

Public Comment Period Update and Program Revisions

Draft EOR Pilot Program Guidelines

To: Public Stakeholders
From: Vina GSA
Date: Friday, November 22, 2024
Subject: Clarifications on Public Comment Deadlines and Program Revisions

Background

Earlier this year, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) awarded \$2.4 million to the Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Vina GSA) to implement two demand reduction strategies in the Vina Subbasin: the Extend Orchard Replacement (EOR) Pilot Program and the Precision Irrigation Pilot Program. Of the \$2.4 million, the Vina GSA initially allocated approximately \$1.25 million to incentivize participation in the EOR Pilot Program. Program guidelines were developed with this intention, and Draft Program Guidelines were subsequently released for public review and feedback.

However, during the public comment period, DWR notified the Vina GSA that grant funds cannot be used to provide incentive payments under the EOR Pilot Program as originally planned. This decision necessitates significant revisions to the EOR Pilot Program and its guidelines to ensure compliance with the grant requirements.

The Vina GSA remains committed to transparency and stakeholder engagement throughout this process. Public input will continue to play a critical role as we make the necessary adjustments to the program. Below, we provide an updated timeline for public comments and outline the next steps for finalizing program revisions.

Public Comment Deadline

- **Original Deadline:** Earlier communications included conflicting deadlines of November 22, 2024, and November 25, 2024. To ensure clarity and consistency, the official public comment deadline has been set for **November 27, 2024**.

Program Revisions

Impact of Funding Changes:

- Due to restrictions on grant fund usage, incentive payments initially planned under the EOR Pilot Program will no longer be available.

- Consequently, the revised program guidelines will shift focus. Instead of outlining a pilot program with incentive payments and an application process, the guidelines will describe the program's structure, highlighting its water savings potential and possible incentive components. This adjustment will position the program to pursue additional funding opportunities in the future.

Next Steps:

- A revised version of the program guidelines will be released to stakeholders in December 2024.
- Upon release, the Vina GSA will initiate a new public comment period to gather feedback specifically on the revised guidelines. This ensures that stakeholders remain informed and engaged throughout the process.

Stakeholder Engagement

To ensure all stakeholder feedback is effectively addressed:

- **Original Comments:** All feedback submitted during the current comment period will still be carefully reviewed and considered as part of the program's revisions.
- **New Comments:** Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to participate in the upcoming comment period once the revised program guidelines are made available. This will provide an opportunity for additional input on the updated program structure.