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ACRONYMS

CPUC – California Public Utilities Commission

DID – Durham Irrigation District

DWR – California Department of Water Resources

ET – Evapotranspiration

GIS – Geographic Information System

GSA – Groundwater Sustainability Agency

GSP – Groundwater Sustainability Plan

JPA – Joint Power Authority

SGMA – Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

SHAC – Stakeholder Advisory Committee

FEE STUDY PREFACE

The Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency commissioned this study to evaluate alternative fee methodologies to develop a fee that will support the typical annual operation costs of its regulatory program authorized by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The analyses, opinions, and findings contained within this report are based on primary data collected through interviews and research, as well as many sources of secondary data available as of the date of this report. While it is believed that the secondary sources of information are accurate, this is not guaranteed. Updates to information used in this report could change or invalidate the findings contained herein.

Every reasonable effort has been made in order that the data contained in this study reflects the most accurate and timely information possible. No responsibility is assumed for inaccuracies in reporting by Vina GSA, its consultants and representatives, or any other data source used in the preparation of this study. No warranty or representation is made that any of the projected values or results contained in this study will be achieved. There typically are differences between forecasted or projected results and actual results due to changes in events and circumstances.

Changes in economic and social conditions due to events including, but not limited to, major recessions, availability of water resources due to droughts, major environmental problems, or disasters that could negatively affect operations, expenses and revenues may affect the result of the findings in this study. In addition, other factors not considered in the study may influence actual results.

The fee study consultant team that prepared this report includes:

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We want to thank Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency member staff, and all the stakeholders who helped inform development of the Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency SGMA fee for Fiscal Year 2026.

Catherine Hansford



Hansford Economic Consulting LLC

Section 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Vina GSA or Agency) was created in 2019 by a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) to serve as one of two groundwater management agencies that provide groundwater management in the Vina Subbasin pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014. Vina GSA oversees groundwater management for the majority of the subbasin, including urban areas such as Chico and Durham and surrounding agricultural lands, while Rock Creek Reclamation District (RCRD), the second GSA in the subbasin, manages groundwater within its jurisdiction, primarily serving agricultural lands in the northwestern portion of the subbasin. Vina GSA is governed by its member agencies - the City of Chico (City), County of Butte (County), and Durham Irrigation District (DID). **Figure 1** on the following page illustrates the jurisdictional boundaries of both agencies.

SGMA provides for the local management of groundwater by requiring that all groundwater basins in the State of California achieve sustainability into perpetuity. Bulletin 118 Interim Update 2016, circulated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), identifies the groundwater basins and subbasins to be managed, and designates their priority status. In the most recent edition of the DWR Bulletin Number 18, the Vina Subbasin, (number 5-021.57) is designated as a high priority basin, meaning it is subject to SGMA's most stringent requirements. As required by SGMA for a high priority basin, a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was prepared and submitted to DWR before January 31, 2022. DWR approved the GSP in July 2023.

SGMA defines sustainable groundwater management as the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results¹. The six undesirable results are:

1. Chronic lowering of groundwater levels,
2. Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage,
3. Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion,
4. Significant and unreasonable degradation of water quality,
5. Significant and unreasonable land subsidence, and
6. Surface water depletions that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of surface water.

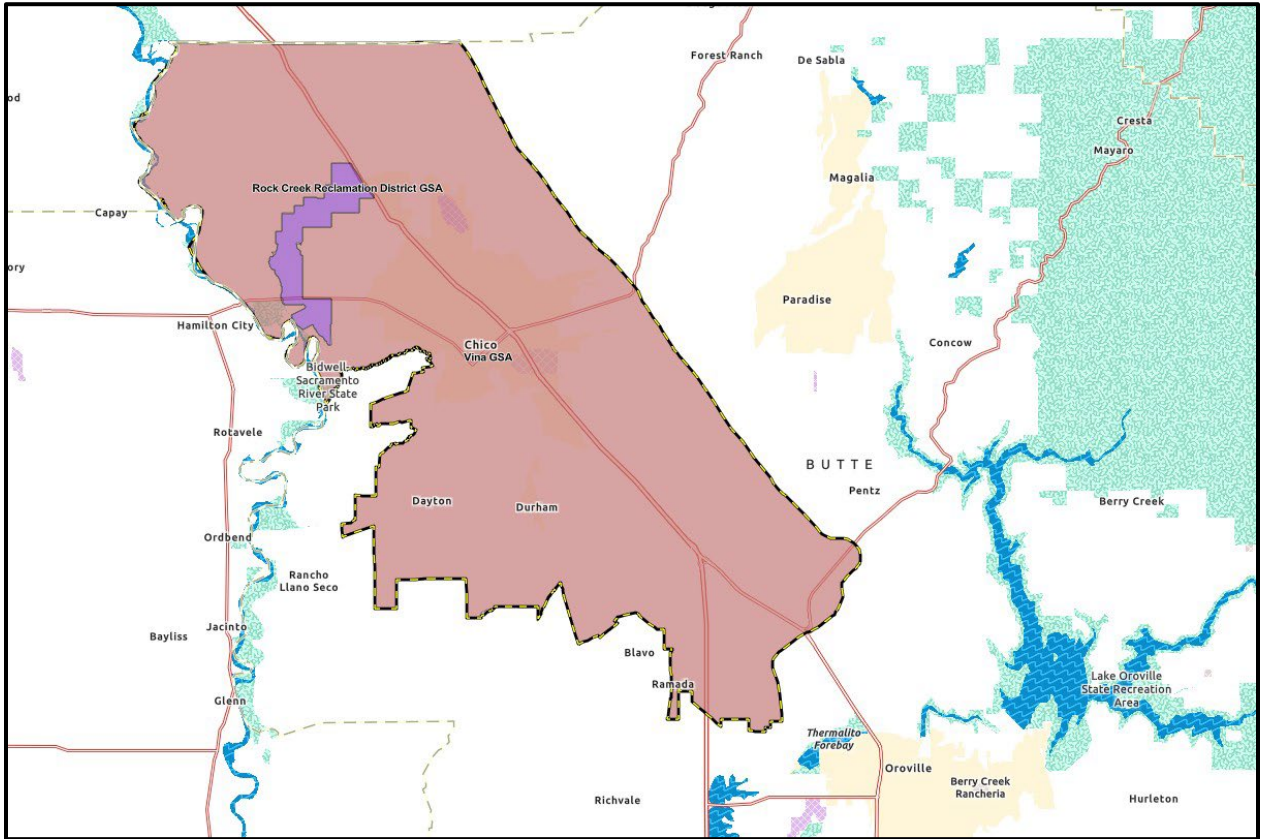
The GSP addresses each of these undesirable results as they pertain to the Vina Subbasin and provides a plan for sustainability of groundwater in the Vina Subbasin. Each year, Vina GSA submits its annual report to DWR on or before April 1 to report on groundwater conditions and implementation status of its GSP over the prior water year².

¹ Water Code 10721.

² The water year runs from October 1 through September 30.

Vina GSA works to ensure groundwater supplies are professionally managed to support urban and rural communities, agricultural land uses, and environmental uses now and in the future.

Figure 1
Map of the Vina Subbasin



1.2 PURPOSE OF THE FEE STUDY

In 2023 Vina GSA adopted a SGMA fee with a maximum charge of \$3.09 per acre billed to all taxable parcels within the GSA’s boundaries³ to fund its ongoing groundwater management responsibilities. The implemented fee was \$1.54 per acre for FY24 and \$2.53 per acre for FY25. The fee is charged to all taxable parcels within the Agency’s boundaries based on the assessed acreage shown on property tax bills. If a parcel straddles the Vina GSA boundary, the fee is only applied to the portion of the parcel within the Vina GSA jurisdiction.

This fee study was commissioned to examine alternative methodologies to structure a fee that will fund the GSA’s evolving operations in groundwater management and implementation activities. The fee study considers several factors in determining alternative fee structures including land use, community characteristics, culture, and demographics.

³ Vina GSA Resolution No. 03-23 “Resolution Certifying the Results of a Proposition 218 Majority Protest Proceeding and Basis for Setting the Vina GSA Operations Fee”.

The Agency needs sufficient revenue to cover essential operating expenses, support staffing, fund investigative studies, and address data gaps that improve its understanding of the Vina groundwater subbasin. Revenues also support monitoring activities, the preparation of annual reports, and periodic evaluations as required by SGMA. By funding these SGMA-required activities with a SGMA fee, Vina GSA ensures it stays compliant with State law while maintaining local control over groundwater management, keeping decision-making local and of direct benefit for the Vina Subbasin. Landowners in the Vina GSA jurisdiction benefit from the sustainable groundwater management activities funded by these fees, which are essential for protecting the long-term health of the groundwater basin, a condition that is vital for the prosperity and security of all who rely on it.

Vina GSA has the authority to charge fees, conduct investigations, register wells, require reporting, and take other actions to sustainably manage groundwater resources of the Vina Subbasin. Per Section 15.1 of the JPA, the Agency may be funded as provided in Chapter 8 of SGMA (commencing with section 10730 of the Water Code). Water Code Sections 10730, 10730.1 and 10730.2 set forth the authority for the Vina GSA to establish and charge fees. The SGMA fee described in this report is being adopted pursuant to these authorities. The fee covers “reasonable costs” of the SGMA regulatory program. The fee is proportional and related to benefits of the program.

