

# MONO COUNTY TRI-VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

123B Valley Road  
Chalfant, California 93514

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Carol Ann Mitchell, Chairperson

Phil West, Vice-Chairperson

Geri Bassett, Secretary

Andy Puhvel

Greg Allen

Ed Parkinson

Rhonda Duggan, Mono County District 2 Supervisor (Ex-Officio Member)

**REGULAR MEETING AGENDA Final**  
**Wednesday, May 17, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.**  
**Benton Community Center**  
**Highway 120**  
**Benton, CA 93512**

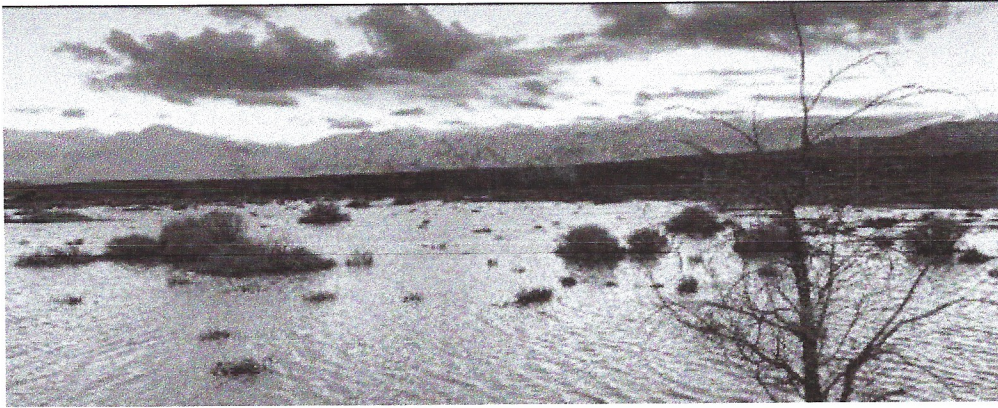
*Mission: The mission of the Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District is to comply with the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)\* of 2014 and other applicable laws (government code, water code etc.) as the law pertains to the District.  
Core Vision: To preserve the groundwater within the boundaries of the District (Chapter 844 of 1989 California Statutes).*

1. Advisory Board
  - a. Advisory Board Report and Comment
  - b. Spring Newsletter
  - c. Re-Appointment of Betsy McDonald for a 1 year term
  - d. Re-Appointment of Dennis Murphy for a 1 year term.
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of minutes: April 26, 2023 meeting.
4. TVGMD Board of Directors
  - a. Public Comment on Board composition.
  - b. Discussion and action from the Board on possible language changes to the District statutes regarding the domestic and 100 g.p.m seats on the TVGMD Board of Directors.
  - c. Direction to staff on this issue.
5. Report on election to fill Board vacancy, and resolution calling for election.
6. Report on funding request to Mono County.
7. Board of Directors Reports
8. Adjournment to Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 6:30 p.m. at the Chalfant Community Center.

Topic: TVGMD Board Meetings  
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82763245519?pwd=N3U4RXhZTnR6d1pSVlcreGo3bld1UT09>

Meeting ID: 827 6324 5519  
Passcode: 114446  
One tap mobile  
+16699009128,,82763245519#,,,,\*114446# US (San Jose)  
+16694449171,,82763245519#,,,,\*114446# US



"Lake Chalfant", March 2023

## Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District Newsletter June 2023

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**TVGMD Core Vision:** To preserve the groundwater within the boundaries of the District (Chapter 844 of 1989 California Statutes.)

**Mission Statement:** To comply with the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (2014) and other applicable laws (government code, water code, etc.) as the law pertains to the District.

At the next TVGMD Board Meeting we will have a workshop by Christopher Beck, Assistant Mono County Counsel, on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act ([SGMA](#)) and the District as a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA).

Save the date!

**Wednesday June 21, 2023  
6:30 PM  
Chalfant Community Center**





**Water is life!** Wildflowers are going wild :) on the Tablelands in May! These tall Chocolate drops are a delight as they are some of the tallest flowering plants out there. Other flowers in bloom: Evening Snow, Wild Four O'Clock (*Mirabilis Multiflora*), *Mentzelia*, Desert Larkspur, *Penstemon*, Desert Marigolds, lupine, and many more.

