



For Immediate Release:

April 4, 2025

Media Contact:

Dana Merrill, Board President

dm@epcwd.org

Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District Board Advocates for Excluding Domestic Water Users from Extraction Fees

Paso Robles, CA – In a 3-1 vote during its April 2 meeting, the [Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District \(EPCWD\)](#) Board of Directors adopted a policy position opposing groundwater extraction fees for *de minimis* water users in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. The vote took place as part of a broader discussion on recommendations to the Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority regarding a rate study, which is set to be reviewed at the Authority's April 7 meeting.

The EPCWD Board maintains that *de minimis* users — defined as those extracting two acre-feet or less of groundwater annually — should not be subject to financial assessments that could impose undue burdens on local residents.

“Since agriculture is the largest consumer of groundwater in the region, it makes sense that larger users should play a key role in funding sustainable water management,” said Dana Merrill, EPCWD Board President. “Landowners who use minimal amounts of groundwater should not have to shoulder extraction fees. We believe a balanced approach that considers the impact of all users is the best path forward for long-term basin sustainability.”

As a participating agency in the Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority, EPCWD collaborates on the implementation of the region's [Groundwater Sustainability Plan](#) under the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\)](#). The Authority is considering funding mechanisms to support basin sustainability efforts, including potential groundwater extraction fees.

Groundwater fees have been a topic of debate within the community, with concerns raised about their financial impact and fairness. The EPCWD Board's recent vote reflects its commitment to advocating for policies that balance effective groundwater management with economic equity for local residents.

The Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority will hold a public meeting on April 7 at 4 p.m. at the Paso Robles City Council Chambers (1000 Spring Street) to further discuss groundwater

policies and potential fee structures. The EPCWD will support rate structures that align with its stance on protecting de minimis users while ensuring broader compliance with SGMA regulations.

About the Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District:

The Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District, located in Northern San Luis Obispo County, is a Groundwater Sustainability Agency responsible for implementing the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. The District works collaboratively with other regional agencies to ensure the responsible management of groundwater resources for agricultural, residential and environmental needs.

###