

**THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
TO LEASE FARMLAND IN THE SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN BAY DELTA
FOR RICE CULTIVATION PURPOSES**



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

March 10, 2025

The following list is comprised of questions and requests for clarification to the Request for Proposals submitted by potential proposers. Language has been paraphrased and edited for purposes of readability. Metropolitan does not warrant or guaranty the accuracy of information provided by Metropolitan; proposers should independently confirm Property conditions and status.

Question #1: What is the timeline to plant the initial 300 acres of rice by a winning proposer?

Answer: Metropolitan expects the selected lessee to plant at least 300 acres of rice in the first year of the lease term and no less than 1,000 acres but up to 1,361 acres of rice to be planted by June 2028.

Question #2: Can you provide a map of the estimated peat soil depths?

Answer: A map of the estimated peat thickness on Webb Tract is attached (Deverel et al. 2015). 2024 measurements are indicated by the dots and triangles and are expressed in feet. The map and measurements therein are intended only for illustrative purposes and all Property conditions should be independently assessed by proposers.

Question #3: Can you provide information as to the depths of the water table?

Answer: Depth to groundwater varies across the island. Additionally, depth to groundwater varies throughout any given year. Groundwater levels can be adjusted by changing the float levels on the district pumps. Two groundwater monitoring wells were installed on Webb Tract in July of 2024. The depth to groundwater graphs are included as attachments. The information provided herein are intended only for illustrative purposes and all Property conditions should be independently confirmed by proposers.

Question #4: What is the population of pigs on the island?

Answer: The population of pigs on the island is currently unknown.

Question #5: Who operates the Reclamation District (RD)?

Answer: Reclamation District #2026 is overseen by three trustees representing the single landowner (Metropolitan Water District).

Question #6: Are the pumps part of the budget for the RD?

Answer: Yes. The Reclamation District pays for operation and maintenance of the two pump stations on Webb Tract.

Question #7: Should we assume pumping is needed and not rely solely upon gravity flow?

Answer: Irrigation water is currently brought onto Webb Tract and flows solely via gravity flow through the Reclamation District's drainage infrastructure. Historically, gravity flow via siphons has been sufficient to irrigate Webb Tract. There are currently no irrigation pumps on the island.

Question #8: What is the process to coordinate water conveyance, water quality and infrastructure issues with the Reclamation District?

Answer: Issues related water conveyance and other duties for Reclamation District #2026 (RD) is coordinated through the RD Trustees, the RD Superintendent, or RD Staff. Water Quality is monitored through the San Joaquin County, Contra Sota County, and Calaveras County to monitor surface and groundwater quality and help farmers meet the requirements of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

Question #9: Who controls the water infrastructure?

Answer: Infrastructure related to island-wide drainage of the island is the responsibility of Reclamation District 2026. This includes, but is not limited to, levee toe ditch, drainage canals, and discharge pump stations. Major irrigation infrastructure (referenced above) is operated by Reclamation District #2026, and needs and functions of the infrastructure for lessee will be coordinated through Reclamation District #2026. The lessee will control its use of internal farming infrastructure, which includes, but is not limited to, internal field siphons (non-Reclamation District), line ditches, risers, and boxes.

Question #10: How is Fresh Water quality addressed?

Answer: Water quality in the delta is governed by the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan, commonly referred to as the Bay-Delta Plan and monitored through the San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition. The Coalition was formed by farmers in San Joaquin County, Contra Cost County and Calaveras County to monitor surface and groundwater quality and help farmers meet the requirements of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

Question #11: Is there funding for recirculating of water?

Answer: Metropolitan does not intend to provide funding for recirculation of water or recirculation pumps at this time. However, future funding sources could be explored and considered.

Question #12: Who is responsible for interior ditches?

Answer: Major interior irrigation ditches are the responsibility of the lessee. Interior drainage canals are the responsibility of Reclamation District 2026. The toe ditch is also the responsibility of Reclamation District #2026.

Question #13: Who is responsible for levee maintenance?

Answer: Reclamation District #2026 is responsible for levee maintenance.

Question #14: When was the last time it was farmed?

Answer: The last time corn was grown on the island was 2021. Winter wheat was planted this year (2025).

Question #15: What was the yields on the corn when it was farmed?

Answer: As reported to Metropolitan, the yields on the corn farmed in 2021 were around 5 tons per acre.

Question #16: Is corn farming desired in the interim for farming?

Answer: No. While prepping for rice, Metropolitan would prefer a crop that do not increase land subsidence as noted in Section 2.3 of the RFP.

Question #17: Has rice been previously planted on Webb Tract?

