scoping meeting for this project will be held on Wednesday, February 8, 2023 between the hours of 1:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M. The Scoping Meeting will be held in person and will be recorded and posted afterward at <https://tulelakewatershedplan.com>.

## Project Description and Purpose of Project

Tulelake Irrigation District (herein referred to as TID or the District) is seeking federal funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, Public Law 83-566 (PL 83-566). This funding would be invested to modernize irrigation, drainage, conveyance, and control infrastructure utilized or operated by TID to manage water.

TID is requesting federal assistance for an infrastructure modernization project within Modoc and Siskiyou counties, California and Klamath County, Oregon. TID is the most southern irrigation district of the Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Project, which was authorized by the Secretary of the Interior in 1906. The District spans an area of 96,000 acres and serves 63,000 acres of irrigated land through 243 miles of canals and pipelines (TID 2017). Due to the flat topography of the area, the District relies on 36 pumping stations to convey or reuse water throughout the system. The majority of TID's water is supplied by surface water from the Klamath River which is supplemented by groundwater when necessary.

In recent years, the Klamath Project has faced severe droughts that have limited, and in the worst cases, halted water supply to irrigators. Water shortages are exacerbated due to the aging state of the District's conveyance system, which inefficiently delivers the available water. A large amount of the District's water supply is return flow from other Klamath Project water users resulting in management challenges such as having minimal water to manage in the morning and excess water to manage in the evening. The District's current open channel conveyance system does not provide the District information on the volume of water moving through its system. This makes it difficult to manage fluctuating flows while delivering the correct amount of water to patrons at the correct time. Additionally, excessive operation and maintenance costs associated with the District's pumping plants and excessive maintenance costs associated with managing open

canals and laterals prevent the District from investing in modernization efforts that could greatly increase the efficiency of water delivery throughout the District.

The proposed project is regionally significant as agriculture is an essential part of the Upper Klamath Basin's economy. Agricultural production in the District depends on the District's ability to deliver water effectively and efficiently, particularly during drought years when surface water allocation is scarce. Farmers within the District are already under high economic stress after multiple consecutive years of dealing with high operation costs, reduced water supply, and lower agricultural production associated with drought conditions (Jager 2004). Modernizing TID infrastructure would allow the District to have an accurate, and much needed, understanding of the timing and volume of water flowing throughout the District and optimize water deliveries.

The purpose of this project is improving Agricultural Water Management by improving District water management operations and conserving water along District infrastructure.

There is a need for improving water conveyance efficiency and operation of District infrastructure to deliver water more reliably. Modernizing the conveyance infrastructure enables opportunities to benefit the local agricultural community by improving drought resilience and reducing inefficiencies associated with the conveyance system. The following resource concerns would be addressed through the project:

- Support and maintain existing agriculture in the area through enhanced water delivery reliability and improved water management;
- Reduce water loss in the District's conveyance system;
- Reduce the operations and maintenance involved in delivering irrigation water to Project irrigators; and
- Support wildlife community and migratory bird habitat throughout the District, Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.

To address the resource concerns identified, the District is considering the following actions to address the purpose and need at this time: SCADA, piping, canal lining, upgrading pumps, and water level control structure design and replacement.

## Project Location

Tulelake Irrigation District is in Northeastern California, on the east side of the Cascade Mountain Range, in Siskiyou and Modoc Counties, just south of the Oregon border. A small area of land served by TID, relative to the District's size, is in the Klamath County in southwestern Oregon, just north of the border. The Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment (Plan-EA) project area consists of the potential District infrastructure to be modernized and constructed (canals, laterals, and pumps) and associated rights-of-way and/or easements where construction would take place.

## Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention act of 1954 (Public Law P.L. (83-566))

The District is seeking federal funding through PL 83-566. Federal investments through PL 83-566 need to comply with both the program's requirements as outlined in the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines for Water and Land Related Resources Implementation Studies and Federal Water Resource Investments (PR&G) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. NRCS, as the lead federal agency, will be meeting requirements of both NEPA and the PR&Gs simultaneously through the Watershed Planning process.

### Project NEPA and PR&G Analysis

NEPA and other applicable laws require a complete analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed project, as well as the consideration of additional alternatives. PR&G requires additional analyses, such as an economic analysis and inclusion of effects to ecosystem services, to meet the requirements of the program. Public scoping is the first step in the NEPA process and is required under PL 83-566. Under this step, NRCS releases a Scoping Document 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

Resource Concerns and potential environmental impacts will be analyzed as part of the Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Statement for the project. However, a Preliminary Investigative Report has been prepared that initiates the analytical process and provides information on existing conditions for areas of potential impact. The full PIR can be viewed on <https://tulelakewatershedplan.com>. The Affected Environment-Existing Conditions section of the PIR contains background information on the following potential areas of impact that will be further addressed in the Watershed Plan-EA/EIS:

- Cultural Resources and Historic Properties
- Environmental Justice
- Fish and Aquatic Species Geology and Soils
- Invasive Species
- Land Use, Zoning, and Ownership
- Prime Farmland
- Public Safety
- Recreation
- Socioeconomics
- Threatened Endangered Species
- Vegetation

- Visual Resources
- Wetland and Riparian Areas
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wildlife

## Public Involvement

As part of the Project, a public participation plan has been prepared, outlining outreach activities associated with Phase 1 of the Project. Meetings, workshops, and media outreach will all 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.

## Scoping Period

This information and the associated scoping meeting meet NEPA and PR&G requirements for public participation. The scoping process is part of a systematic approach to obtain input from stakeholders about the project and to ensure that significant decision-making factors are addressed. The scoping process helps to ensure that the level of analysis for the proposed project is appropriate, and it helps to anticipate any significant impacts that may result in the need for an Environmental Impact Statement, or whether an Environmental Assessment (EA) should be prepared. At this time, NRCS anticipates that a Draft Watershed Plan-EA (Plan-EA) would be prepared following scoping.

Your input helps Tulelake Irrigation District and agencies make informed decisions. 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 ([tulelakewatershed@gmail.com](mailto:tulelakewatershed@gmail.com)), online at <https://tulelakewatershedplan.com>, or by mail addressed to Farmers Conservation Alliance, Attn: Tulelake Watershed Plan, 102 State St., Hood River, OR 97031.

## Available in Other Languages

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