

**TULARE COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT**

August 4, 2010

**LAFCO Case 1453
Tulare Irrigation District Sphere of Influence Amendment**

- PROPOSAL:** To amend the Sphere of Influence (SOI) of the Tulare Irrigation District (TID) in order to allow the same area to be annexed to the TID's service boundaries.
- PROPONENT:** County of Tulare via BOS Resolution 2008-0372.
- SIZE:** Approximately 137 acres to be added
- LOCATION:** The project site is located on the southeast corner of Highway 63 (Mooney Blvd) and Avenue 272, within the southern portion of the City of Visalia. **(Figure 1)**
- APNs:** **126-019-014**
- NOTICE:** Notice for this public hearing was provided in accordance with Government Code Section 56427.

ANALYSIS

Conformity with Plans:

A. Site Information:

	County	City
Zoning Designation	N/A	Quasi-Public
General Plan Designation	N/A	Park
Uses	N/A	Public Recreational space and facilities, museum

Impact on Prime Agricultural Land, Agriculture and Open Space:

The soil types found on the site are identified as Grangeville Loam and Tagus Loam. The Soil Survey of Tulare County (Western Part), prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture identifies these soils as prime agricultural soils (Grade 1). The inclusion of the site into the Tulare ID's SOI is intended to help stabilize the area's groundwater levels, thereby ensuring the continuation of the site's public recreational use and aesthetics. No change in land use will occur upon annexation or in the immediate future; thus, this SOI Amendment will not promote the eventual conversion of prime ag land to urban uses.

Williamson Act and Agricultural Preserves:

The site is not under any type of agricultural preserve contract.

Environmental Impacts:

The County of Tulare is the lead agency for this proposal. The County prepared an initial study/environmental checklist and on the basis of that study, it was determined that this project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA. A copy of the Notice of Exemption filed with the Tulare County Clerk is included in the application materials.

LAFCO Sphere of Influence Review Requirements:

Government Code Section 56425 (g) requires that on or before January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, the Commission shall, as necessary, review and update each Sphere of Influence.

The most recent scheduled TID SOI update took place in 2007. LAFCO staff provided notice of that scheduled update to TID staff. At the time, the TID determined that its existing SOI boundaries were adequate and the Commission consequently certified the scheduled SOI update without any changes to the boundary. The next comprehensive TID SOI update is scheduled to take place in 2012.

The District's SOI has been amended since LAFCO conducted its 2007 comprehensive SOI update review. LAFCO Case 1450, amending the TID's SOI to include an additional 655 acres, was approved by your Commission on June 2, 2010 (LAFCO Resolution 10-009)

It should be noted that the TID is considering a comprehensive SOI update to include several thousand additional acres. Said proposal could come before your Commission prior to the District's scheduled 2012 SOI update, but has been deferred for the time being.

Municipal Services Review (MSR):

Prior to January 1, 2000, the Sphere of Influence for a city or special district could be established or updated without a MSR. With the passage of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, the Commission is now required to conduct a MSR before, or in conjunction with, but no later than the time it is considering an action to establish a SOI in accordance with Government Code Sections 56425 or 56426.5 or to update a SOI pursuant to Section 56425.

However, in Policy C-5 Appendix B, Tulare County LAFCO has exempted the Tulare Irrigation District, along with other water providing districts that do not provide water for urban uses, from the MSR requirement. When such a district proposes to add area to its SOI they must still provide an adequate level of information that will allow LAFCO Staff to determine their capacity to extend service to the new area in an efficient manner, which the District has done in regard to this proposal.

Sphere of Influence Determinations:

GC §56425(e) requires that in determining the Sphere of Influence of each local agency the Commission shall consider and prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to certain factors prior to making a decision. Attached are suggested determinations as outlined by the Tulare Irrigation District [*Exhibit I*]. If the Commission agrees to the SOI change, it may wish to adopt them for its statement of determinations.

DISCUSSION ISSUES:

City/ LAFCO Staff Meeting:

A meeting between LAFCO Staff and County Resource Management Agency Parks and Recreation Division Staff was held on September 15, 2009 as requested by LAFCO Policy B-1.

Annexation:

The proposed SOI amendment is accompanied by an annexation proposal of the same territory to the District (Case 1454, TID Mooney Grove Annexation). Approval of the annexation cannot take place without approval of this SOI amendment.

