



## What is sustainable groundwater management?

Sustainable groundwater management balances groundwater resources in a manner that ensures basin resiliency and benefits present and future generations. The SGMA defines **sustainable groundwater management** as the management of groundwater supplies in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.

The **planning and implementation horizon** is a 50-year time period over which plans and measures will be implemented in a basin to ensure that the basin is operated within its sustainable yield. **Sustainable yield** is the maximum quantity of water that can be withdrawn annually from a groundwater supply without causing undesirable results (as calculated over a base period that represents long-term conditions including any temporary surplus). **Undesirable results** include significant and unreasonable chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater storage, seawater intrusion, degraded water quality, land subsidence, and depletion of interconnected surface waters.

The SGMA directs DWR to publish best management practices for sustainable groundwater management by January 1, 2017.

## Resources

### Financial

Proposition 1 provides \$100 million for sustainable groundwater management planning and related projects. The proposition also provides substantial funding for groundwater cleanup, storage projects, and other actions that will help local agencies sustainably manage groundwater. Information on how local agencies can apply for Proposition 1 funding will become available as soon as July 2015.

### Technical

The SGMA calls on the state to provide technical assistance to groundwater sustainability agencies and to entities that extract or use groundwater to promote water conservation and protect groundwater resources. Both state and local agencies will provide assistance. For updates on state efforts, please visit the agency websites listed below.

### CalEPA

California Groundwater  
[www.groundwater.ca.gov](http://www.groundwater.ca.gov)

### Department of Water Resources

Groundwater Information Center  
[www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/](http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/)

### State Water Resources Control Board

Groundwater Management Program  
[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/gmp/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/gmp/)

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# Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

*“Local agencies will now have the power to assess the conditions of their local groundwater basins and take the necessary steps to bring those basins in a state of chronic long-term overdraft into balance.”*

-Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.  
From the letter accompanying the signing  
of AB 1739, SB 1168 and SB 1319



# Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is a package of three bills (AB 1739, SB 1168, and SB 1319) that provides local agencies with a framework for managing groundwater basins in a sustainable manner. Recognizing that groundwater is most effectively managed at the local level, the SGMA empowers local agencies to achieve sustainability within 20 years.

The SGMA:

- Respects regional differences and provides for a tailored approach to planning
- Establishes minimum standards for sustainable groundwater management
- Improves coordination between land use and groundwater planning
- Provides state technical assistance
- Creates a mechanism for state intervention if, and only if, a local agency is not managing its groundwater sustainably
- Protects water rights

## Groundwater Basins (Basins)

Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118 identifies 515 alluvial groundwater basins in California. The SGMA recognizes these basins as the initial boundaries for groundwater management and directs DWR to develop a process for revising basin boundaries by January 1, 2016.

## Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA)

A local agency, combination of local agencies, or county may establish a GSA. It is the GSA's responsibility to develop and implement a groundwater sustainability plan that considers all beneficial uses and users of groundwater in the basin. GSAs must be formed by June 30, 2017.

## Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)

GSAs must develop GSPs with measurable objectives and interim milestones that ensure basin sustainability. A basin may be managed by a single GSP or multiple coordinated GSPs. DWR will develop regulations for evaluating GSPs and alternatives to GSPs by June 1, 2016.

## High and Medium Priority Basins:

DWR conducted an initial prioritization of all 515 basins. The SGMA requires high and medium priority basins to develop GSPs. Low and very low priority basins are encouraged, but not required, to develop GSPs.

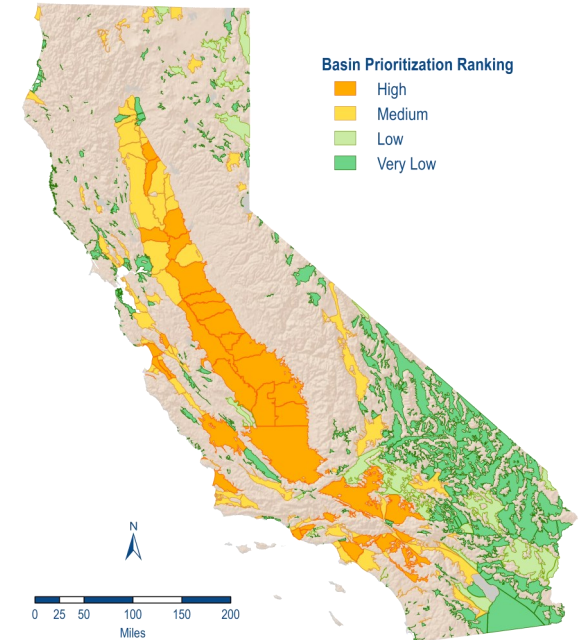
## Basins in Critical Overdraft:

DWR will identify basins subject to critical conditions of overdraft by January 1, 2017. High and medium priority basins in critical overdraft must develop GSPs by January 31, 2020.

## Alternatives to Groundwater Sustainability Plans:

A basin can be managed by an alternative to a GSP if approved by DWR. Alternatives to GSPs are due to DWR for evaluation and assessment by January 1, 2017.

## Final Basin Prioritization



## State Backstop

If a local agency is not managing its groundwater sustainably, the SGMA directs the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to protect the resource until a local agency can sustainably manage the basin. The State Water Board may initiate the State Backstop process in the following circumstances:

- A basin has no GSA after June 30, 2017.
- A high or medium priority basin in critical overdraft has no GSP or the GSP is inadequate after January 31, 2020.
- A high or medium priority basin not in critical overdraft has no GSP or the GSP is inadequate after January 31, 2022.
- A high or medium priority basin has no GSP, or the GSP is inadequate, and there are significant depletions of interconnected surface waters after January 31, 2025.

## Steps to Sustainability

**June 1, 2016**

DWR adopts regulations for evaluating groundwater sustainability plans

**June 30, 2017**

Groundwater sustainability agencies formed

**January 31, 2020**

High and medium priority basins in critical overdraft managed by groundwater sustainability plans

**January 31, 2022**

All high and medium priority basins managed by groundwater sustainability plans

**January 31, 2040/2042**

All high and medium priority basins achieve groundwater sustainability (twenty years after plan is adopted)