



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DWR Regulations to Guide Local Sustainable Groundwater Management Plans Approved by California Water Commission

SACRAMENTO – The [Department of Water Resources](#) (DWR) regulations that will guide local groundwater sustainability agency management and regulation of California’s groundwater basins as outlined in the historic [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\)](#) enacted by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 2014 were approved by the [California Water Commission](#) today. The [approved emergency regulations](#) now will be filed with the Office of Administrative Law and go into effect June 2016.

“Today we reach a major milestone in California’s quest to sustainably manage groundwater,” said DWR Director Mark Cowin. “These regulations will help communities bring aquifers into balance and prepare for a changing climate and future droughts.”

Groundwater is vital to California and supplies over a third of the water Californians use, and as much as 60 percent or more in some areas during times of drought. SGMA requires local agencies to draft plans to bring groundwater aquifers into balanced levels of pumping and recharge. Managing groundwater sustainably is a key element of the California Water Action Plan, the Brown administration’s five-year roadmap for building resilient, reliable water supplies and restoring important ecosystems.

In some parts of the San Joaquin Valley, groundwater levels are reaching record lows—up to 100 feet lower than previous records. In August 2015, the Department of Water Resources released a new NASA report showing land in the San Joaquin Valley sinking faster than ever before, nearly two inches per month in some locations. Continued extensive groundwater pumping puts nearby infrastructure at greater risk of costly damage.

High- and medium-priority groundwater basins identified as critically over-drafted must be managed under groundwater sustainability plans by January 31, 2020. All

other high and medium priority basins must be managed under a groundwater sustainability plan by January 31, 2022 or an alternative to a plan by January 1, 2017. DWR offers technical and financial assistance to help local agencies develop their plans.

From the outset, the SGMA was intended to recognize that groundwater is best managed on the local level and that each groundwater basin has unique characteristics and challenges. An inherently technical and complex task, managing groundwater requires regulations that can address the goal of sustainability across such a geologically and hydrologically diverse state as California.

These regulations recognize the two key principles of the groundwater legislation. First, that groundwater is best managed at the local or regional level, and local agencies should have the tools they need to sustainably manage their resources. Second, when local or regional agencies cannot or will not manage their groundwater sustainably, the state will intervene until the local agencies develop and implement sustainable groundwater management plans.

The [Groundwater Sustainability Plan \(GSP\) regulations](#) also reflect DWR's responsibility under SGMA. DWR must evaluate the development and implementation of GSPs, alternatives, and coordination agreements by local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies or Local Agencies. The regulations cover such provisions as data collection, reporting requirements, descriptions of current and historical groundwater conditions, the elements of the "water budgets" that each plan must include, and the criteria by which an agency defines conditions in its plan that constitute sustainable management.

The new GSP regulations are the result of extensive public engagement and reflect the wide variety of perspectives provided by numerous advisory groups and statewide stakeholders, the general public, the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Water Commission. Throughout 2015 and 2016, DWR regularly met with more than a dozen SGMA [advisory groups](#), conducted public meetings and webinars across the state, published issue papers to educate the public on the issues, prompt public discussion and gather feedback.

For more information regarding California's groundwater please visit:
<http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/index.cfm>

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water; find out how at SaveOurWater.com.



