

Contact: Paul Cambra
(916) 873-5774
paul.cambra@cw.com

Draft white paper includes preliminary findings, next steps on safeguards for groundwater trading programs

As part of the California Water Commission's work assessing how to shape well-managed groundwater trading programs with appropriate safeguards for vulnerable water users, Commission staff will present a [draft white paper](#) containing preliminary findings and next steps for Commission discussion at the January 19, 2022, [meeting](#).

In support of [Water Resilience Portfolio Action 3.6](#), the Commission used its public forum to frame considerations around how Groundwater Sustainability Agencies that choose to advance groundwater trading programs may do so while ensuring protections for natural resources, small- and medium-size farms, and water supply and quality for disadvantaged communities. The Commission also explored how the state can help support well-managed, locally designed, and locally led trading programs that protect water users who might be impacted by groundwater trading.

To understand the concerns and opportunities surrounding groundwater trading, the Commission last year held expert presentations at its monthly meetings, hosted public workshops, and conducted outreach by attending meetings of local stakeholders. Drawing on these public discussions, the Commission developed its draft white paper to provide information to those considering trading programs and to guide the continued work on Action 3.6 by the California Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

The draft white paper includes a set of findings that describe specific, locally relevant mechanisms to safeguard vulnerable users and explain the need for inclusive stakeholder engagement, transparency, and consistent enforcement. The paper acknowledges that the state's authority to develop rules or oversee trading is limited by current law and suggests that state agencies can play an important role in supporting well-managed trading by disseminating information, developing best management practices, providing technical and financial assistance, engaging stakeholders to better recognize their concerns and fill information gaps, and standing ready to administer greater authorities if the state Legislature finds stronger oversight is needed.

Commission staff will incorporate feedback from the Commission and the public to produce a final draft of the white paper that will be presented to the Commission for approval at the March 2022 meeting.

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The nine-member California Water Commission uses its public forum to explore water management issues from multiple perspectives and to formulate recommendations to advise the director of the

California Department of Water Resources, and as appropriate, the California Natural Resources Agency, the Governor and Legislature on ways to improve water planning and management in response to California's changing hydrology. For more information regarding the California Water Commission visit cwc.ca.gov.