

Allensworth Project – Project Description

The Allensworth Project is a multi-component plan that will help to mitigate emergency floodwater damage to the Severely Disadvantaged Communities (SDACs)/Underrepresented Communities of Allensworth by diverting water from the White River for direct use and recharge while providing a Recreational Park for Allensworth. The Allensworth Project was listed in the Tri-County Water Authority (TCWA) GSP as the “TCWA GSA Recharge Project.” The project has been updated since the GSP submittal based on on-going discussions with Allensworth.

The Allensworth Project is in a portion of Tulare County with limited options for groundwater recharge so capture of floodwater is a critical component of SGMA implementation for TCWA. With limited recharge options, ‘In lieu’ projects utilizing surface water capture to reduce groundwater pumping are necessary to bring the subbasin into long-term sustainability. This project provides a unique opportunity to provide flood protection to Allensworth to capture much needed surface water.

The Project originally consisted of the construction of two gravity-fed basins within the flood sink of the White River to capture floodwaters from major storm events. The stored water will be used for groundwater recharge and directly for irrigation. The direct use of the captured water will occur in areas of the TCWA that are reliant on only groundwater. The stored water will aid in replenishing groundwater supplies that have been depleted during drought years within the critically over-drafted Tule Subbasin.

The other key benefit will be to the historic community of Allensworth which sees periodic flooding from the White River. Residents and surrounding landowners will benefit by utilizing capturing floodwaters that may have otherwise damaged the SDACs. During dry seasons, the basins will be used as a Recreational Park which will bring economic value, health and environmental benefits, and social importance to the area. The Allensworth Project will be built on property already owned by the Angiola Water District (AWD) and the District is a strong proponent for the project. The Allensworth Project is a high priority project as the Southeast Area of TCWA does not have access to surface water and is forced to depend entirely on groundwater pumping. Replacing the dependence for groundwater pumping will improve groundwater levels in the lower aquifer while maintaining the upper aquifer’s stability and reduce land subsidence.

The Allensworth Project was selected to make available surface water storage which can assist to alleviate the Southeast Area’s dependency on groundwater pumping while protecting the surrounding SDACs from floods and enhancing the community with a Recreational Park. The project will tie into a proposed trail system from Allensworth State Park to the Atwell Island wetlands. In addition, the project will incorporate a tree lined berm to reduce noise and visual impacts from the California High-Speed Rail (HSR) project.

The Allensworth Project consists of three phases for implementation: (1) Excavation of the proposed basins; (2) Construction of a trail system and recreational area; and (3) Construction of new reaches and improvement of the proposed White River canal. A more detailed description of each phase follows.

Phase 1 Basins

Phase One of the Allensworth Project focuses on the construction of a 40-acre basin with the storage of approximately 220 acre-feet on AWD property. The proposed basin will be located adjacent to the community of Allensworth and will be strategically placed downslope of the SDAC to capture White River floodwaters received from the proposed White River Canal. During dry seasons, the basin can be used as a Recreation Park to enhance the community. This phase is considered the top priority of the project as it has multiple beneficial uses including the protection of surrounding communities in the event of a major storm, increased surrounding property value, promotion of conservation and environmental sustainability. The AWD property includes approximately 1,500 acres of proposed surface area to construct basins with a total potential storage capacity of 11,000 AF, additional basins will be constructed as funds are available.

The development of Phase One will be constructed as part of the SGM Round 1 Implementation Grant to help protect the community of Allensworth. Initial Plans for basins in the “North” and “South” areas have been developed and will provide direction for implementation. These basin locations were chosen to protect residents and surrounding agricultural land, however, a small portion of the South area is in the right-of-way of the HSR. AWD and TCWA will work closely with the HSR to modify the plans to incorporate the HSR facilities into the Allensworth Project.

Recreation Area

Phase Two will consist of the construction of recreational facilities within one of the proposed basins. While these discussions are on-going with Allensworth, it is expected that the project will be incorporated into a larger development plan for the area, including the fore mentioned trail. The recreation area will likely consist of a walking trail, children’s playgrounds, and sports fields. Dual use for stormwater basins is very common in south Valley communities. Phase Two will not be included as part of the SGM Round 1 Implementation Grant.

Canal Improvements

Phase Three focuses on the proposed White River canal which will convey White River water from a Point of Diversion to the basins. This phase will require construction and improvements within 9.7 miles of the partially existing canal. Approximately 3.8 miles of new reaches from the existing canal will be constructed while 5.9 approximate miles of the canal will be improved to divert White River floodwaters to the basins. Phase Three will not be constructed as part of the SGM Round 1 Implementation Grant.