
State Water Resources Control Board

July 21, 2025

Mr. Brandon Fawaz
Fawaz Farming



CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OF 2025 GROUNDWATER LOCAL COOPERATIVE SOLUTION FOR FAWAZ FARMING

Dear Mr. Fawaz:

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) readopted an emergency regulation that went in effect on January 27, 2025, that establishes emergency minimum flows in the Scott River and Shasta River watersheds (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, §§ 875-875.9) (Regulation). Under the Regulation, local cooperative solutions by individuals or groups may be proposed by petition to the Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director) as an alternative means of reducing water use to meet or preserve the emergency minimum flows, or to provide other fishery benefits, in lieu of curtailment. Section 875, subdivision (f)(4)(D) of the Regulation describes three types of local cooperative solutions that are specifically available for overlying or adjudicated groundwater diversions for irrigated agriculture: Best Management Practices, Graduated Cessation Schedule, and Percent Reduction. The Deputy Director may approve a proposal submitted by an individual or group, provided that it meets the specific requirements of the applicable groundwater local cooperative solution type, satisfies the metering and inspection requirements, is founded on a binding agreement made with the State Water Board or a Coordinating Entity, and is to be implemented throughout the entirety of the irrigation season.

Summary of Proposal

The State Water Board received a groundwater local cooperative solution proposal¹ from Brandon Fawaz (petitioner) that involves reducing water use from eight groundwater wells that irrigate a total of 623 acres for the 2025 season using the Best Management Practices and Graduated Cessation Schedule groundwater local cooperative solution options, which are summarized below.

¹ The term “proposal” includes, as applicable, elements of the petitioners’ Application Form for 2025 Local Cooperative Solution, communications with Division of Water Rights staff, and content from the petitioners’ approved 2024 local cooperative solution. Generally, any applicable content is restated in this letter as part of the current proposal.

- Best Management Practices Proposal: Under the Best Management Practices portion of the proposal, the petitioner proposes to use a low-energy precision application (LEPA) system on 460 acres of irrigated land, use soil moisture sensors to inform irrigation timing, stop irrigating corners after June 15, and forgo the use of end guns.
- Graduated Cessation Schedule Proposal: The petitioner proposes to use Option 2 of the Graduated Cessation Schedule local cooperative solution for 163 acres. The Option 2 schedule involves ceasing:
 - At least 20% of irrigated acres by July 20,
 - At least 50% of irrigated acres by August 20, and
 - At least 95% of irrigated acres by September 5, with a maximum of six inches of water to be applied to the remaining 5% of irrigated acres during the remainder of the irrigation season. This 5% can be on land previously fallowed.

To meet the conditions of this graduated cessation schedule, the petitioner proposes to cease irrigation of 33 acres on July 20, 2025, which accounts for 20% of the total 163 acres. On August 20, 2025, irrigation will cease on an additional 56.5 acres, bringing the total irrigated acres with irrigation ceased for the season to 50%. Finally, on September 5, 2025, irrigation will cease on an additional 65.35 acres to achieve 95% cessation of the total 163 acres. The petitioner requests to provide the State Water Board with the specific details of the irrigated acreage to be ceased by the final cessation date (September 5, 2025) by August 25, 2025.

The proposal was posted to the State Water Board's webpage for local cooperative solutions associated with the Regulation on June 6, 2025. A further description of the site and water reduction measures is provided in the application submitted for this proposal. The application identifies Scott River Water Trust as the Coordinating Entity and includes a "Binding Agreement" that grants property access to verify compliance with the proposal.

Groundwater Metering

A groundwater local cooperative solution must include a description of any existing groundwater metering, and a proposal to meter and record such extractions or applications on a weekly basis, and to report monthly to the Deputy Director (or the Coordinating Entity, if so agreed), with limited exceptions. If a meter has not been installed prior to the start of the irrigation season, the petitioner may submit a time schedule as part of the proposal that describes and substantiates the efforts, actions, and timelines for meter installation. The Deputy Director may waive the metering requirement for groundwater wells irrigating less than 30 acres or upon a determination that metering in a particular instance is not feasible. The Deputy Director may also approve a time schedule for the installation of a meter if not currently installed at the start of the irrigation season.

The petitioner had installed meters on two groundwater wells and three pivots that irrigate 448 acres of the total 623 irrigated acres by the start of the 2025 season. An additional pivot that irrigates 110 acres was metered and has been collecting and maintaining a log of water usage data since the beginning of June 2025. The proposal includes a plan to record and maintain a log of the meter data and submit it to the Coordinating Entity each month for the entire irrigation season. Additionally, the petitioner requests to waive the metering requirement for the remaining 65 irrigated acres because the irrigation systems do not have easily accessible pipes for installation, or the well design will not accommodate a meter. The proposal includes a plan to monitor water usage on this remaining acreage and maintain a log of the data, which will be submitted to the Coordinating Entity each month for the entire irrigation season.

Approval

The Division of Water Rights has reviewed the groundwater local cooperative solution proposal and finds that it meets the requirements of Regulation section 875, subdivision (f)(4)(D), with the following conditions:

- The petitioner shall provide the State Water Board with specific details of the irrigated acreage to be ceased by the final cessation date (September 5, 2025) for the Option 2 Graduated Cessation Schedule local cooperative solution proposal on or before August 25, 2025.
- Throughout the irrigation season, the petitioner shall meter, record, and maintain a log of the water pumping and usage data from the groundwater meters installed on the two groundwater wells and four pivots on a weekly basis, consistent with the Regulation. The metering data shall be submitted to the State Water Board by the 10th of each month for the preceding month. The Division of Water Rights recognizes that implementation may require operational adjustments, and will allow reasonable time to achieve full compliance, provided there is demonstrable progress towards meeting the weekly requirement.

The Division of Water Rights grants the petitioner's request to waive the metering requirement for 65 irrigated acres considering that meters have been installed to monitor water usage for 90% of the 623 total irrigated acres included in the proposal and the feasibility issues claimed in the petition. Conditional approval of this proposal does not assure approval under the same conditions in the future (e.g., additional metering may be required).

The petitioner's groundwater local cooperative solution proposal is hereby approved. Any failure to implement any commitments of the proposal and any conditions of this approval (collectively, the approved local cooperative solution) is subject to enforcement as a violation of the Regulation. Additionally, violations of other provisions of the Regulation (e.g., surface water curtailment) may result in termination of this approval.

If you have questions regarding this approval, please contact Division of Water Rights staff via email to: ScottShastaFlows@waterboards.ca.gov or by leaving a message on our dedicated phone line at: (916) 327-3113.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Ragazzi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Erin Ragazzi
Assistant Deputy Director
Acting Deputy Director for Scott-Shasta
Division of Water Rights

ec: Scott River Water Trust
scottwatertrust@gmail.com