Goals of the fee study are:

1. Establish and secure a SGMA fee that the Vina GSA can adopt with confidence and support from interested parties and stakeholders.
2. Provide a fee structure that generates sufficient revenue to support the financial obligations and budget needs of the Agency pursuant to SGMA’s mandate.
3. Ensure the fee is based on current, reliable data and reflects only the reasonable costs of Vina GSA’s groundwater management services.
4. Adopt a fee structure that is economically and easily administered, charged, and collected.

A key tenant in developing the fee has been to maintain transparency throughout the project, informing the Vina GSA fee payors about the fee study, opportunities for involvement, and how to provide input to the process. Vina GSA’s SGMA fee was developed using two key pillars of information that were constructed through the fee study process:

- (1) Stakeholder and public input on who should be charged, and the most reasonable fee structure, and (2) Available reliable data upon which to estimate the benefits received by Vina GSA services each year.

This report documents the methodology, public outreach conducted, and Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Vina GSA SGMA calculated and proposed fee.

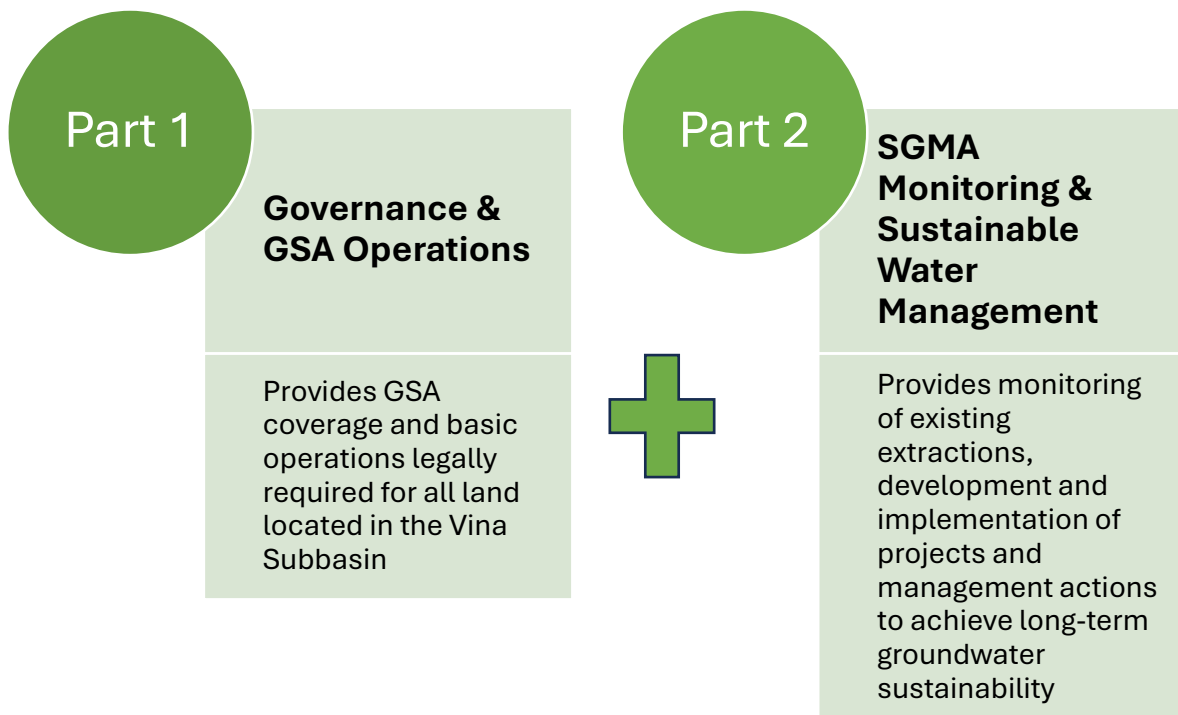
Vina GSA Board of Directors Approval

It is anticipated that the SGMA fee will be adopted by the Board of Directors (Board) by resolution May or June 2025. The 2025 resolution will establish the SGMA fee for FY26. Vina GSA anticipates adopting a fee resolution each year to determine the annual fees and place the fees calculated for each Assessor’s parcel on the tax roll, regardless of whether the fee amounts change or not. The fee should be adjusted each year as necessary to raise sufficient revenues by either applying the change in a price index (the March to March change in the West Region Consumer Price Index published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is recommended), applying a (maximum, up to) set percentage increase (such as 4%), or estimating costs required to fund the Agency’s next fiscal year budget plus an amount for prudent reserves. Periodic reviews (at least every five years) of the fee structure is recommended to be included in the fee resolution.

1.3 PROPOSED FEE STRUCTURE

Fee Structure

The Vina GSA fee structure is divided into **two parts** based on the **different services the Vina GSA provides**:



Part 1 Fee: GSA Governance and Basic Operations (Applies to All Parcels)

The Part 1 fee funds the minimum cost of having a GSA in place, which is a legal requirement for land included in high- and medium-priority subbasins under SGMA, including the Vina Subbasin.

Part 1 Fee Service Provided: Maintaining a functioning GSA and performing all basic legal requirements that SGMA requires of a GSA in a high-priority basin.

The Part 1 Fee covers the following cost items:

✓ **GSA Administration** – Staff, legal support, financial reporting, and operational costs necessary to run the agency. ✓ **Board of Directors Meetings & Public Oversight** – Ensuring local governance, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making authority. ✓ **Minimum SGMA Compliance Requirements** – Covering only what is required to keep the GSA in existence and recognized by the State of California.

💡 **Why The Part 1 Fee Applies to All Parcels:**

- The land included in the Vina Subbasin is legally required to be managed by a GSA, regardless of groundwater use.
- This fee represents the cost of governance and administration, which is a requirement of the land in high and medium priority subbasins, regardless of groundwater use.

Part 2 Fee: SGMA Monitoring & Sustainable Groundwater Management (Applies Only to Groundwater Users)

The Part 2 fee funds the costs of services provided by the GSA to sustainably manage groundwater.

Part 2 Fee Service Provided: Groundwater monitoring and sustainable groundwater management, ensuring long-term groundwater availability.

The Part 2 Fee covers the following cost items:

✓ **SGMA Monitoring and reporting** – Required reporting (Annual Reports, Periodic Evaluations) and ongoing data collection related to groundwater extraction. ✓ **Groundwater Monitoring & Data Management** – Tracking extractions, basin conditions, and sustainability trends. ✓ **GSP Implementation** – Activities identified in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to achieve long-term sustainability. ✓ **Stakeholder Engagement & Outreach** – Working with groundwater users to ensure compliance and educate the public on sustainability efforts.

💡 **Why The Part 2 Fee Applies Only to Groundwater Users:**

- The costs associated with monitoring and reporting directly benefit groundwater users, as it relates to understanding and management of how groundwater is used in the Vina Subbasin.
- Sustainable management efforts support the long-term sustainability of groundwater as a resource, which directly benefits groundwater users and the ability to rely on long-term availability of a sustainable groundwater system.
- Grazing and vacant lands do not benefit from groundwater monitoring and management in the same way extractors do because their use of groundwater, if any, is minimal (stock watering for example) and is not included in the monitoring or reporting of groundwater use.

Why This Two-Part Fee Structure is Necessary

✓ **Ensures the GSA fees are reasonably related to the services provided** – Part 1 keeps the GSA operational, covering all land in the Vina Subbasin as required by SGMA. ✓ **Aligns cost with service** – Part 2 ensures groundwater users pay for sustainable groundwater management.

The Part 2 fee is paid by groundwater user type. Groundwater users have been placed into three groups.

Group 1: Agricultural users who extract groundwater for crop irrigation. The fee is charged per cropped acre where a cropped acre is identified using DWR’s most recent cropping mapping layer.

Group 2: Domestic (including commercial) users who rely on groundwater for residential or business activities, including those served by small and public water systems. For domestic users the fee is charged per developed parcel. Domestic use of water on a parcel of land is identified using the most recent Butte County Assessor’s parcel information and the most recent Butte County FEMA map.

Group 3: Properties with minimal or no groundwater use, such as grazing land and vacant parcels. These parcels have \$0 Part 2 fee. They are only subject to the Part 1 fee.

The Part 1 and Part 2 fees are added together to determine the total fee charged to each Assessor’s parcel. The fees will be collected from every parcel with property taxes, unless the property owner does not receive a property tax bill, in which case the Agency will ‘hand bill’⁴ the fee directly to the landowner.

⁴ ‘Hand bill’ is the term used for sending an invoice directly to the property owners. Examples include the Chico Unified School District, Butte College, California State University, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife properties, and Union Pacific Railroad Company.

1.4 CALCULATED FISCAL YEAR 2026 FEES

The proposed fee applies to all parcels of land in Vina GSA’s jurisdiction unless the parcel is:

- **Exempt** pursuant to SGMA. This includes federal properties, and properties held in trust by the federal government for tribes, or
- **Unusable** as determined using Butte County Assessor data. These parcels are not exempt legally from the fee but are not charged because they can never be developed due to geographical features such as a lake, or the parcel has insufficient data available upon which to charge the fee. These parcels are identified as having land use code UU or 9999 and they have not been assigned a taxability code, per the Butte County Assessor.