**Common name:** Chocolate drops, hairy caulanthus, hairy wild cabbage, **Latin name:** *Caulanthus pilosus*

[Wildflower Hotspots of the Eastern Sierra](#)

## **Fish Slough Groundwater Monitoring Project**

Aaron Johnson from CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provided a presentation on a multi-agency monitoring well project at the April TVGMD Board Meeting, as requested by the board. [Here is a link to a pdf of his talk.](#)



As you may be aware, prior to TVGMD and Mono County leaving the Owens Valley Groundwater Authority (OVGA) and becoming the exclusive Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Tri-Valley area (see TVGMD map below), OVGA was awarded funding from the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) to complete a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the entire Owens Valley Groundwater Basin including the Tri-Valley management area. GSP documents are required under the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) for medium and high priority groundwater basins, and voluntary for low priority basins such as Owens Valley, which was formerly ranked medium priority. The GSP was prepared by OVGA staff and specialized groundwater consultants in a multi-year planning process that involved extensive analysis of existing data and public input, including that of TVGMD.

The GSP identifies a need for additional groundwater monitoring in the Tri-Valley area, and in Hammil Valley in particular, to understand the causes of groundwater declines that have been observed in the existing wells. Some previous geological and water chemistry studies show the likelihood that Northeast Spring in Fish Slough is being fed by Hammil groundwater. And Northeast Spring is drying up rapidly, threatening sensitive fish, plants, snails, and the like.

The State of California and other agencies are concerned about the spring flow declines at Northeast spring and other spring systems, and the health of Fish Slough, which is an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and has been designated a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service and an Ecological Reserve by the California Fish and Game Commission, providing "wetland and riparian habitats unique to the area, and also supports various endangered or rare fish, plant, and animal species."

One million dollars has been identified for Fish Slough/ Tri Valley monitoring wells by CA Department of Water Resources (DWR), CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, and USGS cost-matching. Hammil Valley monitoring well locations are on BLM land. As the agency charged with protecting endangered and threatened fish, animals, plants, and ecosystems, CDFW is coordinating the effort to gather data to find out what is causing the drying up of springs in Fish Slough, a unique and protected ecosystem, parts of which are in the boundaries of the Tri-Valley GSA.

