

California

PROPERTY TAX INFORMATION



*A Reclamation District
can be formed to
finance the
rehabilitation of land
that has been made
unusable by flooding or
overflow.*

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What is a Reclamation District?

Background:

In areas of California near the ocean or other body of water, land may be subject to frequent overflow or flooding that makes the land unusable. The legislature enacted law so Reclamation Districts could be formed as a way to pay the costs to “reclaim” the land for future use. These districts are most often formed in areas that have become swamps, salt marshes or tidelands.

Reclamation District Law

This law (Water Code §50000 *et seq.*) provides a means for counties to finance the reclamation of land that has been made unusable by overflow or flooding. Services and facilities that can be financed by a Reclamation District include all things “necessary and convenient” to reclaim the land. Items commonly financed include facilities and services for sewage and waste removal and facilities to be used for the irrigation of lands inside or outside the district.

The law allows a Reclamation District to use any of the following financing tools to raise money needed to pay for the facilities and services:

- Special assessments based on the specific benefit each parcel receives from the improvements.
- Fees or charges, including minimum and standby charges, for services provided.
- User fees for the irrigation services provided to property owners.

The Reclamation District also may issue bonds to finance improvements.

How is a Reclamation District Formed?

A Reclamation District is initiated by a petition of the owners of 50% or more of the assessed value of land in the area. The petition is presented to the county in which the proposed district is located. After receiving the petition, the county will provide notice to affected property owners and a public hearing. A vote of all landowners will be conducted, with landowners getting one vote for each \$1 in assessed value owned. There may be additional procedural requirements when a District issues bonds related to the particular type of bond act used. In those cases, the bond issuance must be approved by the property owners or registered voters in compliance with the financing method that is being used.

How is the Annual Charge Determined?

The calculation of the annual charge will be based on types of assessments and charges applied. However, in general the charges applied to each parcel’s property tax bill must be based on the actual benefit received by each property.

How Long Will the Charge Continue?

If bonds are issued, the charges will continue at least until the bonds issued by the District are paid off. If no bonds are issued, the charge may continue as long as needed to complete improvements, or as otherwise authorized by the District.

