



## Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Briefing

### Background

On September 16, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a three-bill legislative package, composed of AB 1739 (Dickinson), SB 1168 (Pavley), and SB 1319 (Pavley), collectively known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). For the first time in its history, California has a framework for sustainable groundwater management, defined as “management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.”

SGMA requires governments and water agencies of high and medium priority basins to halt overdraft and bring groundwater basins into balanced levels of pumping and recharge. Under SGMA, these basins should reach sustainability within 20 years of implementing their sustainability plans. For critically over-drafted basins, that will be 2040. For the remaining high and medium priority basins, 2042 is the deadline.

SGMA applies to all California groundwater basins and requires that high and medium-priority groundwater basins form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and be managed in accordance with locally-developed Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) or Alternatives to GSPs (Alternatives). High- and medium-priority basins that are identified in Bulletin 118 – Interim Update 2016 as critically over-drafted are required to submit a GSP to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) by January 31, 2020. A map of the critically over-drafted basins may be found [on the DWR website](#).

DWR developed an online [Portal](#) for GSPs and posted guidance to assist GSAs in submitting their adopted GSPs through its GSP Reporting System. DWR also hosted two workshops in August 2019 and produced a webcast to assist GSAs with submitting their GSPs.

Water Code Section 10733.2, required DWR to adopt regulations for the evaluation of GSPs and Alternatives, the implementation of GSPs and Alternatives, and coordination agreements. Following a two-year outreach effort, DWR prepared emergency regulations governing evaluation and assessment of GSPs and Alternatives. The Commission approved the emergency regulations in May 2016.

DWR and the State Water Resources Control Board developed a [fact sheet](#) on submittal and evaluation of GSPs from critically overdrafted basins. The fact sheet describes the roles of both DWR and the State Water Board and a timeline of activities. As explained in the fact sheet,

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DWR must evaluate and assess all GSPs to determine whether the plans are adequate, based on best available science and information, and whether implementation of the plans is reasonably likely to achieve the basin's sustainability goal. DWR has two years from the submittal of a GSP to complete its evaluation.

The Commission maintains an ongoing interest in the timely and effective implementation of SGMA, which is critical to managing California's water resources sustainably. Goal 1 of the Commission's revised Strategic Plan states that the Commission will serve as a public forum for discussing water management policy to assist regions in achieving climate resiliency. Implementation of GSPs will raise concerns associated with the availability of water in disadvantaged communities, as well as economic and land use issues. All of these issues are identified as objectives for the Commission to explore and promote policies to address under Strategic Plan Goal 1.

Taryn Ravazzini, DWR's Deputy Director for Statewide Groundwater Management, and Natalie Stork from the State Water Resources Control Board will brief the Commission on the GSP review process, including how public comments will be considered during the review, and how the Water Board and DWR will interact with GSAs during the review process.

This is an informational item.

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