

Frequently Asked Questions

North San Joaquin Water Conservation District (NSJWCD)
Proposition 218 – Proposed New Irrigation Water Rates
For South System and Tracy Lake System

1. ***I've never used any water from the NSJWCD system. Why was I notified of the proposed rate increase?*** Proposition 218 requires NSJWCD to send notices to those parcel owners where NSJWCD water is “immediately available.” To satisfy that requirement, the NSJWCD Board notified owners of 735 parcels adjacent to or within 2,000 feet of the NSJWCD South System pipeline who MAY be interested in receiving NSJWCD water sometime in the next 5 years. Owners of the 12 parcels within the Tracy Lake Improvement District were also notified.
2. ***Why does the Board of NSJWCD want to raise water rates?*** In the past, NSJWCD sold water below cost. NSJWCD cannot continue to operate a water system that loses money. The Board decided to establish rates that would cover NSJWCD's projected costs for delivering irrigation water to the South and Tracy Lake Systems.
3. ***Do the proposed water rates apply to everyone in NSJWCD?*** The proposed rates only apply to those parcel owners who actually take delivery of water from the South System or Tracy Lake System.
4. ***If I do not take delivery of water from the NSJWCD system, will the Proposition 218 process result in any additional fees or charges?*** No.
5. ***If I want water from the NSJWCD system in the future and water is available, will I be able to connect and take delivery of water?*** Yes. No connection fees or late penalties are currently in effect or are being proposed at this time. However, as explained in FAQ 6 below, you would be responsible for all costs to physically connect to the NSJWCD system.
6. ***I would like to be able to get NSJWCD water but will have to modify my irrigation system. Who pays for the modification?*** You would be responsible for the cost of making the physical connection to NSJWCD system subject to review and approval by the NSJWCD Engineer.
7. ***What is the Proposition 218 process?*** Simply stated, it is California law that requires a specific process when a District proposes new or to raise existing water rates. The Proposition 218 process requires written notice, a public hearing and to provide parcel owners with the opportunity to protest the proposed rates.
8. ***Who gets to protest and how do they protest?*** Owners of the parcels who were mailed notices may file protests against the rate increase. Please refer to the Proposition 218 notice for details on how to file a protest against the proposed new water rates.
9. ***Why are rates set so far into the future?*** A multi-year rate structure precludes need to revisit the Proposition 218 process more frequently, reduces administrative cost, and allows people wanting NSJWCD water to determine future cost more accurately.
10. ***Why are water rates for the Tracy Lakes system so low as compared to the rest of the system?*** The NSJWCD water rate study available online at http://www.nsigroundwater.org/uploads/6-Prop_218_Rate_Study-Final.pdf, explains in detail the reasons for the difference. The main reasons are that all parcel owners within

the Tracy Lake Improvement District have agreed to pay the capital costs for the new system currently under construction through the levying of improvement district capital assessments and to pay the subsequent annual operation and maintenance (O&M) costs through the levying of a separate annual improvement district O&M assessment. Assessments are like taxes in that they are liens on the land and take priority over existing mortgages, deeds of trust, and loans. The annual O&M assessment includes most of the O&M costs being covered by the new South System water rate.

11. ***Why does NSJWCD propose to charge per acre foot of water instead of per acre of land irrigated?*** The California Legislature in November 2009 adopted a new law to increase water use efficiency and water conservation. All agricultural water suppliers providing irrigation water to 10,000 or more irrigated acres are required to adopt a pricing structure based at least in part on the quantity delivered. Woodbridge ID has adopted such a pricing structure. In the past, NSJWCD water rates were charged on the basis of per acre of land irrigated regardless of the amount of water actually used. While this may be a simple way to charge, it is not an equitable way to charge and does not encourage water conservation. With this Proposition 218 process, NSJWCD wants to move to charging based upon the quantity delivered.
12. ***Charging per acre foot may be more equitable but how will NSJWCD accomplish it without staff?*** NSJWCD is contracting with Woodbridge Irrigation District. WID staff will serve as water master, oversee NSJWCD system operation, deliver, measure, and record water deliveries, and provide billing services.
13. ***Can NSJWCD ever charge more than the approved rate?*** Not without starting a whole new Proposition 218 process.
14. ***If NSJWCD delivers water during 2015 and I take delivery of South System water, will the proposed Proposition 218 2015 water rate for the South System be the rate actually charged?*** Not necessarily. The proposed rate for each year sets the maximum or ceiling that NSJWCD may charge. Each year the NSJWCD Board will set the actual water rate taking into consideration that year's adopted budget, the amount of Mokelumne River water available to NSJWCD, costs to pump groundwater within the South System, and other factors.