Table 1 presents the calculated Part 1 and Part 2 fees for FY26. As noted in the table, a parcel can have more than one type of use. For example, a ranch on a predominantly agricultural parcel would be charged the Part 1 (“base fee”) plus the Part 2 Group 1 fee for cropped acres, and the Part 2 Group 2 fee for the home (domestic) water use of the parcel. **The fee schedule in this report is preliminary. The final fee levels for FY26 will be adopted by the Board of Directors before the start of FY26 (July 1, 2025).**

Table 1
FY26 Vina GSA SGMA Fee

Fee Part	Type of Use	Preliminary FY26 Fee	Application of the Fee
Part 1: Base Fee	Every parcel is charged the Part 1 fee	\$11.02	per Parcel
Part 2: User Group	Part 2 fee(s) are charged by use and added to the Part 1 fee [1]		
Group 1	Agricultural	\$4.06	per Cropped Acre [2]
Group 2	Domestic	\$0.94	Per Developed Parcel
Group 3	Grazing & Vacant	\$0.00	

Notes:

[1] A parcel can have more than one type of use.

[2] Cropped acreage of the Assessor Parcel within the GSA Boundaries.

Definition of Cropped Acre. Land that is identified in DWR’s most recently published crop mapping layer as having grown a crop the preceding 12 months (excludes Idle and Unclassified crop codes).

Definition of Developed Parcel. A parcel with a building/structure identified using FEMA and

Butte County Assessor databases.

Vina GSA Board Direction

The Vina GSA Board of Directors (Board) will provide direction on the following key items to staff and legal counsel to move forward with implementation steps for the FY26 fee.

1. Approval of the Part 1 and Part 2 cost items.
2. Approach to the cost basis for setting the FY26 fee, subsequent annual updates, and requirement of periodic reviews of fee methodology.
3. Approval of the methodology to allocate Part 2 costs between Agricultural and Domestic users.

Recommendations for each of these items presented to the Board at its February 26, 2025 Board meeting are highlighted in the report. The final fee report will reflect the Board's direction on these three key items and the proposed fees.

SECTION 2: FEE STUDY PROCESS

2.1 FEE AUTHORITY

Vina GSA's fee authority is derived from the SGMA-specific legislation codified in Water Code 10730 through 10731 "Financial Authority". This section of the Water Code allows the Agency to impose fees for regulated activities, including but not limited to, permits to operate wells, the costs of a groundwater sustainability program such as development and amendment of a GSP, investigations, inspections, compliance assistance, enforcement, and program administration including a prudent reserve.

The SGMA fee must be no more than necessary to cover the reasonable costs of the governmental activity, and the manner in which the costs are allocated to a payor must bear a fair or reasonable relationship to the payor's burden on, or benefits received from, the governmental activity.

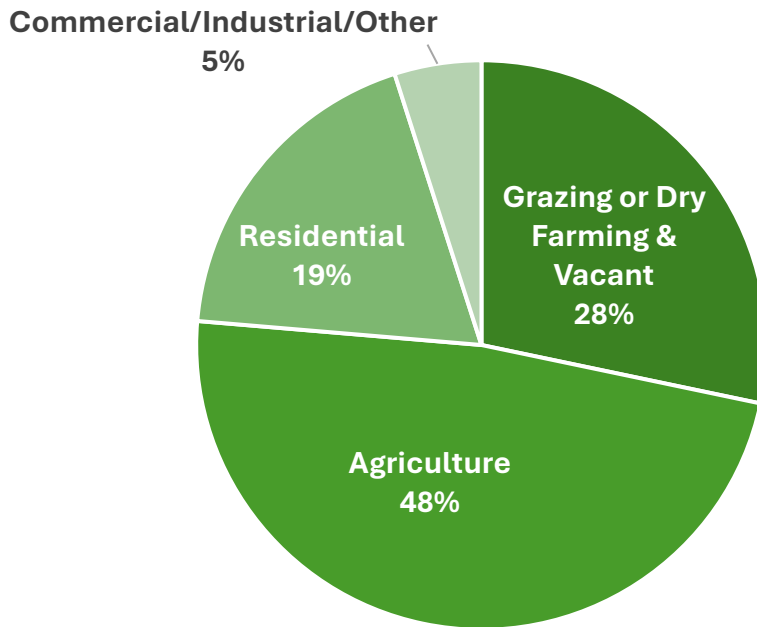
2.2 VINA GSA GROUNDWATER STEWARDSHIP

Vina GSA is responsible for sustainably managing the groundwater of the Vina Subbasin to the benefit of all beneficial uses and users. Beneficiaries include individuals, businesses, and government agencies, including the State of California. Beneficiaries may also include wildlife, riparian habitat and other environmental users of groundwater and surface water sources which are interconnected to groundwater. Landowners in the Vina Subbasin are beneficiaries because these lands benefit from Vina GSA's existence and groundwater management activities. Uses of land protected by Vina GSA's stewardship of groundwater resources of the Vina Subbasin are summarized in **Figure 2**.

Vina GSA is monitoring and evaluating water resources, as required by SGMA, to continually improve its hydrologic model as environmental conditions change. Water resources need to be protected, monitored, and managed to ensure a stable supply of groundwater in the Vina Subbasin. Properties may be using groundwater supplied by a public water system, by a domestic well, commercial production well, or an irrigation well, or they may be passive users of groundwater⁵. Residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and other domestic users of water are 100% groundwater dependent in the Vina Subbasin. Agriculture predominantly uses groundwater; however, some surface water is utilized near the larger creeks that drain to the Sacramento River. Grazing and dry farming generally depends on precipitation and springs for water resources; some of these lands use a minimal amount of groundwater for stock water. Grazing land, dry farmed land, and even vacant developable land benefit from the Vina GSA's activities to maintain the ecological health of the ecosystems, supporting forage, and potential future irrigation of the land.

⁵ Dry farming is a passive use of groundwater as precipitation is consumed by plants rather than reaching the aquifer.

Figure 2
Lands Benefiting from Vina GSA Groundwater Stewardship



Source: Butte County Assessor.

An analysis of the subbasin’s socioeconomic characteristics was conducted to better understand who is benefitting from sustainable groundwater management in the Vina Subbasin and to understand how best to communicate with them. The analysis revealed that about 50% of Butte County’s population lives in the Vina Subbasin. In total, 110,000 people permanently reside in the subbasin, with the vast majority in the City of Chico, and with a substantial number considered Disadvantaged⁶. About 20% of the population speak Spanish as their first language.

The City of Chico is the major employment hub in the Vina Subbasin with major industry sectors including health care and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation and food services, as well as educational services (these four industry sectors comprise 62% of all jobs in the City of Chico). All of these industries depend on a sufficient quantity of good quality water. Industries are supplied 100% with groundwater.

Cal Water, a private water company regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), serves homes and businesses in the City of Chico. Durham Irrigation District, a municipal water supplier, serves homes and businesses in and around the unincorporated community of Durham. There are many other smaller public water systems and small water systems serving neighborhoods, golf courses, industrial complexes, and food facilities. In total, there are about

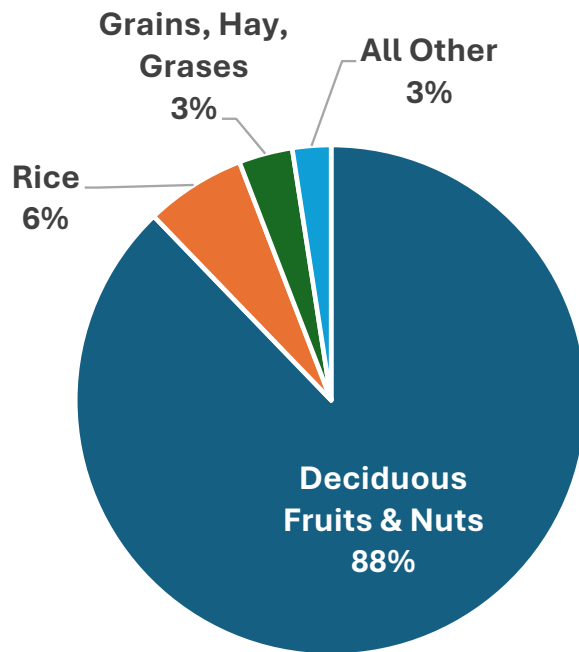
⁶ Disadvantaged is a term used by the State for a community with median household income less than 80% of the State’s median household income.

55 water systems in the Vina Subbasin, most of which are regulated by Butte County.

Agriculture is a significant economic driver in the region although it is not a major employment sector. In terms of total agricultural production value, Butte County ranks 19th of the State’s reporting counties⁷. In 2022, Butte County’s total agricultural production value was \$659 million, 1% of the State’s total of \$66,195 million. Almonds, walnuts, rice, and prunes (dried plums) have consistently been the most valuable crops in Butte County over the past 20 years.

Figure 3 shows the share of crops grown in the Vina GSA’s jurisdiction by crop category.

Figure 3
Vina GSA Crops Grown



Source: DWR crop mapping 2022 dataset.

