

# Corning Sub-basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Fee Policy

## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### Introduction

The Corning Sub-basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CSGSA) is developing its long-term fees in 2023 to fund GSA Administration, GSP Implementation and SGMA compliance costs for the FY23-24 through FY27-28 period. The CSGSA is approving a new Irrigated/Non-Irrigated fee structure to achieve more equity for those subject to the fee. The CSGSA needs to develop an associated fee policy to ensure equitable billing for services received.

### Purpose

This is a policy document developed by the CSGSA to implement the new Irrigated/NonIrrigated fee structure approved in 2023. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that each parcel subject to the fee is properly classified into the correct user class and charged the correct fee amount on a per acre and annual basis based on the unique user class fees. The policy recognizes that the manner in which each parcel is charged under the new fees needs to be clearly defined to ensure landowners understand the fee, to promote consistency in fee determination, and simplify any potential reclassification of parcels into the correct user class for accurate fee purposes.

### Adopted Irrigated/Non-Irrigated Fees

The new 2023 CSGSA proposed fees include three user classes: Non-Irrigated, Irrigated-Surface Water, and Irrigated-Groundwater. Each fee has a unique per acre per year fee which reflects the respective benefit of CSGSA services. Appendix A includes the proposed resolution approving the new CSGSA 2023 fees.

## SECTION 2 – USER CLASS DEFINITIONS

The CSGSA is developing its long-term fees in 2023 to recover adequate revenues to achieve SGMA compliance for all landowners in the service area. The three (3) distinct user classes are defined below.

### Fee User Class Definitions

**Non-Irrigated User Class:** Includes parcels within the CSGSA service area that open space, natural habitat, vacant, dry land farmed or rangeland. Parcels included in this user class have no groundwater wells or wells used only for minimal domestic use on large parcels consisting of 5 acres or more.

**Irrigated-Surface Water User Class:** Includes parcels within the CSGSA service area that use surface water primarily which may include parcels within the surface water provider service area or have individual water rights or permits for surface water allocations directly from the Sacramento River, Stony Creek, or another source. Parcels that use surface water with groundwater in a supplemental fashion will be classified as irrigated-surface water users.

**Irrigated-Groundwater User Class:** Includes parcels within the CSGSA service area that use groundwater primarily and do not have access to or the right to use surface water supplies. These parcels will typically have a well(s) on the parcel, or a nearby parcel, serving as the primary source of water supply. Urban areas or residential areas that rely on groundwater for domestic supply are included in this category.

## Other Definitions

County: Glenn County located in northern California.

CSGSA: The Corning Sub-basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

Landowner: The landowner of record for a parcel subject to the CSGSA fee based on County assessor parcel data.

Parcel address: The address of the property subject to the CSGSA fee based on County assessor parcel data.

Parcel Acreage: The total acreage of the parcel subject to the CSGSA fee based on County assessor parcel data. If there is more than one acreage figure for a parcel the CSGSA will generally base fees on the lower acreage figure or the acreage figure that most accurately represents the parcel acreage. Multiple sources of data will be referenced in order to verify use of accurate acreage data for assessing CSGSA fees.

Parcel Acreage For Boundary Parcels: For parcels with a portion of the land area within the CSGSA service area boundary, the net acreage of the parcel subject to the CSGSA fee located within the CSGSA boundary will be used for fee assessment purposes based on GIS calculations data.

## SECTION 3 – CURRENT USER CLASSIFICATIONS

This section allows landowners subject to the fee to understand how their parcel(s) are classified under the new CSGSA Irrigated/Non-Irrigated 2023 fee structure with three (3) user classes. The CSGSA will make parcel level fee data easily available to landowners subject to the fee. CSGSA Service Area Boundary Appendix B includes the CSGSA service area boundary. Parcels with a portion of their acreage within the CSGSA boundary will only be assessed fees based on their acreage within the CSGSA service area boundary.

CSGSA Service Area Parcel User Class Delineations Appendix B includes a CSGSA service area parcel map indicating user class delineations based on the approved 2023 fees and associated definitions included in this draft policy document. Landowners may identify parcel classification by viewing this map which categorizes parcels based on the three (3) user classes included in the approved fees for the fee assessment process. The parcel map delineations will be updated based on changes in land use necessitating a change or to address any errors in initial classification. As parcel reclassifications are approved the user class map will be updated accordingly.

## SECTION 4 – USER CLASSIFICATION CHANGE REQUEST

Landowners may request a change in user classification (and associated fee assessment) (User Classification Change Request) based on implementation of the new CSGSA Irrigated/Non-Irrigated fee structure approved in 2023 (see Appendix A). The purpose of this policy is to ensure that each parcel subject to the fee is properly classified into the correct user class and charged the correct fee amount on a per acre and annual basis based on the unique user class fees. The CSGSA recognizes category classification may need to be reviewed in limited circumstances.

## Basis For User Classification Changes

Landowners may request reclassification of their parcel(s) under the new 2023 CSGSA fees based on the following circumstances: (1) parcel is classified improperly (not in correct user class); (2) parcel fee assessment amount is incorrect (based on acreage inaccuracy or incorrect user classification); or (3) parcel land use has changed requiring the parcel to be reclassified into a different user class. To request a User Classification Change, the landowner must fill out a User Classification Change Request form.

## User Classification Change Request

The CSGSA may consider User Classification Change Requests after a landowner has submitted the respective form requesting a specific change. The CSGSA has the option of providing both electronic and manual forms. The information requested would include landowner name, parcel address, parcel user classification, and parcel acreage. A sample of potential draft manual and electronic forms are included in Appendix C. A User Classification Change Request must be submitted not more than 45 days from the County's issuance of the tax bills which includes the CSGSA property related fee. The CSGSA staff will review, and process User Classification Change Request within 15 business days of receiving the Request form. All Request forms received will be stored electronically for CSGSA records. Request forms may be submitted electronically or via handwritten form. Staff will review the Request form and the existing information related to the parcel at issue to determine whether reclassification is appropriate based on the definitions included in this Policy. Approved Change Requests will be signed and dated by authorized staff, provided to the requesting party, and kept in CSGSA records. If Change Requests are not approved, staff will provide the denial and indicate the reason denying the reclassification request to the requesting party. There are no Application fees levied by the CSGSA in processing these Applications.

## SECTION 5 – USER CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PROCESS

Landowners who request a parcel user class reclassification under Section 4 of this policy who are denied the request, may appeal the decision to the CSGSA Committee. The Appeal must be submitted to the CSGSA Committee within 30 days of the date the denial by staff was issued. The Appeal must be written and include specific reasons the denial was improper based on the Classification Policy definitions and any supporting facts in support thereof. The CSGSA Committee will consider the appeal at the first Committee meeting that occurs at least 15 days after receiving the Appeal. If the staff determination is not supported by evidence, the CSGSA Committee may grant the Appeal and approve the User Classification Change Request; if the staff determination is supported and consistent with the Policy, the CSGSA Committee shall deny the Appeal.