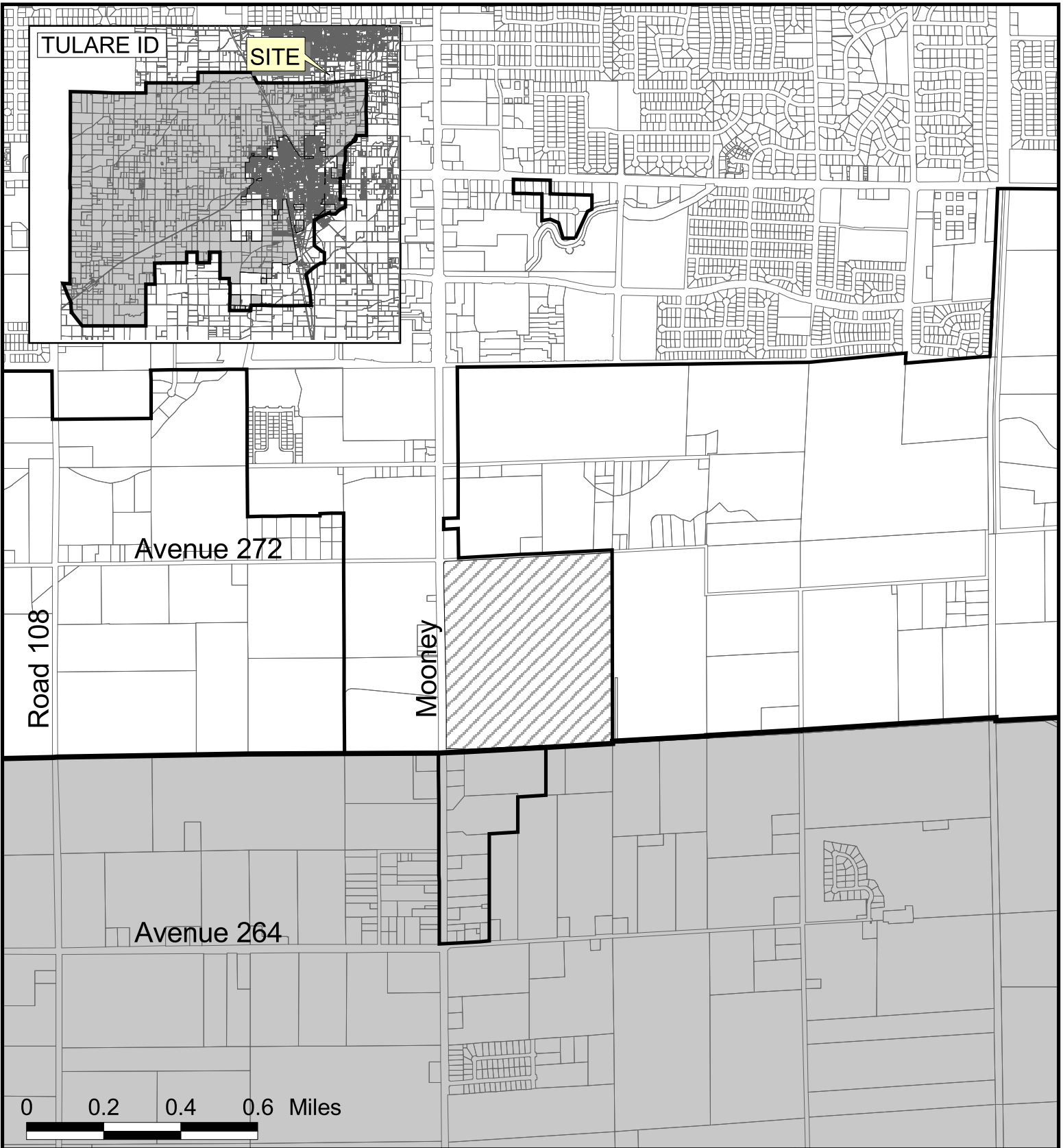
RECOMMENDED ACTIONS






It is recommended that this proposal be approved and that the Commission take the following actions:

1. Certify that the Commission has reviewed and considered the Notice of Exemption approved by the County of Tulare Board of Supervisors for this project and find that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.
2. Adopt the written statements recommended by the Tulare Irrigation District and find that the proposed amendment to the TID Sphere of Influence is in compliance with the GC Section 56425.
3. Approve the Sphere of Influence Amendment as requested, to be known as LAFCO Case 1453, TID SOI Amendment (Mooney).

Figures & Exhibits

- Figure 1 Site Location Map
Exhibit 1 Written Determinations



-  SITE
-  DISTRICT
-  SOI
-  PARCELS
-  VISALIA

LAFCO CASE 1453
 TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT
 SOI AMMENDMENT



FIGURE 1



COUNTY OF TULARE

GENERAL SERVICES

GENERAL SERVICES

May 11, 2010

LAFCO Determinations

Hal Cypert
GENERAL SERVICES
MANAGER

Teresa Barrett
CUSTODIAL

Richard Lamb
FLEET

Neil Pilegard
PARKS/MUSEUM/
LAKE PATROL

Art Arreola
PRINT & MAIL

Robert Newby
PROPERTY
MANAGEMENT

1. The present and planned land uses in area, including agricultural and open-space lands **will not change.**
2. The present and probable need for public facilities and service area **will not change.**
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide. **Tulare Irrigation District has current capacity to supply site needs and agrees that it will provide water deliveries to the County during TID's normal irrigation run.**
4. The existence of social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency **not applicable.**

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Tulare Irrigation District

Sphere of Influence Amendment

Written Determinations

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.

