

PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

SGMA empowers local water users to come together to decide how to use and manage groundwater. GSAs are required to hold public meetings and allow for public input. GSAs can impose different types of fees. Fee types may include groundwater extraction, GSP development, GSP implementation and program administration. If managed well, groundwater can be a reliable source that is available long term. Therefore, decisions made by the GSAs will affect residents in rural communities like yours.

Get Involved and Help Your GSA

- Understand the groundwater challenges affecting rural unincorporated communities and/or private wells.
- Identify and develop projects that improve groundwater conditions in your community.
- Identify ways to keep SGMA fees affordable.

How to Get Involved

- Contact your GSA and register as an interested party for the GSA to receive notices of meetings and important information about Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) development.
- Attend meetings of the GSA board and/or committee. Provide public comment/recommendations or ask questions about their work.
- Apply to serve on a committee or GSA Board.

FAQs

- **Why was SGMA passed?**
Governor Brown signed the Act to call for a better local and regional management of groundwater use.
- **What does Sustainable Groundwater Management mean?**
The Act defines “sustainable groundwater management” as management and use of groundwater in a manner that keeps groundwater aquifers productive indefinitely, without causing undesirable results.
- **Who will ensure SGMA compliance?**
The Department of Water Resources is required to review GSPs within two years of submission and every 5 years after that. If a GSA is not managing its groundwater sustainably, the State has a responsibility to protect the resource until a GSA can sustainably manage the groundwater basin. Only if local efforts fail or SGMA deadlines are not met, can the State Water Board step in and manage the basin on a temporary basis.

CONTACT

For questions or more information, contact:

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SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT (SGMA)



Supporting rural communities across
the San Joaquin Valley to achieve
sustainable groundwater management.



GROUNDWATER BASICS

What is groundwater?

Groundwater is the water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand and rock. These underground reserves of water are called aquifers.

Why is groundwater important?

Groundwater is used for:

- Drinking water
- Agriculture
- Environment

In many areas of the State, groundwater pumping exceeds the amount that is replenished over the long term. This is commonly known as overdraft. Overdraft has caused many problems, including higher pumping costs (because water is being pumped from deeper wells) declining groundwater levels (dry wells) and in some cases loss of aquifers (also known as subsidence). During drought periods, groundwater withdrawal increases because less surface water is available.

Groundwater management has been voluntary and minimal.



Groundwater Recharge Basin

SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT (SGMA)



The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014 is a new law that, once fully implemented, will fundamentally change the way we manage and use groundwater in California.

SGMA aims to improve groundwater management to ensure groundwater is a reliable source that is available long term.

SGMA applies to areas with known ground water challenges (also known as critically overdrafted basins or high- and medium-priority basins). Most of the San Joaquin Valley fits this description.

The intended principle of SGMA is **“Groundwater is best managed at the local level.”**

Areas subject to the Act must:

- 1) Form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to manage and regulate groundwater. Once formed, these GSAs will have new powers, including the ability to limit or suspend groundwater pumping and charge fees for groundwater extraction.
- 2) All GSAs must develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). GSPs will need to document the groundwater conditions in the area; establish goals to prevent negative impacts (also known as undesirable results); and identify projects and management actions that improve groundwater conditions.
- 3) GSAs will have 20 years to implement the GSP and achieve sustainability.

UNDESIRABLE RESULTS

The following are undesirable results that SGMA seeks to prevent:



Lowering groundwater levels



Reduction of storage



Degraded quality



Land subsidence



Surface water depletion

SGMA TIMELINE