Answer: Our agricultural production records go back to 2008. Between 2008 and 2025, there was no record of rice being grown on Webb Tract.

Question #18: Other than rice, what would be acceptable to farm out here?

Answer: Only crops that do not contribute to land subsidence, as outlined in Section 2.3 of the RFP, may be planted. However, it is essential to note that the lessee is required to meet the minimum rice planting commitments specified in the RFP. While alternative crops may be considered as a short-term, interim option, they are not a substitute for the required rice cultivation. The lessee must prioritize planting a minimum of 300 acres of rice in the first year and achieve a total of 1,000 to 1,361 acres of rice by June 2028.

Question #19: How level are these fields? Can you provide the field elevation data in a table?

Answer: The existing grade on the proposed rice field varies. None of these fields have been leveled for rice. There are topographic maps attached to the RFP. Here is a link to a digital elevation model:

DEM

The model and measurements therein are intended only for illustrative purposes and all Property conditions should be independently assessed by proposers.

Question #20: What is the volume of soil to be removed or leveled?

Answer: Volume of material to be removed or leveled will be determined by the lessee. Topographic maps of the rice fields are attached to the RFP. Additionally, here is a link to a digital elevation model:

DEM

The model and measurements therein are intended only for illustrative purposes and all Property conditions should be independently assessed by proposers

Question #21: What is the expectation of MWD to share data with potential farmer Lessees?

Answer: MWD will share data that would be beneficial to a farmer lessee.

Question #22: What are the prevailing wage requirements?

Answer: The grant requires payment of prevailing wage for labor code activities to which payment of prevailing wages would be subject. The lessee is responsible for ascertaining and complying with all current general prevailing wage rates for crafts.

The grant requires that prevailing wage be paid for covered activities. Metropolitan does not determine what covered activities are. Covered activities will be self-reported by the lessee during invoicing and the successful proposer will defend, indemnify, and hold harmless Metropolitan for prevailing wage compliance. .

Question #23: Is there employee housing on the island?

Answer: There is one trailer on the island that is currently used by a full-time caretaker employed by Reclamation District #2026. There is no Metropolitan employee housing on the island.

Question #24: Is the Lessee responsible for the 24-hour security/employment?

Answer: Reclamation District #2026 provides 24-hour security. As a point of clarification of Section 2.4 in the RFP, Lessee shall not be required to have a dedicated staff person available 24/7.

Question #25: What is the expectation of management during the non-growing season and weed control?

Answer: The lessee will be responsible for vegetation management or weed control within the entirety of the lease premises.

Question #26: Is grazing OK as an interim use of the island?

Answer: Yes, grazing is acceptable for interim use of the island.

Question #27: If grazing is used, is fencing required?

Use of fencing is at the discretion of the lessee, but a clear separation from the levee footprint will need to be maintained so animals are contained in designated areas of the leased premises. Animal access to levee footprint is not allowed. Once the wetlands and habitat restoration project commence construction, the lessee must keep animals away from the construction and life estate hunting areas.

Question #28: Are there existing hunting rights on the island?

Answer: The property includes an existing life estate for hunting purposes. Waterfowl hunting takes place on approximately 139 acres, involving the life estate holders and their invitees. These hunting rights encumber a portion of the property.

Question #29: Should our proposal include rice field design and layout?

Answer: The lessee's design and layout of rice fields are not required upon submitting a proposal. However, the conceptual design and layout need to be provided during lease negotiations or lease execution.

Question #30: Will Delta Conservancy approve the rice plan?

Answer: Metropolitan will approve the rice plan.

Question #31: Who has oversight for how the \$3,000 land preparation allowance is allocated or dispersed?

Answer: Metropolitan and the selected lessee will establish reimbursement metrics and protocols during lease negotiations. Disbursement of up to \$3,000 allowance will be controlled by Metropolitan in collaboration with the Delta Conservancy who will inspect the rice fields throughout the land preparation phase.

Question #32: What is MWD and the Delta Conservancy's position on organic farming?

Answer: MWD and the Delta Conservancy recognize that organic farming on Webb Tract may present unique challenges, such as aggressive weed growth, bird predation, and limited rice varieties. While organic rice

cultivation is neither prohibited nor mandatory, we are supportive if it is something the farmer can successfully accomplish.

Question #33: Can you provide information on the different types of weeds that are common on Webb Tract?

Answer: **Here is a link to common types of weeds that impact rice production: <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/rice/common-and-scientific-names-of-weeds/#gsc.tab=0> Many of these species are present on Webb Tract.**

Question #34: What is MWD and the Delta Conservancy's position on maintaining prescribed water levels on the rice fields for a specified number of months?