#### **Summary** (from Aaron's slide)

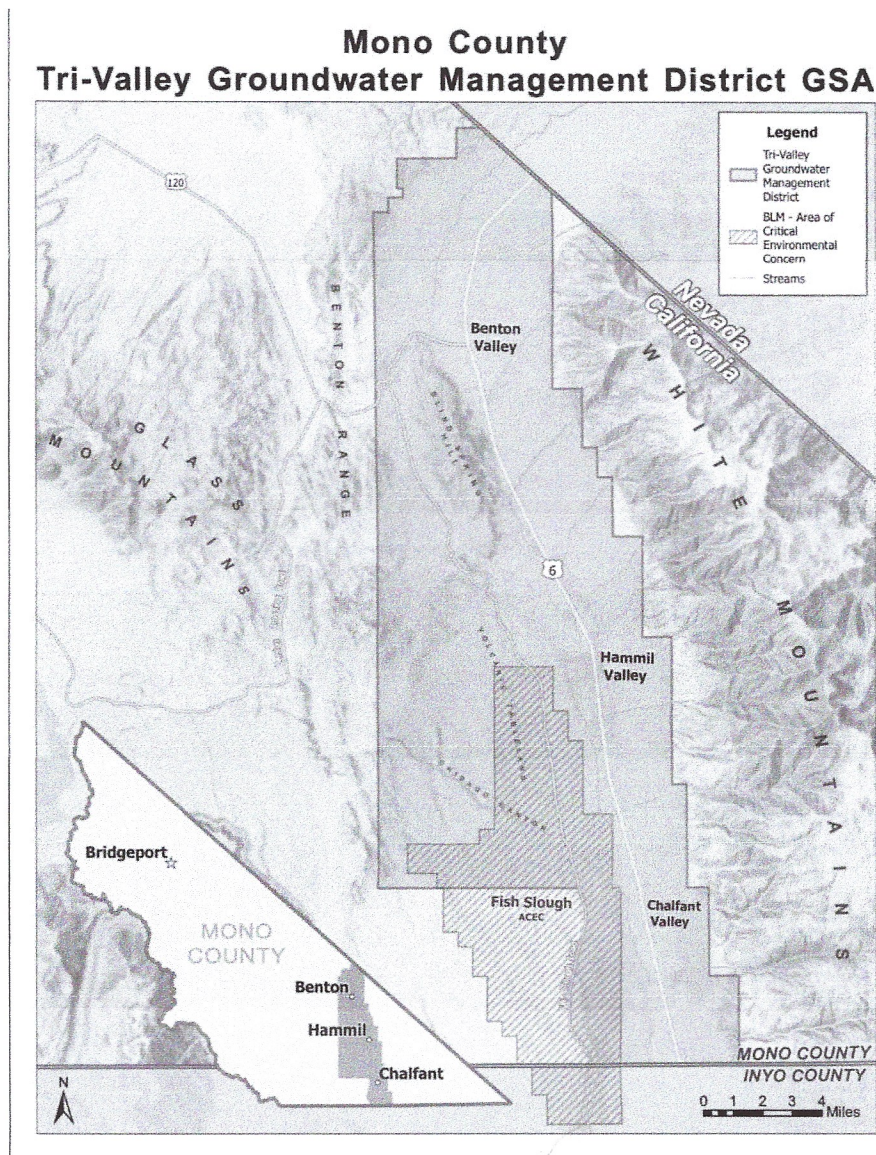
- Long term declines in groundwater have been observed in portions of the Tri-Valley Groundwater Management Area including Fish Slough
- These declines, and specifically loss of spring flow, is impacting endemic fish and wildlife species
- Additional subsurface geology, groundwater monitoring, and groundwater flow modeling are needed to inform groundwater management



These monitoring wells will provide data much needed as Tri-Valley prepares to receive the Groundwater Model Grant monies and move forward to gain a better understanding of this precious resource we share as Tri-Valley communities. This information will assist the Board of Directors of TVGMD with decisions they will need to make to assure sustainability of groundwater.

## Sources

- Fish Slough Groundwater Monitoring Project  
(presentation by Aaron Johnson, CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife)
- Zdon et al. Identification of Source Water Mixing in the Fish Slough Spring Complex, Mono County, California, USA
- OVGA Groundwater Sustainability Plan
- Fish Slough Ecological Reserve, CDFW



This map of the Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District GSA was created and



donated by Denver Darius Billing.

## Upcoming TVGMD Board Meetings

6:30 PM

June 21, 2023 Chalfant (3rd Wed)

July 26, 2023 Benton

August 23, 2023 Chalfant

September 27, 2023 Benton

October 25, 2023 Chalfant

November 15, 2023 Benton *Changed for Thanksgiving*

December 20, 2023 Chalfant *Changed for Christmas*

Meetings generally are the 4th Wednesday of each month,  
alternating between Chalfant & Benton.

Please check the [TVGMD website](#) for updates, cancellations, etc.

[To subscribe to this newsletter click here.](#)

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## A Little Hammil History

Hammil Valley was know by the indigenous Paiute people as Tupueseenata. If anyone knows what this means or anything about the indigenous history of this area, I'd love to hear! On old maps Hammil Valley has been called Sage-Brush, Alkali Flat, Alkali Valley, Irish Flat, and Spring Creek Valley.

William and Mary Hammil immigrated from Ireland (Shankill and Belfast) and ended up in this valley. They established the first ranch in the area in 1864. At this same time, miners and prospectors were swarming to Blind Springs Hill for silver. The Tri-Valley area was getting a lot of attention! The Hammils acquired water rights to their property in 1869. They took possession of Birch Creek and two small side creeks to use for irrigation and domestic use. In 1883 they granted the Carson and Colorado Narrow Gauge Railroad permission to take water from Birch and Willow Creeks at a cost of one dollar.

