

Tule Subbasin Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program Workshops #1 Highlights

Workshops Overview

Workshops Objectives

- Build shared understanding on the water challenges facing the Tule Subbasin and why MLRP is being implemented to help address those challenges
- Understand the Tule Subbasin MLRP purpose, goals, benefits, and timeline
- Gather input from key stakeholders on their land-repurposing concerns and interests and what information they want to know more in regard to MLRP

Workshops Agenda

- 6:00 - 6:15 Registration & Welcome
- 6:15 - 6:30 Introductions
- 6:30 - 6:45 What is the Tule Subbasin MLRP?
- 6:45 - 6:55 What are the Land Repurposing Options?
- 6:55 - 7:05 Q&A Discussion
- 7:05 - 8:00 Gathering Input

Workshops Materials

- Tule Subbasin MLRP Fact Sheet - [English](#) & [Spanish](#)
- Tule Subbasin MLRP Land Repurposing Options Flyer - [English](#) & [Spanish](#)
- Tule Subbasin MLRP [Workshops #1 Presentation](#)

Workshops Highlights

Community Resident Workshop #1

Hosted by Self-Help Enterprises on Wednesday, November 8th, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, in-person at Tulare County Sheriff, 161 N Pine St, Pixley, CA

Top Concerns

- **Access to clean and affordable water.** Participants shared how they are concerned about water contamination, especially as aquifers get lower, and the increasing cost of clean water for domestic use and the smaller farms some operate.
- **Loss of jobs for self, community, and future generations.** Loss of jobs could lead to loss of community residents which would impact the town's economy. Additionally, there were concerns about land repurposing further shifting labor to more automated or intensive crop management or requiring the labor force to acquire new skills. Where would they get that workforce development training?

- **Concerns about the environment** such as drought, air pollution and dust issues, and maintenance of public natural areas. Participants shared that maintaining parks is often not accounted or budgeted for with restoration projects (Example: Pixley National Wildlife Refuge's amenities and infrastructure are not well maintained). Tulare County does not have a parks and recreation department to develop or maintain habitat or open space.

Top Interests

- **Land ownership and small-scale farming.** Some participants shared their interest in creating opportunities for residents to secure parcels of land to manage their own small-scale farms on that land. This was especially true where land could be 'repurposed' to small-scale, community-oriented and regenerative ag operations.
- **Water security.** Participants were interested in building water storage tanks, implementing recharge basins (especially to recharge domestic wells), upgrading water systems, and acquiring permits for water infrastructure.
- **Work security and workforce development.** There will be a need for the workforce to upskill for some of these land repurposing options, that may involve more intensive water management (e.g., winter/early Spring water management), habitat restoration and maintenance, regenerative & community farming, and even 'technical' land uses, like solar installation and management
- **Wildlife and pollinator support.** There was an interest in developing habitat for bees and birds which provides other benefits such as fighting soil erosion and having honey to sell. Plants like lavender were mentioned as good pollinators.
- **Low water crops.** Participants had ideas for low-water crops including winter wheat, aloe, agave, and cacti such as prickly pear and nopales.

Farmer & Landowner Workshop #1

Hosted by Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust on Thursday, November 9th, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, in-person at Tipton Memorial Place, 577 Spencer Rd, Tipton, CA

Top Concerns

- **Personal and community economic decline if there's less land in production.** Participants shared how if land repurposing entails less acreage and income then this could impact how growers are able to afford the increasing property taxes and new state and local water fees, among other regulatory costs. Additionally, if more land is put out of production this would negatively affect the workforce and tax base.
- **Reduced water supply and increasing costs. water supply.** There is distress about surface and groundwater availability *and* affordability. The increased costs and fees associated with water, coupled with a dwindling water supply, have serious implications for growers' viability and livelihoods.
- **Increasing government control.** There are concerns that these programs are designed to make private land more dependent on government dollars, which can come with increased control in terms of what farmers can and can not do

Top Interests

- **Land repurposing financial benefits.** There is an interest to learn more about the financial, operational, and logistical implications, costs and benefits of alternative land uses such as grazing, ag conservation easements, recharge, temporary land fallowing, and the other alternatives that are acceptable. They want much more detail about what options could look like to assess their options near term and longer term.
- **Flood & Dust Management.** Participants share their interest in building more recharge basins around communities, upgrading ditch infrastructure, better ways to capture excess water in flood years, and finding innovative solutions to deal with the dust issues, especially if they don't use much water.