Appendix A provides tables and further description of the socioeconomic characteristics of the Vina Subbasin. **Appendix A will be added to the Final Report.**

2.3 GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION ESTIMATES

The estimate of Vina Subbasin groundwater extraction is provided in the GSP and GSP annual reports prepared for and submitted to DWR. The GSP estimates that groundwater supplies 90% to 95% of total water used in the Vina subbasin (includes the RCRD portion of the subbasin). During critically dry water years, groundwater pumping increases and during wet years, it decreases (**Table 2**). Groundwater pumping ranges from about 199,000 acre-feet to

⁷ California Agricultural Statistics Review 2022-2023, California Department of Food and Agriculture.

about 284,000 acre-feet per year.

Table 2
Vina Subbasin Annual Water Deliveries

Water Year	Surface Deliveries	GW Pumping	Total Supply	GW as % of Total
All figures in acre-feet per year				
Wet	24,000	198,600	222,600	89%
Above Normal	21,100	222,800	243,900	91%
Below Normal	20,600	235,500	256,100	92%
Dry	17,300	266,600	283,900	94%
Critical	12,200	283,700	295,900	96%

Source: Vina GSP Table 2-9 (page 126).

The fee study grouped groundwater users into three groups based on the purpose of groundwater use on the land.

Group 1: Agricultural Use. Agricultural uses of land that is cropped. Cropped land is identified using DWR’s most recently released publicly available crop mapping dataset. The dataset is typically published two years after the water year ends in September.

Group 2: Domestic Use. Parcels of land upon which there are domestic (including commercial) uses of groundwater. Parcels with domestic uses of land are identified as parcels with buildings/structures using data published by FEMA and the Butte County Assessor.

Group 3: Grazing and Vacant. All other lands capable of supporting economic activity; these include, but are not limited to, vacant land that may not currently be supporting economic activity and land used for grazing.

Table 3 shows that, for the last three water years, groundwater pumping has been estimated between 242,000 and 279,000 acre-feet. These groundwater pumping estimates indicate between below normal and critical water years. During the drier years, agricultural production extracts a greater proportion of total groundwater pumping but the percentage difference is small.

Table 3
Annual Vina Subbasin Groundwater Use Estimates

Water Year	Agricultural Prodn.	Municipal [1]	Domestic [2]	Total GW Use	Ag. as % of Total
<i>Acre-Feet per Year</i>					
2021	242,400	23,280	2,300	267,980	90.5%
2022	253,800	22,300	2,600	278,700	91.1%
2023	218,600	21,900	1,500	242,000	90.3%
Total 3-Years	714,800	67,480	6,400	788,680	90.6%

Sources: GSA annual reports for water years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

[1] Cal Water and Durham Irrigation District public water system wells only.

[2] Domestic includes private wells and wells serving public water systems other than Cal Water and Durham Irrigation District, and small water systems.

On average, agricultural production extracts about 90% of total groundwater pumped in the Vina Subbasin.

2.4 FEE STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The fee structure was developed using two key pillars of information that were constructed through the fee study process:

1. **Stakeholder and public input** on who should be charged, and the most reasonable fee structure, and
2. **Available reliable data** upon which to estimate the benefits received by Vina GSA services each year.

1. Stakeholder and Public Input

Outreach to the general public and stakeholders served as one of the fundamental components of establishing a reasonable, equitable and legally defensible fee structure. Key principles included transparency, inclusion, and recognition of the diversity of groundwater users in the Vina Subbasin, as well as cultural, environmental, and economic considerations. Outreach goals, objectives and considerations were identified at the onset in a Communication and Engagement Plan, which was reviewed by GSA staff, the management committee, and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SHAC). Below is a summary of how the public was invited to be involved and provide input into the process. Additionally, the public had opportunities to participate and provide input at Vina GSA Board meetings and SHAC

meetings when the fee study was on the agenda. The fee study was discussed on the June 26, 2024, December 11, 2024, January 15, 2025, and February 12, 2025 Board meetings. It was also discussed at the May 22, 2024 and November 20, 2024 SHAC meetings.

Stakeholder Interviews.

Meetings were held in summer 2024 with representatives of several interested parties, including:

- Cal Water
- Rangeland and Rangeland Owners with Agricultural Properties
- Domestic Well Owners
- Tuscan Water District

Domestic Well Owner Workshops.

As an outcome of meeting with domestic well owners (DWO)s, two workshops were held in the evening in Chico and Durham. Neighborhoods with high concentration of domestic wells were mailed directly inviting them to attend a workshop. Discussions and voting boards were used to obtain opinions from the 30-plus attendees who came to the workshops. DWOs pay the fee, and as one DWO said, “I feel if we are not paying, we are not part of the process. We should pay something.” Water Code 10730 allows a GSA to charge de minimis users SGMA fees if they are regulated⁸.

Online Survey.

An online survey was developed to gauge the public’s knowledge about the GSA and the fee the agency collects, obtain opinions about potential fee structures and methodology, and ascertain perspectives about equability among fee-paying groups (domestic, commercial, irrigated or non-irrigated agriculture) so that the GSA can craft a fee structure that has considered many different perspectives on equability, and better educate property owners about the fee in the future. Advertising for the online survey included three ads in the Chico ER, postcards mailed directly to DWOs, rangeland and agricultural landowners, and business cards distributed at meetings and events. Social media and cross-listing on websites provided additional avenues to encourage participation.

GSA-Staff Led Meetings.

The GSA Program Manager worked collaboratively with the Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation staff to expand outreach activities by providing GSP and SGMA project updates to a variety of groups and organizations such as:

- Butte County Resource Conservation District
- Butte County Farm Bureau
- Butte County Agricultural Commissioner
- Butte College
- City of Chico

⁸ Regulation may refer to Water Code 10725.4, specifically conducting investigations, and in connection with such investigations, “inspecting the property or facilities of a person or entity to ascertain whether the purposes of this part are being met and compliance with this part.”

- Water Commission
- Durham Irrigation District (GSA Activities Update)
- Rock Creek Reclamation District

GSA staff also attended Grower’s Day in Chico and “Coffee with Water” Q&A general information meetings to answer any questions about the fee study.

2. Data Sources to Estimate Benefits Received

California law generally provides that a fee calculation should rely upon the best available data at the time the fee is calculated. The fee calculations herein rely on the best available data sources as of the time of this fee study report (February 2025). Data sources used to develop the fee include:

- Butte County Assessor Parcel Database,
- The Vina Subbasin GSP, and the 2021, 2022, and 2023 Annual Reports,
- Department of Water Resources Water Management Planning Tool (<https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/boundaries/>),
- Butte County FEMA mapping, and
- DWR 2022 crop mapping (<https://data.cnra.ca.gov/dataset/statewide-crop-mapping>).

A Geographic Information System (GIS) platform⁹ was used to create a web map application from which to conduct data queries and establish the necessary data for the fee database. The determination of fee-paying parcels, and acreage of those parcels, is shown in **Table 4**.

**Table 4
Vina Subbasin Acres and Parcels**

Item	Acres	Parcels
Total Vina Subbasin	178,579	37,383
less RCRD	4,648	77
Total Vina GSA	173,931	37,306
less Federal	1,501	19
less Unusable	796	156
Vina Fee-Paying	171,634	37,131

Source: KSN and HEC January 2025.

Combining Data, Outreach and Legal Considerations to Develop a Fee Structure

Data limitations helped shape fee structures that were developed. Fee structure options considered but eliminated after conducting research of available data and meetings with stakeholders include wellhead and extraction fees, and fees per water system connection.

⁹ ESRI.

Although the Vina Subbasin is designated a “high-priority” basin, the Vina GSA does not administer groundwater allocations, does not meter agricultural wells, and has a currently limited well permitting database.

- Wellhead and extraction fees were eliminated due to many data limitations, such as not having complete records of the number of and location of wells.
- A fee per water system connection was explored for domestic users (including those served by a water system and those with a private well), but this fee structure option was hampered by insufficient data from small water systems and private well users.

With these fee structure options eliminated, the fee study proceeded with two parcel-based fee structures, examining per parcel and per acre types of fee structures. The parcel-based fee structures that were developed use data that is readily available, can be explained to the public, and can be used with confidence.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Input

The Board directed staff and consultants at its June 26, 2024 meeting to obtain input from the SHAC in the fee structure development process. The SHAC was created in accordance with Section 11.3 of the JPA to ensure diverse perspectives and active stakeholder participation in the Vina GSA. The SHAC provides input and recommendations to the Board of Directors on the development, implementation, and ongoing management of the Vina Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). Key responsibilities outlined in Section 11.3 of the JPA include:

- Representing the interests of groundwater users and other stakeholders across the Vina Subbasin.
- Providing recommendations to the Board of Directors on groundwater management strategies and actions.
- Meeting as directed by the Board of Directors to review and discuss key issues related to the GSP.

The SHAC includes three agricultural groundwater users, two domestic well users, an environmental representative, a local business representative, Cal Water Chico, RCRD (non-voting member), a non-irrigated/ranged representative, and a water scientist.

The opinions expressed and data collected from the stakeholder interviews, domestic well owner workshops, GSA staff community gatherings, and the online survey were synthesized and considered with available, reliable data sources to gain input from the SHAC on how to proceed with fee structure options for the Board to consider. At the November 20, 2024 SHAC meeting, members were asked for input on seven questions that would help shape the fee that would be brought forward to the Vina GSA Board. Six of the ten SHAC members were in attendance.