Lots of personal history ensued, of course. There is definitely more to this story! But for now...William and Mary Hammil are buried in the cemetery in Benton. Their descendants still grace this valley. In 1900 the Hammil Ranch was acquired by the Sinnamon family and later the spelling was changed to Cinnamon Ranch, which is now owned by Richard and Barbara Moss.

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Info gleaned from *A Valley Gains a Name* by Pam Vaughn, published in the Inyo Register, March 19, 2016 and provided by Sue Butler, a descendent of the Hammils.

## **TVGMD Advisory Board**

### **Need Advisory Board Members esp from Hammil and Benton!**

Our lives here in the Tri-Valley depend on water. We all have a stake in assuring that our groundwater is being recharged and our water is clean. We have openings on the Advisory Board and would love to hear of your interest. The Advisory Board meets quarterly and is charged with connecting with each of the communities, soliciting and listening to their concerns, and reporting to the Board of Directors. Send your letter of interest to [secretary@tvgmd.org](mailto:secretary@tvgmd.org).

## **High Desert Gardening Part 2, Stewarding Our Water**

*Harold McDonald, Inyo/Mono Master Gardener*

In California, roughly 50% of our water is retained in ecosystems (streams, lakes, wetlands), 40% goes to agriculture and 10% goes to urban use (residential, industrial and commercial). Landscaping accounts for roughly half this urban water use, so clearly it behooves us—especially those on their own wells—to garden in a manner that will conserve this valuable resource. Every drop counts!

### **Choose your plants with water use in mind**

Don't just stick with the old garden standards—some of them can be real water hogs. It may take a little looking around, but there are so many other choices available. We talked about some last time, and this column will highlight many others in the future. Try to stick with plants that are suited to our unusual summer-dry, winter-cold climate. This could include our own local natives, but also be on the eye for plants native to similar climates around the world (think inland rather than coastal, for example).

We all love our lawns, but consider whether you really need one, because forgoing a lawn is by far the biggest thing you can do to reduce your water usage. A typical lawn irrigation system is via pop-up sprinklers. Each one uses 16 gallons per minute. If you have eight of them, and you water for just 15 minutes, your lawn will take 1,920 gallons of water each time you water. In just a week, you could easily fill an average-sized swimming pool! If you must have a lawn, try to keep it to a modest size and landscape the remaining area with drought-tolerant bushes and trees. If you already have a lawn, look for ways to conserve, like adjusting your mowing and fertilizing practices and making sure your watering regime is as efficient as possible.

### **Irrigate efficiently**

Drip irrigation can cut water use by 30-80% compared to other means of watering. And setting up a drip irrigation is fun and easy to do yourself. It's like working with Tinker Toys—so many cool little pieces that you can use in endless ways! Lay out your drip system, hook it up to a battery-operated timer and your yard will be watered



automatically and efficiently, whether you're home or not. If you're not already using drip irrigation, choose a small part of your yard to give it a try. And no matter what irrigation method you have, fix any leaks ASAP and try to water during cooler hours.

## Mulch

The soils in the Tri Valley region are typically extremely low in organic matter, which is vital for retaining soil moisture, so it's especially important in our environment that we use anything we can to cover the bare earth. Mulching will moderate soil temperature, cut down on weeds, and dramatically reduce evaporation. Mulches can be organic (hay, grass clippings, wood chips, newspaper), inorganic (rocks and gravel) or synthetic (landscape fabric). You can easily cut your water use in half by mulching. Each mulch has its advantages and disadvantages, but any mulch is better than none. Use what you have. I have a lot of pine trees, so for me, it's needles.

An inviting landscape is not incompatible with a low-water use household. Following the guidelines above will, in the long run, save you time, money—and water!

