



Sustainable Groundwater Management Agency FAQ's

What is sustainable groundwater management?

Sustainable groundwater management refers to the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results. It means maintaining balanced levels of pumping of the groundwater, and recharge of the groundwater, while assuring reliable water quality, for the foreseeable future, without any adverse effects.

What areas of San Benito County are affected?

The area of the San Benito County Water District's GSA/GSP is in northern San Benito County, where the Bolsa, Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and Tres Pinos Valley sub-basins are located. These basins have been consolidated into one basin that is now referred to as the North San Benito Basin.

When will the groundwater sustainability plan be in place?

By law, the groundwater sustainability plan for the San Benito County Water District GSA must be completed by 2022, and sustainability must be achieved by 2042.

What will happen if state intervention becomes necessary?

SGMA states that if local GSAs fail to follow the established timeline, then the State Water Resources Control Board will step in and intervene in local groundwater management. Intervention may include an interim plan to directly manage groundwater extractions, corrective actions, a timeline to make the basin sustainable, a monitoring plan, extraction reports from well owners, intervention fees, and other actions.

Will stakeholders and the general public be involved in implementing SGMA?

SGMA requires the GSA to involve groundwater users and the general public in the development of the GSP. Collaboration and stakeholder involvement will be key to the successful implementation of SGMA. Opportunities for stakeholder involvement include open public meetings of the GSA board, periodic community meetings, and a variety of informational materials.

Does SGMA affect my water rights?

Section 10720.5 of the SGMA specifies that the act and any groundwater management plans developed as a result of the act do not affect surface or groundwater rights.

Who will pay for the implementation of SGMA and any programs/projects?

The SBCWD applied for and received a grant for \$830,336 from the Department of Water Resources under the Proposition 1 Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant Program, which will help pay for the costs of GSP preparation. SGMA allows the GSA to collect fees to help pay for the costs of implementing and maintaining the GSP, including programs and projects.

How will this law affect me?

SGMA is intended to ensure sustainable groundwater supply for groundwater uses and users. It gives GSAs broad authority to manage groundwater, including authority to increase groundwater supply (for example, projects to increase groundwater recharge or replenishment) and to manage groundwater demand through well monitoring and, if necessary, regulating groundwater extraction. SGMA does not authorize GSAs to meter domestic groundwater wells that use less than 2 acre-feet per year. Local agencies also have authority to assess fees for groundwater management.

Will SGMA limit how much water I can use?

The GSP will include programs and projects needed for the basin to become sustainable within 20 years. Under SGMA, it is possible that a GSP could limit the water pumped by individual well owners who pump more than two-acre feet annually. The District and other agencies already have similar regulatory powers to restrict water use, which can be invoked in the event of a water supply shortage.