Key conclusions and direction received from the SHAC included:

- The two-part fee structure fits the service provided to beneficiaries of Vina GSA’s activities.
- All parcels (unless Exempt or Unusable) must be charged because these parcels receive the same Part 1 services from Vina GSA. Additionally, if a Part 1 fee was based on acreage, the SHAC supported a minimum fee per parcel.
- Part 2 service costs should be split between Agricultural and Domestic users of groundwater based on historical estimates of pumping as described in the annual reports prepared for DWR.
- Cropped acres should be charged a uniform fee regardless of the crop type grown.
- Among the 6 SHAC members in attendance, they unanimously agreed that cropped acreage should be identified using a GIS tool, and they supported use of DWR’s crop mapping data while acknowledging that this could be updated in the future should a better source become available for Vina GSA’s use.
- The SHAC was presented with two options for charging the Domestic users the Part 2 fee: (1) the same fee per acre, and (2) a weighted fee per parcel based on estimated water use. For various reasons, the SHAC was undecided which option best reflected the benefit received for Part 2 GSA services.

Appendix B of this report provides key public outreach materials and workshop summaries, and information on questions asked of the SHAC at its November 20, 2024 meeting. **Appendix B will be added to the Final Report.**

Developed Fee Structures for Board Consideration

The Board was presented with two fee structure alternatives, Alternative A and Alternative B at the December 11, 2024 Board meeting. The alternatives only differed in how the Part 1 fee would be charged, as shown below. Under Alternative A, the Part 1 fee would be charged per acre. Under Alternative B, the Part 1 fee would be charged per parcel. Part 2 fees would be charged the same under both alternatives.

:: ALTERNATIVE A ::	:: ALTERNATIVE B ::
Part 1 Fee per Acre	Part 1 Fee per Parcel
Part 2 Fees Agricultural Use: Per Cropped Acre Domestic Use: Per Developed Parcel	

Discussion on the fee alternatives was continued to the January 13, 2025 Board meeting, at which direction was provided to pursue Alternative B with a Part 1 fee charged per parcel and Part 2 fees charged per cropped acre for agricultural use and per developed parcel for domestic use.

Section 3: FEE CALCULATION

3.1 COST BASIS OF FEE

The cost basis of the fee comprises the Agency's operations costs and a prudent reserve. Operating expenses include agency staffing, legal counsel, general office expenses, audits, fee placement on the tax roll, annual reporting and monitoring to DWR, periodic evaluations of the GSP, and various other regulatory activities. The costs are described as Part 1 or Part 2 costs based on the different services that Vina GSA provides.

Part 1 Fee Service Provided: Maintaining a functioning GSA and performing all basic legal requirements that SGMA requires of a GSA in a high-priority basin.

Part 1 Fee: Governance & GSA Operations – Providing GSA coverage and basic operation of the GSA, which is legally required for all land located in the Vina Subbasin. The Part 1 fee funds the minimum cost of having a GSA in place, which is a legal requirement for land included in high- and medium-priority subbasins under SGMA, including the Vina Subbasin. This fee covers:

- ✓ **GSA Administration** – Staff, legal support, financial reporting, and operational costs necessary to run the agency.
- ✓ **Board of Directors Meetings & Public Oversight** – Ensuring local governance, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making authority.
- ✓ **Minimum SGMA Compliance Requirements** – Covering only what is required to keep the GSA in existence and recognized by the State of California.

Part 2 Fee Service Provided: Groundwater monitoring and sustainable groundwater management, ensuring long-term groundwater availability.

Part 2 Fee: SGMA Monitoring & Sustainable Groundwater Management – Providing the monitoring of existing extractions, the development of projects, management actions, and implementation of projects that achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. The Part 2 fee covers:

- ✓ **SGMA Monitoring and reporting** – Required reporting (Annual Reports, Periodic Evaluations) and ongoing data collection related to groundwater extraction.
- ✓ **Groundwater Monitoring & Data Management** – Tracking extractions, basin conditions, and sustainability trends.
- ✓ **GSP Implementation** – Activities identified in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to achieve long-term sustainability.

✓ **Stakeholder Engagement & Outreach** – Working with groundwater users to ensure compliance and educate the public on sustainability efforts.

FY26 Cost Basis

The Board has two options for determining the cost basis and setting the fee level in FY26.

- **Option 1** – FY26 budget (minus RCRD’s share of Part 2 costs).
- **Option 2** – FY26 cost basis to support Vina GSA’s costs and prudent reserve that can be increased in smaller annual increments to achieve the revenue levels needed to support the projected 5-year operations costs. The Part 1 and Part 2 fees reflect the effort for the services provided under each part for the next five years rather than only FY26.

Table 5 shows the cost basis for Option 1 (FY26 budget) and Option 2 (calculated cost basis accounting for the 5-year cost projection) for setting the FY26 fee. A prudent reserve, which is added to the cost basis, is split between Part 1 and Part 2 because it is unknown what portion of those costs may be used for which purpose.

Table 5
FY26 Fee-Setting Cost by Part and Option

Operations Cost Category	Share by Fee Part	FY26 Fee Cost Basis	Prudent Reserves	Cost Basis by Fee Part
[1]				
Option 1		FY26 Budget		
Part 1 Costs	77%	\$452,100	\$15,374	\$467,474
Part 2 Costs	23%	\$136,022	\$4,626	\$140,647
Option 1 FY26 Fee Level		\$588,122	\$20,000	\$608,122
Option 2 -- Calculated Cost Basis for Smoother Fee Increases				
Part 1 Costs	56%	\$388,005	\$11,247	\$399,252
Part 2 Costs	44%	\$301,995	\$8,753	\$310,748
Option 2 FY26 Fee-Level		\$690,000	\$20,000	\$710,000

Source: GSA staff and HEC February 2025.

base budget

[1] Excludes RCRD's share of Part 2 costs.

Option 1

Table 6 shows the five-year costs forecast in real (inflated) dollars with a FY26 starting budget of \$611,611, of which \$608,122 is Vina GSA’s cost share. Under Option 1, the fee would be calculated on the Agency’s budget every year. A drawback with Option 1 is that the Part 1 and Part 2 fees will fluctuate dramatically from one year to the next because of the anticipated reduction in legal defense costs.

- The FY26 Part 1 fee is 77% of the total Vina GSA budget (see **Table 5**) but in FY27 that percentage is reduced to 56%, and in FY28 it is reduced to 53%.

Table 6
Projected Budget Needs with Inflation

Operations	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Cost Category	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5
<i>Annual Inflation [1]</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>4.0%</i>	<i>4.0%</i>	<i>4.0%</i>	<i>4.0%</i>
Part 1 Costs					
Audit Services	\$10,000	\$10,400	\$10,820	\$11,250	\$11,700
Financial Services	\$7,000	\$7,280	\$7,580	\$7,880	\$8,190
County Tax Roll Fee Support	\$28,000	\$29,120	\$30,290	\$31,500	\$32,760
Legal Services	\$25,000	\$26,000	\$27,040	\$28,130	\$29,250
Legal Defense Reserve	\$140,000	\$108,160	\$112,490	\$116,990	\$121,670
Legal Defense Reserve Accrued FY 24-25	\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Professional Services	\$35,000	\$36,400	\$37,860	\$39,380	\$40,950
Program Manager	\$110,000	\$114,400	\$118,980	\$123,740	\$128,690
Office Expenses	\$16,000	\$16,640	\$17,310	\$18,000	\$18,720
Subtotal Part 1 Costs	\$411,000	\$348,400	\$362,370	\$376,870	\$391,930
Contingency 10%	\$41,100	\$34,840	\$36,237	\$37,687	\$39,193
Part 1 Costs Estimate with Contingency	\$452,100	\$383,240	\$398,607	\$414,557	\$431,123
Part 2 Costs					
Annual Reporting	\$0	\$41,600	\$43,270	\$45,000	\$46,800
Periodic Evaluations	\$20,000	\$52,000	\$54,080	\$56,250	\$58,500
Groundwater Monitoring	\$30,000	\$54,080	\$101,130	\$105,180	\$109,390
Surface-GW Modeling	\$0	\$31,200	\$32,450	\$33,750	\$35,100
GSA Coordination and Outreach	\$10,000	\$31,200	\$32,450	\$33,750	\$35,100
Data Management System Maintenance	\$15,000	\$15,600	\$16,230	\$16,880	\$17,550
Technical Assistance - Cost Share	\$5,000	\$5,200	\$5,410	\$5,630	\$5,850
Technical Assistance -Professional Services	\$35,000	\$36,400	\$37,860	\$39,380	\$40,950
Grant Procurement	\$15,000	\$15,600	\$16,230	\$16,880	\$17,550
Subtotal Part 2 Costs	\$130,000	\$282,880	\$339,110	\$352,700	\$366,790
Contingency (10%)	\$13,000	\$28,288	\$33,911	\$35,270	\$36,679
Part 2 Costs Estimate with Contingency	\$143,000	\$311,168	\$373,021	\$387,970	\$403,469
less RCRD 2.44% Share of Part 2 Costs	(\$3,489)	(\$7,592)	(\$9,102)	(\$9,466)	(\$9,845)
Part 2 Total Costs Estimate	\$139,511	\$303,576	\$363,919	\$378,504	\$393,624
Prudent Reserve	\$20,000	\$20,800	\$21,640	\$22,500	\$23,400
Budget	\$611,611	\$707,616	\$784,166	\$815,561	\$848,147

Source: GSA staff February 2025.

inf budget

[1] Based on average annual change 2019-2024 using Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Indexes for:
West Region 4.4%
California 3.5%

RCRD Cost Share

Per agreement, the RCRD is responsible for paying 2.44% of certain portions of the Vina GSA budget. The agreement needs to be updated to reflect the Part 1 and Part 2 budget that has been developed as part of the fee study, and potentially to update for the revised fee structure methodology.

