

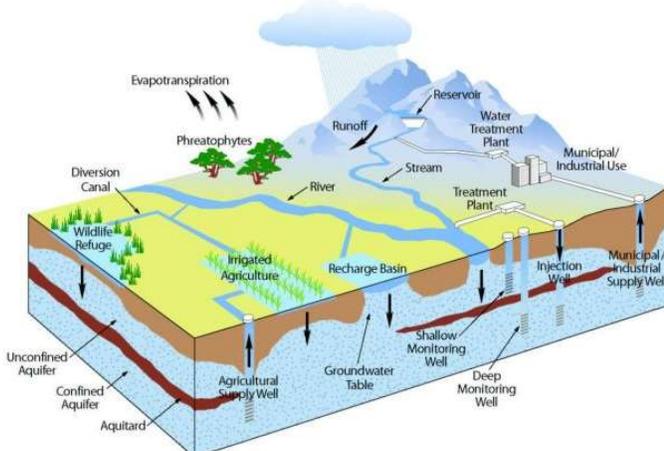
SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT (SGMA)

WHAT IS SGMA?

SGMA is a comprehensive California law that sets the framework for statewide, long-term sustainable groundwater management by local authorities. For groundwater basins that the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has designated as medium or high priority, the law requires the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) tasked with assessing the conditions of their local basins and adopting local management plans or “Groundwater Sustainability Plans” (GSPs). It provides for limited state intervention when a GSA is not formed and/or fails to create a plan and implement planned actions that will result in groundwater sustainability within 20 years.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act:

- Provides for local management of groundwater basins
- Provides local agencies with the authority, technical, and financial means needed to maintain groundwater supplies
- Establishes minimum standards for sustainable groundwater management
- Creates a mechanism for state intervention if a local agency is not managing the groundwater sustainably
- Improves data collection and understanding of groundwater resources and management



ACRONYMS:

DWR	California Department of Water Resources
GSA	Groundwater Sustainability Agency
GSP	Groundwater Sustainability Plan
SGMA	Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (<i>State law went into effect Jan. 1, 2015</i>)

WHAT DOES SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT MEAN?

SGMA defines sustainable management as managing and using groundwater in a way that can be sustained over a long period of time. For SGMA’s planning horizon, this needs to cover 50 years. Specifically, sustainable yield is defined as the amount of groundwater that can be withdrawn annually without chronically lowering groundwater levels, reducing groundwater storage, causing seawater intrusion, degrading water quality, causing land subsidence, or depleting interconnected surface water (i.e., creeks, streams and rivers) in a manner that causes significant and unreasonable impacts.

HOW ARE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREAS DEFINED?

DWR’s Bulletin 118 report (updated in 2016) defines groundwater basin boundaries. The basin boundaries were derived primarily by identifying alluvial sediments on geologic maps, using the best available information at the time. Under SGMA, each medium and high priority basin, in its entirety, must be managed to effectively avoid significant and unreasonable impacts as defined above.

WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF MANAGING THE GROUNDWATER BASIN?

Any local public agency or combination of local public agencies overlying a groundwater basin, which has water supply, water management or land use responsibilities, may form a GSA. Water corporations regulated by the Public Utilities Commission or mutual water companies may participate on a GSA. **The law requires that GSAs be formed by June 30, 2017.** If an area over a basin is not within the management area of a GSA, the local county will be presumed to be the GSA for that area unless the county opts not to.

ELIGIBLE ENTITIES IN PASO BASIN:

Local Agencies: City of Paso Robles, County of San Luis Obispo, County of Monterey, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Heritage Ranch Community Services District and San Miguel Community Services District

Proposed Water Districts (if formed): Estrella-El Pomar-Creston, Shandon-San Juan

Mutual Water Companies: Green River, Mustang Springs, Santa Ysabel, Spanish Lakes, Walnut Hills and Rancho Salinas Mutual Benefit Water Company

Overlapping jurisdictions exist in many basins, and there is the question of which existing local agencies should be designated GSAs. SGMA allows for the sharing of basin governance, thus a basin can be managed by several separate GSAs, or just one. No matter how many GSAs there are, the GSA(s) must prepare one or coordinated GSPs that covers the entire basin.

HOW DOES SGMA AFFECT EXISTING WATER AND PROPERTY RIGHTS?

The SGMA is designed to address issues related to both overdraft and safe yield, but does not change existing groundwater rights. It should be understood, however, that there was never an unfettered right for private property owners to pump as much water as they could – the

California Constitution has always mandated that water must be put to beneficial use.

WHAT IS A GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY PLAN (GSP)?

DWR finalized the GSP Regulations that define what is required for GSP content, such as basin conditions, water budget, minimum thresholds, measurable objectives, monitoring network, and interim five-year milestones to achieve sustainability within 20 years of GSP adoption.

The GSA(s) must prepare a GSP that complies with these state regulations by January 31, 2020.

WHOSE INTERESTS WILL BE CONSIDERED IN THE LOCAL ENACTMENT OF SGMA REGULATIONS?

SGMA requires that the GSA consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater, including agriculture and domestic well owners, municipal well operators, public water systems, local land use planning agencies, environmental users of groundwater, surface water users (if there is a hydrologic connection to groundwater), the federal government (including the military and managers of federal lands), disadvantaged communities, Native American tribes, and groundwater level monitoring entities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

SGMA Legislation

<http://groundwater.ca.gov/legislation.cfm>

GSP Requirements

<http://water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/gsp.cfm>

DWR Bulletin 118 Description of Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin

<http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/bulletin118/basindescriptions/3-04.06.pdf>

San Luis Obispo County Water Resources: Groundwater Basin News and Information

<https://slocountywater.org/sgma>