["Water Use in California,"](#) Public Policy Institute in CA

["Around the Yard"](#) from SaveOurWater California

["Saving Water with Microirrigation,"](#) EPA WaterSense

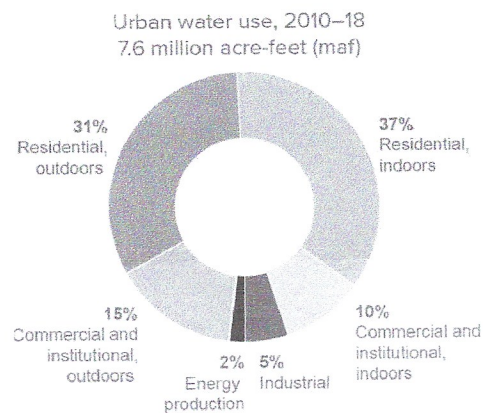
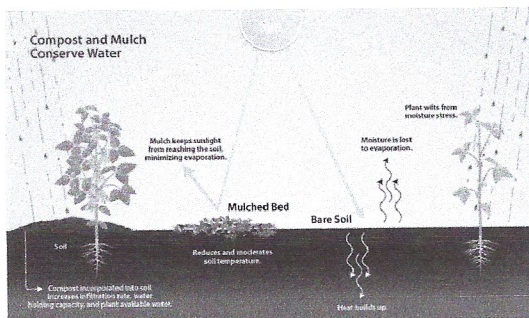
["Water Conservation"](#) from CalRecycle

["How to Water Your Lawn Efficiently,"](#) WikiHow

["Mulches"](#) from UC IPM

["Drip Irrigation"](#) from UC Sonoma County Master Gardeners

[WUCOLS](#) (Water Use Classification of Landscape Species) database, UC Davis



# Contacts and Links

[TVGMD Website](#) for more information

For meeting reminders, etc. email: [secretary@tvgmd.org](mailto:secretary@tvgmd.org)

## Links

California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

[Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\) Overview](#)

[CASGEM](#)--site where well monitoring data is input and available

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

[UC Davis re Alfalfa Production](#) (lots of different articles)

[SGMA Best Practices Website](#)

## TVGMD Board of Directors

### DIRECTOR A—Domestic Well

- Carol Ann Mitchell term expires 11/30/2026
- Andy Puhvel (newly appointed) term expires 11/30/2026
- Geri Bassett term expires 11/30/2024
- Vacant, term expires 11/30/2024

### DIRECTOR B—Resident/(Agricultural/100 GPM Well)

- Edward Parkinson term expires 11/30/2026
- Phil West term expires 11/30/2024
- Greg Allen term expires 11/30/2024

### DIRECTOR EX-OFFICIO

- Mono County District 2 Supervisor Rhonda Duggan

## Advisory Board Members

### Chalfant

Gina Barsi

Betsy McDonald

Amy Saladin

### Benton

Janet Barth

### Hammil

Dennis Murphy

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West

## ARTICLE 4. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*(Suggested amendments to Article 4 below are listed in bold italics)*

§ 128-401. Membership; quorum; terms; elections; vacancies

Sec.401. (a) The board of directors of the district shall consist of eight members as follows:

(1) One member shall be a county supervisor appointed by the board of supervisors as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

(2) Four members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district. These members shall be elected at large from the district, except as provided in subdivision (d).

(3) Three members shall be residents of the district ***or; who have permanent residence within Mono or Inyo Counties, whose primary agricultural production is located within the Tri-Valley district***, who are the owners of record of real property located within the district, and on which property there are extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute exclusive of domestic use. These members shall be elected at large from the district.

(b) A quorum of the board of directors shall be four of the voting members. Four affirmative votes of the board shall be required to take an action.

(c) Of the seven members of the board elected at large, terms of office shall be four years. Members of the board of directors may be reelected.

(d) The member added to the board by the act that added this subdivision shall be elected for an initial term at the November 3, 2020, general election. Until a member is elected to that seat on the board, the vacant seat may be appointed by the board pursuant to subdivision (f).

(e) Except as otherwise provided in this act, the Uniform District Election Law (Part 3 (commencing with Section 23500) of Division 14 of the Elections Code) shall apply to elections within the district.