For this draft fee study, a cost share of 2.44% of the Part 2 costs has been allocated to RCRD, which results in \$3,489 for FY26. This is preliminary and will be updated once discussions are complete with RCRD and the agreement has been updated.

Recommendation for Decision #1 February 26, 2025

Approval of the cost items as presented in Part 1 and Part 2 is recommended because these correspond with services provided for Part 1 and Part 2 GSA activities.

Option 2

Table 7 provides a cash flow analysis for the Agency for the next five fiscal years under Option 2 which sets the FY26 fee at a level that can be adjusted each year in smaller increments to meet the projected 5-year costs and determines the Part 1 and Part 2 costs to set fees on a 5-year average (56% part 1 and 44% part 2 as shown in **Table 5**).

The cash flow includes an allowance for bad debt as is typical of governmental entities. Although the GSA will receive all fees placed on the tax roll, guaranteed by participating in the Teeter Plan, fees that are hand billed may not be completely recoverable and other bad debt may be experienced in the future. It is anticipated that the GSA will have a negative cash balance at the end of fiscal year 2025 for two key reasons:

- (1) Acreage calculated to be subject to the fee was previously incorrect.
- (2) The last two years of fee levels were determined based on the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, but actual costs have proven greater than estimated.

With revenue from the fee in FY26, and budgeted costs for FY26, it is projected the Agency will have a positive ending balance at the end of fiscal year 2026. The goal is to increase the Agency's cash balance such that it has reserves that are 25% of operating costs, and so that gross revenues (revenue plus cash balance) exceed operating costs by 20%. It is anticipated that these financial goals, based on Government Financial Officers Association guidelines, will be met by the end of fiscal year 2027. Projected costs and revenues and collection of reserves as a percentage of operating costs are illustrated in **Figure 4**.

Note that the estimates of costs and revenues are best estimates; actual costs and revenues will likely vary over time, and there could be periods of time during the fiscal year that the Vina GSA is unable to maintain its target minimum cash threshold because it needs to draw from reserves.

Table 7
Projected 5-Year Cash Flow

Revenues and Expenses	Fiscal Year Ending					
	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenue						
Vina GSA SGMA Fee : Tax Roll	\$407,218	\$698,165	\$726,091	\$755,135	\$785,340	\$816,754
Vina GSA SGMA Fee : Hand Bill		\$11,835	\$12,309	\$12,801	\$13,313	\$13,846
RCRD Part 2 Cost Share		\$3,489	\$7,592	\$9,102	\$9,466	\$9,845
Grants	\$2,347,755	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue	\$2,754,973	\$713,489	\$745,992	\$777,038	\$808,120	\$840,444
Expenses						
Operations	\$281,350	\$411,611	\$578,656	\$650,036	\$676,071	\$703,077
Legal Defense	\$160,000	\$180,000	\$108,160	\$112,490	\$116,990	\$121,670
Grant-Funded Activities	\$2,347,755	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expense	\$2,789,105	\$591,611	\$686,816	\$762,526	\$793,061	\$824,747
Estimated Net Revenue	(\$34,132)	\$121,878	\$59,177	\$14,511	\$15,059	\$15,697
Beginning Balance	\$31,055	(\$3,077)	\$115,843	\$171,942	\$183,253	\$194,984
Net Revenues	(\$34,132)	\$121,878	\$59,177	\$14,511	\$15,059	\$15,697
Bad debt		(\$2,959)	(\$3,077)	(\$3,200)	(\$3,328)	(\$3,461)
Estimated Ending Balance	(\$3,077)	\$115,843	\$171,942	\$183,253	\$194,984	\$207,220
Reserves						
Target Reserves	\$110,338	\$147,903	\$171,704	\$190,632	\$198,265	\$206,187
Cash Balance as % of Costs	-0.7%	19.6%	25.0%	24.0%	24.6%	25.1%
Financial Health Criteria						
Target Reserves 25% of Costs	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
Gross Revenues Ratio 1.2 [1]	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Source: Fee study, HEC February 2025.

flow

[1] Gross revenues ratio target of 1.2 times total expenses.

Figure 5 demonstrates potential for the fee to be increased by less than 4% in year 5, as it is projected the ending cash balance will be greater than 25% of operating costs; note however, the projection is for fiscal year-end only and it is possible that at some point during the fiscal year, the GSA may have to use some of its reserves to pay invoices. This can happen because the GSA does not receive any fee revenue between July and December.

Figure 4
Projected Costs and Revenues and Reserves Compared to Target Reserves

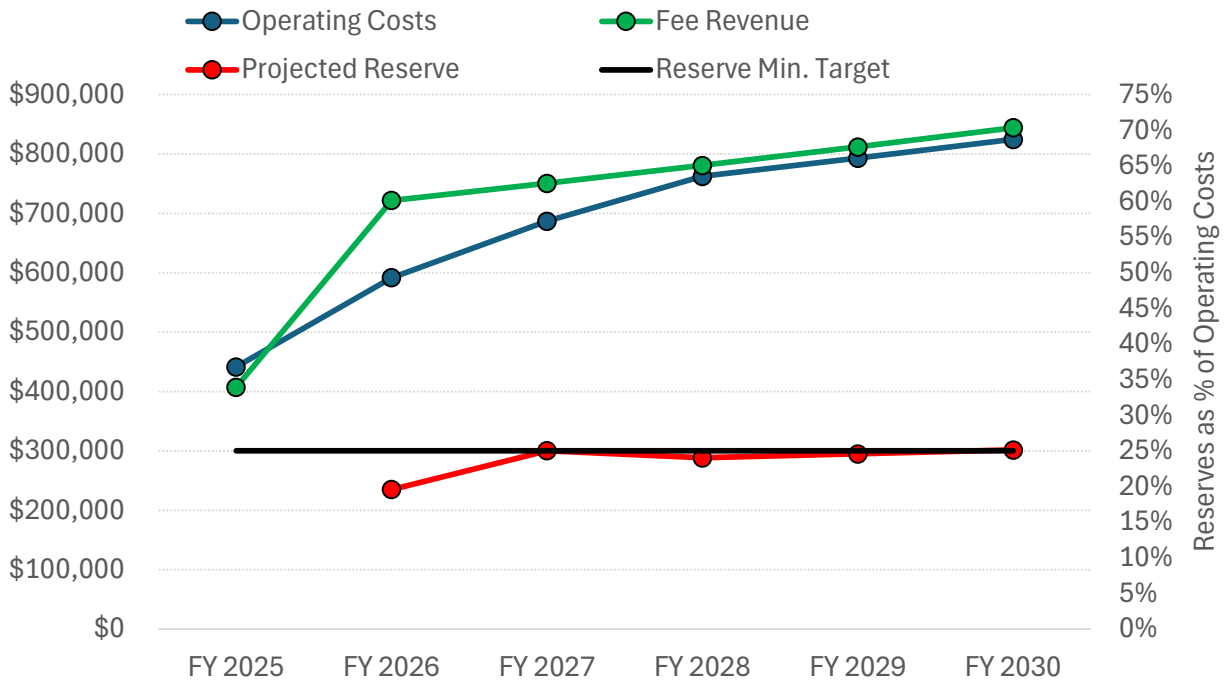
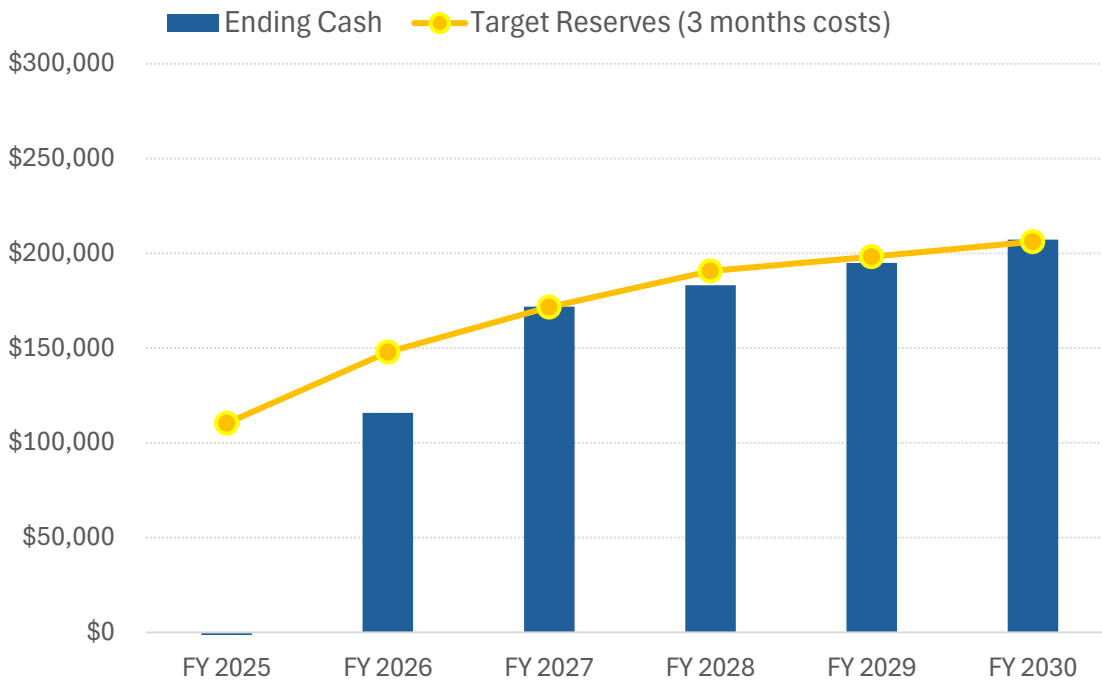


Figure 5
Projected Vina GSA Ending Cash Balances by Fiscal Year



Recommendation for Decision #2 February 26, 2025

Option 2 is recommended to set a fee level for FY26 that reflects the projected long-term annual operations cost of the Vina GSA. The allocation of costs should be revisited every 3 to 5 years to ensure that the cost recovery between the fee parts continues to be accurate.

