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Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA); Implementing SGMA in Colusa County, Part 3 of 4

For immediate release

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This is the third article in a four-part series to inform groundwater users in Colusa County about new groundwater legislation, called the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), and the local efforts that are taking place to implement these new laws.

Part 3 – Implementing SGMA in Colusa County

Forming Governance

The County of Colusa and other local agencies and stakeholders have been working cooperatively on a proactive approach to SGMA implementation since early 2015. The County wants to be part of a partnership that implements SGMA the right way, ensures that we are regional and statewide leaders, and keeps our citizens ahead of the curve on groundwater management policies.

Formation of local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) is the first major task required by local agencies. Only public agencies that have water use, water management, and/or land use authorities are eligible to be a GSA. These include the county, cities, irrigation and reclamation districts and public water suppliers. GSAs are the governing bodies that will be responsible for developing a Groundwater Sustainability plan (GSP) and implementing SGMA locally. GSA-eligible agencies in Colusa County have formed a Governance Workgroup that has been meeting regularly to determine the best approach to form one or more GSAs in the county. Groundwater users from the County's Private Pumper Advisory Committee (PPAC) are also participating in these meetings.

GSA-eligible agencies will have to make very important decisions regarding their level of participation in governance. Implementing SGMA will require significant resources from GSAs. Some agencies may not have the necessary resources, yet they don't want to be left out of the process. Other agencies may not want to participate and prefer to leave decision making to other agencies. The Governance Workgroup is discussing options to include different levels of engagement from agencies.

Recognizing the delicate nature of bringing agencies together to form a new political governing body, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) developed a program to provide facilitation support services to counties. Colusa County acquired these services and the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) at California State University, Sacramento, has been facilitating the Governance Workgroup meetings. The facilitators act as a neutral third party so that each agency has an equal voice at the table. They also work closely with DWR to ensure that accurate and current information regarding SGMA is shared with the group.

Five facilitated Governance Workgroup meetings have taken place in Colusa County. The next meeting will be held August 24th. The group continues to make progress at the county level. Plans for the near future include coordinating with Glenn and Butte Counties who share subbasins with Colusa County. These meetings are open to the public and are noticed at the project website (see web links below).

Next Steps

The Colusa SGMA Governance Workgroup will continue to convene regular planning meetings over the next year. By the end of 2016, and possibly sooner, we anticipate that the Colusa County portions of the Colusa Subbasin and West Butte Subbasin will have a defined governance structure. Once that structure is agreed upon, legal agreements, such as Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Agreements and Coordination Agreements will be drawn up.

Important Dates:

12/30/2016	Governance Structure defined in Colusa County
Jan. 2017-June, 2017	Legal Agreements are developed
6/30/2017	GSA's must be in place for all high and medium priority groundwater basins that are not in critical overdraft
1/31/2022	GSPs must be completed for all high and medium priority groundwater basins that are not in critical overdraft

Upcoming Meetings:

Governance Workgroup Meeting #6

August 24, 2016, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Westside Water District, 5005 State Highway 20, Williams, CA 95987

Private Pumper Advisory Committee Meeting

August 26, 2016, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Colusa Industrial Properties, 100 Sunrise Blvd., Colusa, CA 95932

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
- ✓ 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