The lands proposed to be included in the new Tulare Irrigation District (District) Sphere of Influence (SOI) are as is indicated in Figure 1—District Proposed Sphere of Influence Map. The current land use in the proposed area is for agricultural production with a limited amount of rural residential homes. The District is currently composed of approximately 72,000 acres, of which approximately 65,000 acres are in irrigated agriculture. The main crops grown within the District include corn, wheat, nut trees, cotton, and fruit trees. The only municipality within the District is the City of Tulare, however they are not within the boundary of the District and are not served any surface irrigation water.

The lands that are to be included in the SOI amendment include lands that are mainly used for irrigated agriculture. There are limited rural homes located in the area. The future use of the land is intended to remain in agriculture and would be further enhanced by the application of surface water supplies.

At this time there are no open-space lands located within the District or the proposed SOI amendment area.

2. The present and probable need for public facilities and service in the area.

The combination of consecutive dry years and increased reliance on groundwater has caused the District and surrounding area to experience an overdraft of the underground basin. The District operates as a conjunctive use basin, which means that when surface water is available it is utilized for irrigation needs and when there is no surface water available farmers will rely on groundwater to meet crop demands. In wet years the District will have excess water

beyond crop demands and will recharge groundwater supplies. However, when the area experiences dry conditions the District will have very little surface water for farmers and the area will pump heavily from the underground. Presented in Figure 2 is a historical look at groundwater levels in the District. This figure shows that groundwater water levels have consistently decreased with time. Although there are periods of time when the groundwater levels seem to be increasing, the overall trend over time has been a downward trend.

The lowering of groundwater levels causes an economic burden upon farmers. In order to maintain access to groundwater many farmers have had to deepen wells, or replace wells as the water levels drop below pumps. This represents a large capital investment in rehabilitating or replacing on-farm pumps. There is also an increased cost to pump water from deeper levels due to the increased power required to lift water from greater depths. The areas under consideration for the SOI amendment are lands which could take advantage of a surface water supply if made available. Farmers within the expanded SOI could annex into the District and receive surface water deliveries from the District. By utilizing surface water, farmers would rely less on groundwater wells and therefore reduce the overdraft situation in the area. Surface water also has traditionally been a cheaper source of irrigation water versus the energy cost associated with operating groundwater wells.

Farmers currently within the District utilize surface water due to its irrigation characteristics. The cost of our surface water has historically been competitive or less than the cost of water produced from groundwater wells. The combination of expensive infrastructure and the cost to pump water makes surface water delivered by the District an affordable option. Farmers are also able to irrigate fields much faster utilizing surface water, due to the ability to move larger amounts of water in a faster manner across fields. In most cases a farmer can irrigate a field in half of the time required to irrigate a field utilizing a groundwater pump. This is a great benefit during the peak heat season of the summer when plants can be damaged by excess heat and limited water.

- 3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.**

The lands under consideration for the proposed SOI amendment as outlined in Figure 1 are lands that currently do not receive surface water supplies from the District, or any other local water district or ditch company. Therefore these parcels are irrigating crops by utilizing groundwater supplies. Being that these lands are on the periphery of the District, the District has strategically selected lands that are adjacent to District canal facilities or are within the vicinity of a District facility. Those parcels that are close to a District facility were only part of the proposed SOI amendment if it was economically feasible to extend a District facility to irrigate the parcel. The District currently has rules established that require the District to provide irrigation water and the required facilities to any farmer within the District who plans to irrigate land greater than 80 acres. For acreage between 40 and 80 acres the District will cost share with the landowner to provide facilities to deliver surface water.

The District currently delivers approximately 150,000 acre-feet of water on an annual basis. This water is delivered via approximately 300 miles of open ditch and limited stretches of pipeline to District landowners. The District is financially responsible for providing the necessary conveyance facilities to deliver water to the closest point of delivery for a property owner within the District. The District has historically detached lands that are annexed into the City of Tulare. As this trend occurs, the lands annexed into the City are removed from agricultural production and the available surface water supply remains with the District and is available to deliver throughout the District. Therefore, as landowners located in the amended SOI seek annexation, the District could accept these lands into the District.

4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area that are relevant to the agency.

The District does not include any economic communities of interest. The only community currently located within the District is the City of Tulare. The amended sphere of influence as present in Figure 1 does not include any land associated with a community. All land is utilized for agricultural production.