3.2 FEE CALCULATIONS

There are three steps to calculating the FY26 fee schedule:

Step 1: Determine the Part 1 and Part 2 costs (the fee calculation numerators)

- Use either Option 1 or Option 2 methodology to determine the FY26 fees.
- Allocate the Part 2 cost between Agricultural and Domestic Users.

Step 2: Determine the Part 1 and Part 2 fee units, which are the fee calculation denominators

- Calculate total number of parcels for the Part 1 fee.
- Calculate the total number of cropped acres for the Part 2, Group 1 (Agricultural Users) fee.
- Calculate the total number of developed parcels for the Part 2, Group 2 (Domestic Users) fee.

Step 3: Perform the fee calculations.

- Divide the Step 1 numerators for each part by the Step 2 denominators for each part.

The fee calculation steps are described in detail below.

Step 1: Determine the Part 1 and Part 2 Costs

Under this step, either Option 1 or Option 2 total cost will be used, as determined by the Board at its February 26, 2026 meeting. That total cost must then be allocated to Part 1 and Part 2, and further to Part 2, Group 1 and Part 2, Group 2.

The SHAC recommended that the Part 2 costs be allocated to Group 1 (Agricultural users) and Group 2 (Domestic users) using the groundwater pumping split between these user types as documented in the Agency's annual reports. Two options are identified for allocating the costs to set the fee levels each year.

- **Option A** - Ninety-percent of Part 2 costs are allocated to Group 1 Agricultural Users, and 10% of Part 2 costs are allocated to Group 2 Domestic Users using the average share of pumping by each group as presented in the Agency's annual reports to-date (three years of annual reports data is available as of February 2025).

- **Option B** - Calculate a five-year running average of the estimated groundwater pumping by each group and change the percentage each year to reflect that running average.

Recommendation for Decision #3 February 26, 2025

Option A is recommended to allocate the Part 2 costs between Group 1 Agricultural users and Group 2 Domestic users based on typical annual water use by Agriculture in the Vina Subbasin demonstrated in Table 3. This option is less administratively burdensome than Option B.

Step 2: Determine the Part 1 and Part 2 Fee Units

Part 1 fees will be charged to all parcels except Exempt and Unusable parcels based on the number of fee-paying parcels in the Vina GSA’s boundaries. Part 2 fees will be charged based on the Part 2, Group 1 (Agricultural Users) number of Cropped Acres and Group 2 (Domestic Users) number of Developed Parcels. Part 2, Group 3 Grazing and Vacant is not charged a Part 2 fee, as explained earlier in this report. **Table 8** describes the fee units (parcels, Cropped Acres, and Developed Parcels) in greater detail.

**Table 8
Explanation of Fee Parts Units**

Fee Part / Group	Identification of Fee Applicability
Part 1 Fee	Parcels within the Vina GSA boundaries (excludes RCRD parcels), excludes Exempt and Unusable parcels Unusable Parcel = Land Use Code is UU (Ditches, Levees etc.) OR Land Use Code is 9999 (Not Yet Defined) and doesn't have a Bute County Assessor Taxability Code
Part 2 Fees	
Group 1: Agriculture	Cropped Acres Identified using DWR's most recently published Crop Mapping Layer as having a crop grown in the preceding 12 months (excludes Idle and Unclassified Crop Codes); acreage computed using GIS - must be growing at least 1 acre of crop on at least 5% of the parcel (parameters are to avoid picking up incorrect parcels)
Group 2: Domestic	Developed Parcels (has a structure(s)) Building on the parcel identified using FEMA and Assessor databases (newer bldgs may not be in FEMA database; non-taxable parcels, parcels being updated, and parcels with multiple buildings may not be in Assessor database)
Group 3: Grazing & Vacant	All Other Parcels subject to the Part 1 Fee

In the Vina GSA boundaries, there are a total of 37,131 fee-paying Assessor parcels, of which 34,672 are Developed Parcels. The DWR 2022 cropping mapping data was used to determine the total number of Cropped Acres on agricultural parcels and parcels with agricultural and domestic uses. In total, there were 72,364 acres of Cropped Acres in water year 2022. The total

number of fee-paying Assessor parcels, Developed Parcels, and Cropped Acres in the Vina GSA are summarized in **Table 9**.

Table 9
Vina GSA Fee-Paying Parcels

Vina GSA	Total Parcels	Part 1 Fee Units	Part 2 Fee Units	
		Fee-Paying Parcels [1]	Cropped Acres	Developed Parcels
FY26	37,306	37,131	72,364	34,672

[1] Excludes Federal and Unusable Parcels.

Tables 10 and **11** show the number of developed parcels and cropped acres by use of parcel.

Table 10
Vina GSA Developed Parcels

Parcel Description	Developed Parcels
Vina GSA	34,672
Domestic Use Only	33,435
Agriculture with Domestic Use	1,237

Table 11
Vina GSA Cropped Acres in Water Year 2022

Description	Cropped Acres
Vina GSA	72,364
Agriculture Only	29,711
Agriculture with Domestic Use	42,653

Step 3: Perform the Fee Calculations

Part 1 Fee

The Part 1 fee cost basis is divided by the number of fee-paying Assessor parcels in the GSA’s boundary. A 2.5% margin for error is included in the Part 1 fee calculation to account for potential refinement to the database prior to bill preparation by August 1.

The Part 1 fee is calculated in **Table 12** at \$11.02 per Assessor parcel for FY26.

Table 12
Part 1 Fee Calculation

Fee Item	Fee Collection		
	Tax Roll	Hand Bill	Total
Cost Allocation for Part 1 Fee			\$399,252
Fee-Paying Parcels	36,330	801	37,131
Parcels with Error Margin	2.5% 35,422	781	36,203
FY26 Fee per Parcel per Year [1]			\$11.02

Source: HEC February 2025.

[1] Fees rounded to 2 cents.

Part 2 Fees

Part 2 Group 1: Agricultural Users Fee. The Group 1 allocated cost is divided by the number of Cropped Acres where cropped acres are identified by the most recent DWR crop mapping GIS file, excluding codes X (idle) and U (unclassified). Parcels that straddle the GSA boundary pay for crops grown on acreage within the GSA boundary only. A 5% margin for error is included in the Part 2 fee calculation to account for refinements to the database prior to bill preparation by August 1. The Part 2 Group 1 fee is calculated in **Table 13** at \$4.06 per Cropped Acre for FY26.

Part 2 Group 2: Domestic Users Fee. The Group 2 allocated cost is divided by the number of Developed Parcels. A 5% margin for error is included in the Part 2 fee calculation to account for refinements to the database prior to bill preparation by August 1. The Part 2 Group 2 fee is calculated in **Table 14** at \$0.94 per Developed Parcel for FY26.

Table 13
Part 2 Group 1: Agricultural Users Fee Calculation

Fee Item		Fee Collection		
		Tax Roll	Hand Bill	Total
Cost Allocation for Part 2 Fees				\$279,673
Agricultural Use Allocation	90.0%			\$279,673
Cropped Acres		71,612	752	72,364
Cropped Acres with Error Margin	5.0%	68,031	714	68,746
FY26 Fee per Cropped Acre per Year [1]				\$4.06

Source: HEC February 2025.

[1] Fees rounded to 2 cents.

