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Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA); Introduction, Part 1 of 4

For immediate release

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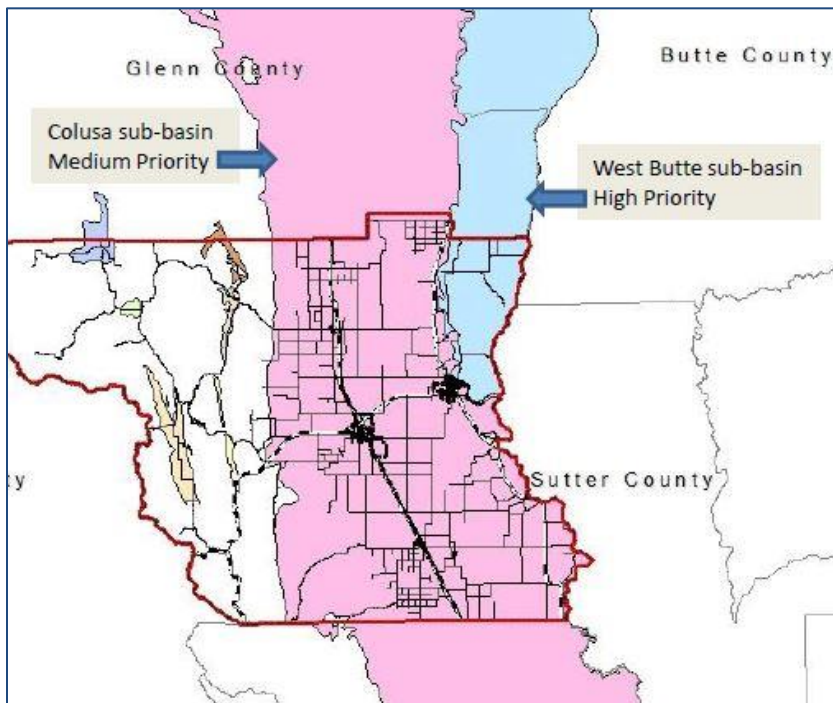
This is the first article in a four-part series to inform groundwater users in Colusa County about new groundwater legislation and the local efforts that are taking place to implement these new laws.

Part 1: The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) – An Overview

What is the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)?

SGMA is comprehensive statewide groundwater legislation that went into effect January 1, 2015. SGMA affects all groundwater users in California. The purpose of the legislation is to achieve sustainable groundwater conditions statewide. Sustainable conditions will support Colusa County's vital agricultural economy, industry, and domestic and public water uses.

SGMA mandates that all high and medium priority groundwater basins in California must be managed sustainably over a 20-year implementation period. In Colusa County we have two groundwater basins subject to SGMA: the Colusa sub-basin and the West Butte sub-basin. Both basins span multiple counties and SGMA implementation efforts must be coordinated basin-wide.



Who Will Be In Charge?

SGMA requires that a local agency, or combination of local agencies, implement SGMA at the local level, with the state as a backstop if necessary. These local agencies are called Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA), and they will be responsible for developing Groundwater Sustainability Plans and ensuring that groundwater is being managed sustainably. GSAs will have many authorities and responsibilities.

According to SGMA, “Any local public agency or combination of local public agencies overlying a groundwater basin may decide to become a groundwater sustainability agency for that basin.” “Local agency” means a local public agency that has water supply, water management or land use responsibilities within a groundwater basin. These agencies include counties, cities, irrigation and reclamation districts, and public utility districts, or similar. “Efforts are underway now in Colusa County to determine a local GSA structure, including which agencies will participate in SGMA implementation,” said Mary Fahey, Colusa County Water Resources Coordinator. Fahey went on to say, “now is the time for folks to become engaged in local SGMA planning efforts. All of our meetings are open to the public.”

What is Sustainability?

Sustainable groundwater management is defined as the management and use of groundwater without causing undesirable results. The California Department of Water Resources has developed Groundwater Sustainability Plan Regulations which define six “Sustainability Indicators” for undesirable results. These conditions must be avoided for a basin to be considered sustainable:

1. Significant and Unreasonable reductions in Groundwater Levels
2. Significant and Unreasonable reductions in Groundwater Storage
3. Significant and Unreasonable Land Subsidence
4. Significant and Unreasonable reductions in Groundwater Quality
5. Significant and Unreasonable reductions in Groundwater-Surface Water Interaction
6. Significant and Unreasonable Seawater Intrusion (we do not have to address this criteria in Colusa County)

Since groundwater conditions vary greatly throughout the state, undesirable results are defined at the basin level (what is undesirable for one area may be acceptable in another area). The bottom line is that the amount of groundwater pumped cannot exceed the amount of water recharged. Cooperation and coordination among agencies and landowners is crucial to successful SGMA implementation, and to maintaining local control over our groundwater resources.

The county would like to remind its citizens that SGMA affects every well owner in California, which is why it is so important for the general public to be informed. Colusa County Supervisor, Denise Carter said, “SGMA planning efforts have been taking place in Colusa County over the past year and a half, and important governance decisions will be made over the next few months. I highly encourage landowners to participate in this process by attending our public meetings and staying informed.”

In the next article, we will discuss Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) and Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) in more detail, and we will also discuss Colusa County's efforts to include private groundwater pumpers in local SGMA planning efforts.

Here's how you can stay informed:

Upcoming Colusa County SGMA Meetings:

July 15, 2016

GSA Working Group Meeting #5

9:00 a.m. – noon

Colusa County Farm Bureau Board Room; 520 Market Street, Colusa, CA 95932

This is the fifth in a series of facilitated working meetings for GSA-eligible agencies to coordinate local governance planning. There will be a presentation on local groundwater conditions and how they relate to the GSP Regulations and sustainability indicators. This presentation will help local agencies determine how they want to participate in local governance. These meetings are open to the public.

SGMA - How to Stay Informed:

- ✓ Get on the Colusa County Water Resources email notification list for updates and meeting announcements - call or email Water Resources Staff: **530.458.7709**; email: mfahey@countyofcolusa.com
- ✓ Visit the Colusa County Water Resources website where you can find meeting announcements, agendas, meeting summaries and presentations as well as information on SGMA: [Countyofcolusa.org](http://www.countyofcolusa.org)
- ✓ Visit us on Facebook – [Colusa County Groundwater](#)
- ✓ Visit DWR's Groundwater Information Center website for extensive information on SGMA: <http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/gwinfo/index.cfm>
- ✓ Do you have questions? Call or email Colusa County Water Resources Staff