Answer: **There is no requirement for minimum number of months that the rice fields must be inundated with water.**

Question #35: What is the plan for irrigating the fields?

Answer: **The fields are fed by gravity flow from existing siphons. A map showing the location of the siphons and the area served by each siphon is attached (same as map for Q#38).**

Question #36: What is the cost of the water?

Answer: **The lease will not include any costs or charges to the lessee for water.**

Question #37: What are the pumping costs, standby costs or Reclamation District costs paid by the selected lessee?

Answer: **The lease will not include any pumping, standby or Reclamation District costs or charges to the lessee.**

Question #38: What siphons will serve the rice fields?

Answer: **Rice will primarily be served by siphons #4 (18 inch), #7 (18 inch), #8 (18 inch), #9 (14 inch), and #10 (12 inch) on Webb Tract. Siphons #6 (12 inch) and #11 (14 inch) can also provide water to the rice area. The attached map shows the location and size of each agricultural siphon on Webb Tract. Additionally, the attachment shows the area that has historically been served by each siphon. Additional siphons may be utilized by the farmer in coordination with Metropolitan and RD 2026.**

Question #39: What is the capacity/flow rate of each siphon?

Answer: **We do not have the exact maximum capacities for the siphons on**

Webb Tract. The estimated capacity based on historic flow rate averages for siphons on Webb Tract are:

- 12” - 10 cfs
- 14” - 10 to 15 cfs
- 16” - 17 to 20 cfs
- 18” - 13 to 25 cfs

Please note that estimated flow rates are impacted by tide, valves, siphon condition, etc. Flow rates on Webb Tract will vary from the estimated capacity flow rates above.

Question #40: Who is responsible for releveling costs after the initial land preparation?

Answer: The lessee is responsible for all costs after initial levelling.

Question #41: Is anyone renting the duck club currently?

Answer: The Property includes a duck club house, maintenance/storage facilities and a Quonset hut (maintenance facility). Currently, no one is renting the duck club. The selected lessee shall be prepared to accommodate joint use of the duck club house and maintenance/storage facilities with Metropolitan staff, Reclamation District #2026 staff, or third-party invitees (as agreed to and written into any lease agreement).

Upon completion of the wetland project, Metropolitan may negotiate an island-wide maintenance agreement that may include the use of the duck club and duck hunting rights. Maintenance of the duck clubhouse shall be the selected Lessee's sole responsibility until that time.

Question #42: Are there weight and length restrictions on the ferry?

Answer: All loads taken by the ferry are at the discretion of the ferry captain. The weight limit is 80,000 lbs, the length limit is 65 feet. The main deck width of the ferry is 15 feet.

Question #43: Are special ferry runs available?

Answer: Special ferry runs can be arranged in advance (complete access document) through the Delta Ferry Authority Executive Director (Reclamation District #2026). There is an additional cost for non-scheduled runs (rates are determined by Landowner-sponsored or Lessee-sponsored requests). Additional ferry runs are done at the discretion of the Ferry Captain.

Question #44: Is the area near ferry access point in Oakley available for staging?

Answer: The area has been used for staging in the past on the Jersey Island section adjacent to Delta Ferry Authority Jersey Island landing, but Metropolitan does not own the property. Staging would need to be arranged with the current owner on Jersey Island.

Question #45: When does construction activities commence for the Wetlands Project and how long is the construction period?

Answer: Construction is expected to begin around the Spring of 2026 and continue for two years. This is subject to change based on acquisition of permits prior to construction and weather conditions during construction.

Question #46: How will water and pumping requirements for the Wetlands Project impact the rice fields?

Answer: Water for the wetlands is expected to use different siphons (based on location and timing). However, priority would be given to the farmer if needed.

Question #47: Can the public access Webb Tract and drive along the levees?

Answer: The Reclamation District has protocols in place to restrict public access and driving along the levees for safety, protection, and security reasons.

Question #48: If the County allows the cultivation of certain crops, other than rice, will MWD concur with the County?

Answer: No, Metropolitan and the Delta Conservancy require that rice is kept for a minimum of 5 years. If, after 5 years, rice is determined to not be financially viable, Metropolitan is required to maintain the land included in this RFP as wet agriculture or wetlands.

It should be noted that rice planting commitments must be met as outlined in the RFP and crops other than rice should be considered a short-term, interim option. The lessee must prioritize the planting of 300 acres of rice in the first year and 1,000 to 1,361 acres of rice by June 2028.

Question #49: How will heavy equipment be brought on to Webb Tract?

Answer: This will be left to the lessee to determine. Metropolitan can assist in coordination with the Delta Ferry Authority for use of the Ferry in operation for the time needed.