

February 23, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EPC Water District Proposition 218 Election passes by large margin.

The Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District announced that preliminary voting results indicated the passage of its Proposition 218 vote that was held over the last 45 days and tallied at the February 21, 2018 Board of Directors meeting. The preliminary count revealed a 98% vote in favor of the assessment maximum which is projected to generate up to \$575,000 annually. The Board of Directors will next create an annual operating budget that will not exceed that amount.

President Dana Merrill stated that this is the final step in the process specified by state water code and in the Memorandum of Agreement unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2017. The last remaining step will take place on March 6 when the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors will vote on formally relinquishing management of the district area to the EPC Water District.

As a matter of policy, the County has consistently supported the inclusion of the EPC Water District as a GSA Member. In November 2016, the County Board of Supervisors adopted its Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Strategy. In that Strategy, the County said, "The County supports landowner and registered-voter driven eligible entity formation processes". The Board of Supervisors reaffirmed the SGMA Strategy again in March 2017.

In April 2017, the SLO County LAFCO voted by a 5-2 margin to approve the formation of the Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District. The primary purpose of the EPC Water District was to become a GSA. The County placed a December 31, 2017 deadline for EPC Water District to become a water district. The EPC Water District was legally formed and registered with the County on December 8th, 2017.

During the summer of 2017, the five GSA agencies adopted the Memorandum of Agreement. The agreement includes provisions for the EPC Water District to become part of the MOA. EPC helped draft the MOA and it was widely recognized by the participants in the MOA that EPC would become the sixth member of the MOA.

District President Merrill added, "Our Basin's GSP will govern water usage in the Paso Basin for decades to come. With little access to supplemental water sources and with drought conditions continuing if not getting worse, writing the GSP will be a challenging task. To include the EPC Water District as a GSA partner in writing the GSP is good policy. The EPC Water District represents the largest group of water users in the Basin and our willingness to cooperate in the process along with our financial support will greatly increase the chances for a successful GSP that everyone can support."

Merrill further expressed his thanks to EPC district members for their confidence as expressed in the vote and their commitment to joining other groundwater sustainability agencies in developing a plan to sustainably manage the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin.

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