(f) Except for the board member who is a supervisor, vacancies on the board shall be filled by appointment by a majority vote of the remaining directors as provided in Section 1780 of the Government Code. An appointment to fill a vacancy on the board shall be for the unexpired portion of the term of the office in which the vacancy occurs. ***Exception to Item (3) above: For appointment purposes, those who reside within the district and/or Mono and Inyo Counties and maintain active an agricultural businesses within the district (with the realization that if the operation is a crop based operation, it is a operational growth season based on climactic seasons of growth not based in animal husbandry), shall receive primary consideration of appointment to non-agricultural based owners of wells that are capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute.***

## CURRENT

### ARTICLE 4. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### § 128-401. Membership; quorum; terms; elections; vacancies

**Sec.401.** (a) The board of directors of the district shall consist of eight members as follows:

(1) One member shall be a county supervisor appointed by the board of supervisors as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

(2) Four members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district. These members shall be elected at large from the district, except as provided in subdivision (d).

(3) Three members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district, and on which property there are extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute exclusive of domestic use. These members shall be elected at large from the district.

(b) A quorum of the board of directors shall be four of the voting members. Four affirmative votes of the board shall be required to take an action.

#### SUGGESTED REVISION - Bassett

#### § 128-401. Membership; quorum; terms; elections; vacancies

**Sec.401.** (a) The board of directors of the district shall consist of eight members as follows:

(1) One member shall be a county supervisor appointed by the board of supervisors as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

(2) Four members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district. These members shall have a well (extraction facility) for domestic/residential use and not be an agricultural producer. These members shall be elected at large from the district

(3) Three members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district, and on which property there are extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute exclusive of domestic use. Whenever feasible, these members shall also be an agricultural producer. These members shall be elected at large from the district.

(b) A quorum of the board of directors shall be four of the voting members. Four affirmative votes of the board shall be required to take an action.



Director Mitchell:

CURRENT:

Sec.401. (a) The board of directors of the district shall consist of eight members as follows:

(1) One member shall be a county supervisor appointed by the board of supervisors as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

(2) Four members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district. These members shall be elected at large from the district, except as provided in subdivision (d).

(3) Three members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district, and on which property there are extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute exclusive of domestic use. These members shall be elected at large from the district.

(b) A quorum of the board of directors shall be four of the voting members. Four affirmative votes of the board shall be required to take an action.

Propose change to section 401 a2 and a3 to read:

Four members shall be full time residents of the district and are owners of record of real property located within the district and on whose property an extraction facility is located for domestic use. These members shall be elected from within the boundaries of the district and meet the requirements of California Elections Code section 349b. These seats shall not be mixed with 100 gallon per minute residents.

Three members shall be full time residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district, and on which property there are extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute, exclusive of domestic use. These members shall be elected from within the boundaries of the district in accordance and meet the requirements of California Elections Code section 349b.

**(a)** "Residence" for voting purposes means a person's domicile. **(b)** The domicile of a person is that place in which his or her habitation is fixed, wherein the person has the intention of remaining, and to which, whenever he or she is absent, the person has the intention of returning. At a given time, a person may have only one domicile

Ca. Elec. Code § 349

Enacted by Stats. 1994, Ch. 920, Sec. 2.

Cal. Elec. Code § 349

Director Puhvel:

This is my idea for a simple solution using the same exact wording which is now there. There are other ways to say this, mine is only one example. I highly value your input and opinions, but feel as though we should put this to the Board for a vote.

Thanks,  
Andy

#### Article 4

Sec (2) Four members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district. These members shall be elected at large from the district, except as provided in subdivision (d).

Sec (3) Three members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district, and on which property there are extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute exclusive of domestic use. These members shall be elected at large from the district.

#### Reworded Sec. (2)

Sec (2) Four members shall be residents of the district who are the owners of record of real property located within the district and on which property there are no extraction facilities capable of pumping at least 100 gallons per minute exclusive of domestic use. These members shall be elected at large from the district, except as provided in subdivision (d).