Table 14
Part 2 Group 2: Domestic Users Fee Calculation

Fee Item		Fee Collection		
		Tax Roll	Hand Bill	Total
Cost Allocation for Part 2 Fees				\$31,075
Domestic Use Allocation	10.0%			\$31,075
Developed Parcels		34,266	406	34,672
Developed Parcels with Error Margin	5.0%	32,553	386	32,938
FY26 Fee per Developed Parcel per Year [1]				\$0.94

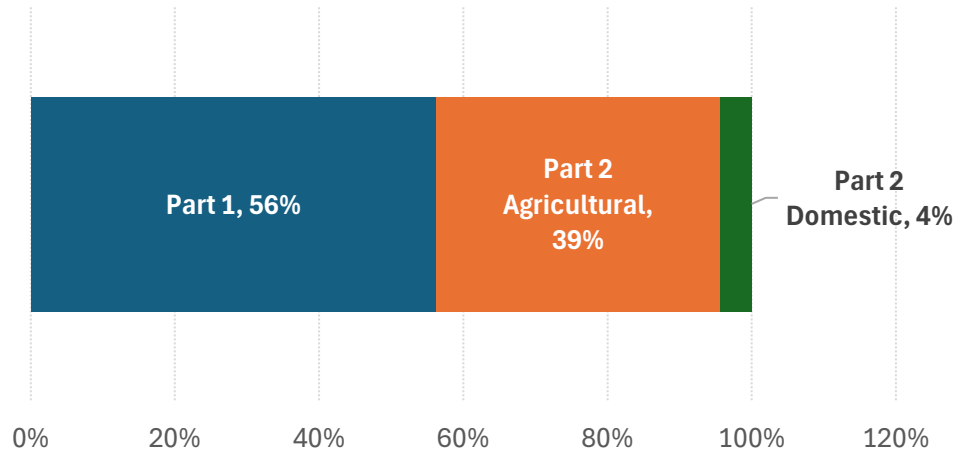
Source: HEC February 2025.

[1] Fees rounded to 2 cents.

A summary of fee part revenue collection is provided in **Figure 6**.

Table 15 shows the fee calculations for each of the fee parts in one table.

Figure 6
Share of Revenue Collection by Fee Part



Source: Vina GSA fee database February 2025.

Table 15
Vina GSA Fee Calculations FY26

Item	FY26
Total Cost Basis	\$710,000
Part 1 Fee	[1]
Cost Basis	\$399,252
Fee-Paying Parcels in Vina GSA	36,203
Fee per Assessor Parcel per Year	\$11.02
Part 2 Costs	\$310,748
Group 1: Agricultural Users	
Part 2, Group 1 Cost	\$279,673
Cropped Acres in Vina GSA	68,746
Fee per Cropped Acre per Year	\$4.06
Group 2: Domestic Users	
Part 2, Group 2 Cost	\$31,075
Developed Parcels in Vina GSA	32,938
Fee per Developed Parcel per Year	\$0.94

Source: HEC February 2025.

[1] Fees rounded to 2 cents.

3.3 FEE COLLECTION

If the Vina GSA adopts the SMGA fee, it will be collected by placing it on the property tax roll by the Butte County Auditor-Controller and collected by the Butte County Treasurer-Tax Collector¹⁰. Butte County adopted the Teeter Plan which guarantees payment of the full amount of the fees that are charged with the County pursuing any unpaid fees. Fee revenues will be disbursed to Vina GSA in December (about 55%), April (about 40%) and July or August (about 5%)¹¹.

Properties not assessed on the property tax roll include railroad and utility-owned parcels, State of California owned parcels, and local government owned parcels if those parcels are located within their own jurisdiction. Vina GSA will directly “hand bill” these properties. Larger landowners that will be hand billed include the City of Chico, Butte County, California State University, Butte College, Durham Unified School District, Chico Area Recreation and Park District, Chico Unified School District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Union Pacific Railroad Company, and Pacific Gas and Electric. Only about 1.7% of total revenue will be collected via hand bills, as demonstrated in **Table 16**.

Table 16
Fee Collection by Part

Fee Part	Fee Collection		
	Tax Roll	Hand Bill	Total
Part 1	\$390,348	\$8,606	\$398,954
Part 2 Agricultural	\$276,207	\$2,900	\$279,108
Part 2 Domestic	\$30,600	\$363	\$30,962
Total	\$697,155	\$11,869	\$709,024
	98.3%	1.7%	

Some parcels will pay Part 2 fees for both Agricultural and Domestic use of groundwater on the property. **Table 17** shows the fee collection by parcel category.

Note: Fee totals in tables 15 and 16 do not add to \$710,000 because the fees are rounded down by 2 cents. Fees are rounded to ensure they are divisible by two, a requirement of the Butte County Auditor-Controller.

¹⁰ All fees would be placed on the property tax roll, with the exception of properties that do not receive a property tax bill.

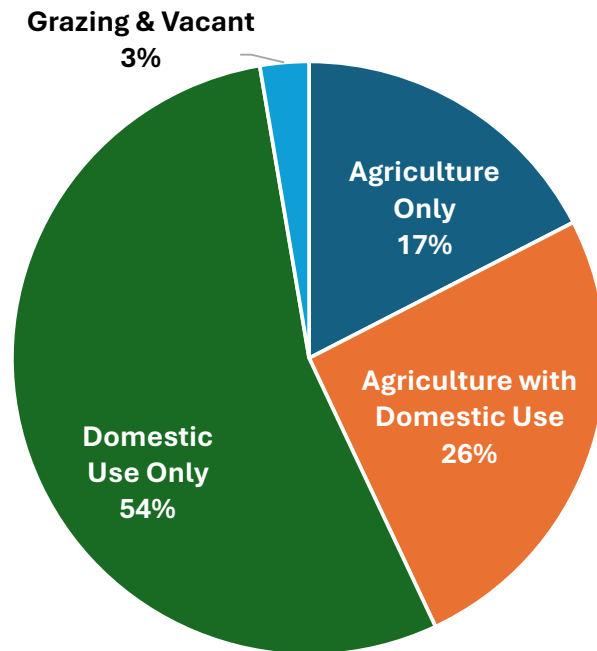
¹¹ Per Butte County correspondence January 2025.

Table 17
Fee Collection by Parcel Category

Parcel Category	Parcel Category Description	Part 1 Fee	Part 2 Fees		Total Fees
			Ag. Use	Dom. Use	
1	Agriculture Only	\$7,349	\$114,593	\$0	\$121,943
2	Agriculture with Domestic Use	\$13,291	\$164,513	\$1,105	\$178,909
3	Domestic Use Only	\$359,242	\$0	\$29,858	\$389,100
4	Grazing & Vacant	\$19,071	\$0	\$0	\$19,071
	Total	\$398,954	\$279,106	\$30,962	\$709,023

Figure 7 shows the percentage of revenue by parcel category.

Figure 7
Revenue Collection by Parcel Category



Source: Vina GSA fee database February 2025.

3.4 BILL IMPACTS

The FY26 SGMA fees were calculated for several different types of properties for demonstrable purposes only. **Table 18** shows the calculations. **Appendix C** provides bills for different properties, for illustrative purposes, under the proposed fees.

Table 18
Sample Bill Calculations

Example	Parcel Size (acres)	Use	Part 1	Part 2	Fee Calculation	FY26 Fee
1	0.5	Domestic	\$11.02 per parcel	\$0.94 per developed parcel	= \$11.02 + \$0.94	\$11.96
2	100	Agriculture	\$11.02 per parcel	\$4.06 per cropped acre	= \$11.02 + (\$4.06*100)	\$417.02
3	100	Agriculture & Domestic (95 acres cropped)	\$11.02 per parcel	\$4.06 per cropped acre \$0.94 per developed parcel	= \$11.02 + \$0.94 + (\$4.06*95)	\$397.66
4	100	Rangeland	\$11.02 per parcel		= \$11.02	\$11.02

Section 4: FEE IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 FEE ADOPTION

To adopt the SGMA fee, the Vina GSA Board must hold at least one public meeting. Prior to the public meeting to adopt the SGMA fee, notice will be provided as follows:

- (1) Publicize once a week for 2 weeks at least 14 days ahead of the meeting, (2) post notice on the agency's website, and (3) send notice of the fee by mail to any interested party who files a written request for notice of agency meetings on new or increased fees.
- (2) The notice must include time and place of meeting, general explanation of the item, and a statement that the data upon which the proposed fee is based is available (this must be made available to the public at least 20 days prior to the meeting).

The specific fee must be set each year to place the fees on the tax roll, regardless of whether the fee amounts change or not. The fee should be adjusted each year as necessary to raise sufficient revenues by one of the following methods:

- a) Applying the change in a price index (the March to March change in the West Region Consumer Price Index published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is recommended), or
- b) Applying a (maximum, up to) set percentage increase (such as 4%), or
- c) Estimating costs required to fund the Agency's next fiscal year budget plus an amount for prudent reserves.

Periodic reviews (at least every five years) of the fee structure is recommended to be included in the fee resolution.

Per Section 9.3 of the JPA, adoption of the fee requires supermajority affirmative vote. After adopting the fee, Vina GSA must continue with the following actions to implement the fee for FY26, and each fiscal year thereafter:

- (1) Per Water Code 10730.1, the Vina GSA shall notify the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) of the fee by way of letter to the Director of the Water Division immediately following adoption of the fee, before the fee is imposed.
- (2) The Vina GSA shall provide the Butte County Auditor-Controller all required documentation authorizing placement of the fee on the property tax roll by August 1, 2025 and shall provide the list of Assessor Parcel Numbers and fee amounts to be placed on the FY 2026 roll no later than the date specified by the Butte County Auditor-Controller (usually around August 10th).

4.2 CORRECTIONS

Vina GSA will develop a policy for landowners to provide the Agency with corrected information in the case that any of the fees are based on incorrect data.

Property owners must pay the fee as charged. For properties billed with property taxes, corrections that reduce or increase the amount of the fee due will be credited or debited on the subsequent year's tax roll. The Vina GSA will develop a policy for the method by which a reduced or increased hand bill is corrected (such as check or direct deposit) and timing for such correction.