



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why is Tulare Irrigation District changing the Assessment Rate?**

The Tulare Irrigation District (District) has strived to keep our assessments and water rates in line with our ability to deliver a reliable supply of surface water for irrigation demand and groundwater recharge. Recent hydrology changes, increased operation and maintenance costs associated with aging infrastructure, expanded regulatory programs, and rising ongoing material and overhead costs have required the District to raise assessment rates to match those increases. The District, in 2021, pursued a Strategic Plan that identified several financial risks to the District, including the inability of the District to match expenses with revenue due to the lack of stable revenues and increased expenses and liabilities. The District conducted a long-range financial plan and identified the needed increase in assessments to meet ongoing expenses and future anticipated expenses.

### **What is Proposition 218, and how does it apply to this assessment rate adjustment?**

California voters adopted Proposition 218 in November 1996 to amend the State Constitution to establish the process by which public agencies can raise taxes or service fees. It requires greater public involvement in taxation (assessment) decisions. Among other things, Proposition 218 requires the District to mail a notice of proposed adjustments to assessments to every property owner and hold a public hearing. **What is the Assessment Rate Being Proposed?**

The District is proposing a Maximum Assessment Rate of \$140.00 per acre. The Maximum Assessment Rate is not intended to be an adopted annual rate, and the District Board of Directors has the ability to set the rate below the Maximum Assessment Rate of \$140.00.

### **How was the assessment rate determined?**

An Engineer's Report was prepared in accordance with State law to describe a proportional distribution of the benefit that will be derived by each parcel from the proposed assessment. The Engineer's Report is available for download at [www.tulareid.org](http://www.tulareid.org).

### **Will the Maximum Assessment Rate be immediately adopted?**

No – the District intends to implement a phased-in (ramp-up) approach and has the ability to annually set the assessment rate lower than the Maximum Assessment Rate. The schedule for the ramp-up in the Maximum Assessment rate is below:

Year	Ramp Up	Maximum Assessment Rate
2023	\$35	\$67
2024	\$25	\$92
2025	\$16	\$108
2026	\$16	\$124
2027	\$16	\$140

**Will the District apply a Consumer Price Index to the Maximum Assessment Rate?**

Yes – To keep up with inflation, the District Board of Directors will annually apply the Western U.S. Cities Average Consumer Price Index (CPI) to the Maximum Assessment Rate. The Western U.S. Cities CPI can be found at [https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex\\_west.htm](https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_west.htm). It should be reinforced that the District Board of Directors will evaluate and can establish an annual assessment rate lower than the Maximum Assessment rate.

**Can Tulare ID change the assessment rate to higher than the proposed Maximum Assessment Rate in the future?**

While the Maximum Assessment Rate will be adjusted annually by the Western U.S. Cities CPI, the District cannot charge more than the Maximum Assessment Rate without conducting a new Proposition 218 process and seeking a higher Maximum Assessment Rate.

**What is the consequence if the assessment rate is not approved?**

If the Landowners do not approve the Assessment Adjustment and the election fails, landowners can expect to see a reduced level of service for irrigation deliveries and groundwater recharge. Outcomes of a failed election include further water infrastructure deterioration resulting in delivery efficiency losses, potential to lose local control of SGMA implementation, and missed opportunities to capture extra surface water in wet years for groundwater recharge. The proposed Maximum Assessment Rate adjustment being proposed is to maintain the current level of ongoing irrigation and groundwater recharge activities.

**If we increase the assessment, does that mean water will be delivered every year?**

Although the District can't guarantee water deliveries every year due to the year-to-year variability of our weather, the assessment will equip us to capture more surface water and store it when its available in wet years. The proposed assessment would give us the revenue necessary to improve our water delivery system and be prepared to take on larger quantities of water, and would support the development of key local water storage facilities including McKay Point Reservoir and Seaborn Reservoir.

### **What is the benefit to the landowners if the assessment passes?**

The District staff and Board have developed a comprehensive strategic plan intended to meet the pressing and future water management challenges faced by our growers. The plan includes goals, strategies, and projects for our local area's success. Landowners can expect to see:

- both new and improved water conveyance and storage infrastructure, maximizing every drop of available water supply
- successful local implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), keeping grower interests as a priority
- capacity to capture and recharge up to ~74,000 acre-feet annually (1.15 acre-feet per acre assessed)
- staff commitment to carry our District into the future with smart and strategic water purchases

### **What is needed for the election to pass?**

The assessment election will pass if a majority of the votes received are in favor of the assessment increase. Votes are weighted by acreage (and thus by financial obligation of the affected property per unit acre).

### **When will the new assessment rate take place?**

If approved, the Maximum Assessment Rate adjustment will be implemented in the November 2022 assessments mailed to landowners in November and the first installment will be due in December 2022. Per the proposed ramp-up schedule, the Board of Directors is anticipating having the ability to assess up to \$67 per acre in November 2022.

### **When will ballots be mailed to Landowners?**

Ballots to vote on the proposed Maximum Assessment Rate adjustment will be mailed in the middle of July 2022 soon after the June 12, 2022, Tulare Irrigation District Board of Directors Meeting.

### **When is the public hearing for the Assessment Adjustment?**

The public hearing and ballot count will take place on August 31, 2022 at 9:00 AM at Tulare Ag Commissioner's Office, 4437 S Laspina St., Tulare, CA 93274.

### **How can a landowner get more information or find answers to questions?**

The public is encouraged to visit [www.tulareid.org](http://www.tulareid.org). Additionally, District staff are available to our growers to answer any questions. Contact us at the the District office at (559) 686-3425.