

Turlock Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program

Frequency Asked Questions

What is the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP)?

- The MLRP is a grant program funded by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) that provides funding to regional block grantees, including the East Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (ETSGSA), to support the transition of irrigated farmland into alternative, lower water use land uses.
- MLRP aims to achieve multiple benefits, in addition to the primary benefit of reduced groundwater consumption on repurposed agricultural lands. Additional benefits may include:
 - Enhanced groundwater recharge
 - Habitat creation
 - Improved community health and economic wellbeing
 - Improved water quality
 - Flood protection
 - Improved soil health, and
 - Bolstered climate resilience.

What are the goals of the Turlock MLRP?

- Through its own locally developed MLRP and related management actions being implemented under the Turlock Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), ETSGSA aims to achieve groundwater demand reduction in the ETSGSA area equivalent to taking approximately 5,000 acres of land out of production during the MLRP grant term (i.e., by 2027) and 21,000 acres by 2037.
- The Turlock MLRP includes development of a Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan (MALRP) that identifies and provides a framework for multibenefit land repurposing strategies that can be carried forward into the future, beyond the MLRP grant term.
- Ultimately ETSGSA aims to reduce groundwater demand through MLRP and other management actions by approximately 60,000 acre-feet per year (AFY), or about two thirds of the 95,600 AFY of total estimated pumping reduction required to achieve sustainability.

How will ETSGSA reach the above goals?

- The ETSGSA is currently developing proof-of-concept demonstrations of land repurposing approaches on a small number of MLRP pilot projects, laying the groundwork for broader application of MLRP practices in the coming years to help bridge the gap between available groundwater supply and demand in the Basin.
- The ETSGSA is focused on multibenefit land repurposing approaches that integrate with existing agricultural operations (i.e., a “working lands” philosophy). These approaches aim to leverage low-tech, self-implementable, scalable solutions, and lend to building regional capacity.

How much money is available for MLRP projects?

- The ETSGSA was awarded an \$8,890,000 grant from the DOC’s MLRP to develop and implement its regional Turlock MLRP. Of this amount, approximately \$7 million is allocated for development and implementation of MLRP projects. To ensure the broad distributions of grant funding and benefits, the ETSGSA plans to institute a per-project cap of \$XXX,XXX.

What projects are eligible for funding?

- Projects eligible for MLRP funding through the ETSGSA are those that repurpose (convert) irrigated farmland into lower water use land uses while also achieving additional benefits to habitat, disadvantaged communities, and/or the local economy.
- Depending on project specifics eligible project types could include:
 - extended fallowing with a beneficial cover crop
 - rewilding orchard swales with native vegetation
 - construction of recharge basins or stormwater retention ponds
 - floodplain reconnection
 - agricultural buffer zones around communities or other sensitive areas, and
 - solar energy production.
- To be eligible for MLRP funding, projects must have durable benefits lasting at least 10 years.

Are some projects better than others?

- The ETSGSA is open to exploring all land repurposing projects that have potential to achieve the goals of the Turlock MLRP. That being said, the ETSGSA is mindful of the limited resources available and therefore must prioritize those projects that have the highest benefit for the least cost.

- While other land repurposing project types are possible, the ETSGSA is specifically developing guidance and materials to support landowners in implementing the following core MLRP strategies:
 - Recharge / Retention Basins
 - Orchard Swale Rewilding
 - Floodplain Reconnection
 - Agricultural Buffer Zones
 - Extended Multibenefit Fallowing
 - Re-cropping (to lower water use crops)

How will projects ultimately be selected?

- The ETSGSA will use an objective project prioritization and scoring framework developed with input from a broad range of stakeholders. Under this framework, project proposals will be assigned scores based on their potential to achieve as many benefits as possible using a criterion-weighted decision matrix that considers:
 - Evaluation of Project Benefits in the four main benefit categories – groundwater sustainability, disadvantaged communities, local economy, and habitat.
 - Geographic prioritization criteria (e.g., land viability for agriculture, location within ETSGSA's Priority Action Areas, and Recharge Suitability Analysis, as applicable)
 - Other project characteristics such as implementability, scalability, community support, and others.
- The project selection process will be conducted in a transparent manner by a committee of ETSGSA representatives, growers, and community members. Projects selected must also be approved by DOC before funding is released.

Where can I find the application?

- The MLRP Project Application can be found on the Turlock MLRP website:
<https://turlockgroundwater.org/multibenefit-land-repurposing>
- Interested parties are encouraged, but not required, to submit their ideas for an MLRP project initially, and as soon as possible, using the Demand Reduction Project Concept Form, which will allow the ETSGSA to assess whether the project aligns with the MLRP or potentially with other ETSGSA programs.

I have a project in mind, but don't know all the technical details. Is there support available?

- The ETSGSA understands the challenges that face potential interested parties in developing their project proposals and applications, and is designing the Turlock MLRP to include tools and guidance such as Implementation Standards and mapping tools to assist landowners with project development. The ETSGSA intends to make a reasonable and equitable amount of Technical Assistance available to MLRP project proponents to support project development, and will also lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance and provide assistance for permitting. At the same time, the ETSGSA expects that project proponents will lead in developing their own projects, investing their own time and resources in planning and coordination. There is no doubt that the success of the Turlock MLRP depends on strong collaboration between the ETSGSA and the landowners whose projects are the core of the program.
- Technical Assistance may take the form of:
 - Workshops to present proposal drafting process and answer applicant questions,
 - Email or phone call correspondence,
 - One-on-one meetings for project discussions (as needed)

I don't have a project, but I want to get involved with the MLRP. What are my options?

- There are multiple ways to get informed and involved about the Turlock MLRP, including:
 - Reach out to Self Help Enterprises (SHE) to join the Stakeholder Advisory Committee
 - Attend public workshops (e.g., the ETSGSA Board meetings, Technical Advisory Committee Meetings, and other public meetings)
 - Respond to questionnaires and/or surveys, when made available by the ETSGSA
 - Join the ETSGSA mailing list to be kept up to date with the latest news regarding the Turlock MLRP.