Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs)

An Opportunity for Improved Groundwater Management Collaboration

5 Stages of Groundwater Management

- **Denial** - deny the reality of the situation...block out the words and hide from the facts...disbelief
- **Anger** – intense emotion...search for someone to blame
- **Bargaining** – need to regain control... “if only we had...” ...seek compromise...renegotiate the terms
- **Depression** – reaction to practical implications relating to the changing situation
- **Acceptance** – "It's going to be okay." "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it and be a part of it."
Presentation Overview

• The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
• The groundwater management planning process
• New Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs)
• Land use & groundwater management collaboration (GSA’s)

“SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT”

- SB1168, AB1739, & SB1319 passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor became effective Jan 1, 2015;
- SB13 & AB617 recently enacted;
- “Groundwater Sustainability Agencies” to direct local groundwater management activities at basin or subbasin level;
- Goal of groundwater sustainability in next 20 years with interim milestones in five year increments;
- Groundwater sustainability agency (GSA) can be a single local entity or combination of local entities that elects to assume this responsibility.
  - Local exceptions – Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (FCGMA) and Ojai Groundwater Management Agency are deemed the exclusive local agencies within their respective statutory boundaries to be the GSA unless they elect to not assume the role
SGMA Framework for Sustainability

- Emphasis on local control
- 20 years to achieve sustainability goal
- State intervention only if locals do not act
- Comprehensive State policy initiative including:
  - Water conservation
  - Water recycling
  - Water storage
  - Safe drinking water
  - Wetlands/watershed restoration

What is Sustainable Groundwater Management?

*Now defined in Water Code §10721*

*Management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.*

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a *significant and unreasonable* depletion of supply
- Reductions in groundwater storage
- Seawater intrusion
- Degraded water quality
- Land subsidence
- Surface water depletions that have adverse impacts on beneficial uses
Steps to Groundwater Sustainability

Step one
Local agencies must form local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) in high- and medium-priority basins within two years.

Step two
GSA’s in high- and medium-priority basins must adopt groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) within five to seven years, depending on whether in critical overdraft.

Step three
Once GSPs are in place GSA’s have 20 years to fully implement them and achieve the sustainability goal.

High-Priority and Medium-Priority Basins

- Priority designated by DWR per CASGEM June 2014 prioritization
- Criteria include population, irrigated agriculture dependent on groundwater, etc.
- 125 of 515 basins are high- or medium-priority basins statewide
- Implementation is elective but encouraged in low-priority basins
## Key Implementation Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2017</td>
<td>Formation of GSAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 31, 2020</td>
<td>Completion of GSPs in critically overdrafted basins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 31, 2022</td>
<td>Completion of GSPs in all other high/medium priority basins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years after adoption of plan</td>
<td>High- and medium-priority basins achieve sustainability</td>
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DWR may grant up to two, five-year extensions on implementation upon showing of good cause and progress.
Groundwater Planning Process

Forming Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
(by June 2017)

• Any local agency or combination of agencies overlying basin may elect to be a GSA
• Local agency is any public agency that does at least one of the following:
  – Water supply
  – Water management
  – Land use
• Counties are the default GSA in “unmanaged” areas
• Can be more than one GSA in basin, but cannot overlap areas
  – Local Exceptions:
    • Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency
    • Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency
• Public Process

New Management Responsibilities Under SGMA

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) are responsible for:
• Maintaining basin groundwater sustainability
• Submittal of annual reports to the Department of Water Resources including
  – Groundwater elevation data
  – Annual aggregated groundwater extraction data
  – Surface water supply used and available for groundwater recharge or in-lieu use
  – Total water use
  – Change in groundwater storage
• Conduct periodic review and assessment of the GSP, evaluating and responding to changing conditions
• Conduct public hearings regarding GSP adoption or amendment
GSA Authorities

“...may perform any act necessary or proper to carry out the purposes...” of this act, including, for example:

- Adopt rules, regulations, ordinances, and resolutions;
- Develop groundwater sustainability plan;
- Propose and collect fees;
- Monitor compliance and enforcement;
- Investigate, appropriate, and acquire surface water, surface water rights, groundwater, and groundwater rights into the GSA;
- Registration of groundwater extraction facilities (wells)
- Reporting of groundwater extractions to GSA;
- Provide for voluntary fallowing program;
- Transport, reclaim, purify, desalinate, treat, or otherwise manage and control polluted water, wastewater, or other waters for subsequent use;
- Impose well spacing restrictions on new wells;
- Impose reasonable operating regulations on existing wells to minimize well interference, including requiring operating on rotation basis;
- Control groundwater extractions of new, existing, reactivated wells; and
- Authorize temporary and permanent transfers of groundwater extraction allocations.

New Groundwater Sustainability Plans

Options for new Groundwater Sustainability Agencies

- Create single GSP covering entire basin
- Multiple GSAs in one basin may prepare separate Plans, but must coordinate and use common data and methods
- Multiple GSAs group together as JPA / MOU / other legal arrangement and create single GSP
- DWR will review multiple GSPs together
- May be possible to use existing plan as “Alternative” under SGMA
Example GSA Formation Options

New Groundwater Sustainability Plans

Plan Requirements

- 50-year planning horizon; 20 years to reach sustainability
- Measurable objectives/interim milestones to reach sustainability goal
- Physical description of basin
- Groundwater-surface water interaction
- Historical and projected data on demands and supplies. Major technical components include, for example:
  - Water supply sources (SW & GW) / Water demand (M&I, AG, ENV) / WQ / Beneficial water use / Environmental water use / GW pumping / GW recharge / GW elevations / Subsidence / Land use changes / Monitoring & enforcement pgms / Management alternatives / BMOs / Sustainable yield
- Monitoring and management provisions
- Description of how Plan affects other GSPs
- GSP adoption is exempt from CEQA
What About Water Rights?

- Neither the SGMA nor Groundwater Sustainability Plans alter existing groundwater or surface water rights
- However, like other property rights, water rights can be regulated

“It is the intent of the Legislature to preserve the security of water rights in the state to the greatest extent possible consistent with the sustainable management of groundwater.” [Water Code §10720.1]

What’s Next?

- Follow-up Legislation
- Development of rules and guidelines by DWR
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Hearings for GSA Formation
- GSA Operational Framework
State’s Roles

• Department of Water Resources
  – Defines the Basins and their Status
  – Regulations & Guidelines
  – Provide Technical Support

• State Water Resources Control Board
  – Intervene if no GSA or no GSP
  – Create an interim plan where there is none
  – Regulates deficiencies

Resources

• Full version of SGMA statute and other resources
  www.opr.ca.gov/docs/s_groundwater.php

• DWR Groundwater Information Center
  www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/

• ACWA’s Groundwater Sustainability Page
  www.acwa.com/content/groundwater/groundwater-sustainability

• California Water Foundation Information / Recommendations on Groundwater Sustainability
  www.californiawaterfoundation.org
QUESTIONS?

Example GSA Organization

Fillmore-Piru Basins GSA
- County of Ventura
  - Technical Support Staff
- UWCD
  - Technical Support Staff
- Stakeholder Rep
- Fillmore Pumpers Assoc
- Piru Pumpers Assoc
- ENV Water Use
- City of Fillmore
- Agric Pumpers
- Agric Pumpers
Example GSA Organization