

Background Information:

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown on September 16, 2014, created a new framework for groundwater management in California. The framework includes a structure and schedule to achieve sustainable groundwater management within 20 years. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has historically managed the state's central repository for groundwater data. Under SGMA, DWR provides guidance, financial assistance, and technical support for compliance with state requirements. The State Water Resources Control Board provides the regulatory backstop under SGMA, taking over basin management and assessing fees if local groundwater management is not successful in complying with the requirements of SGMA.

SGMA established a new structure for local groundwater management through Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs). The formation of GSAs for all basins that DWR designated as high- and medium-priority groundwater basins was required by July 1, 2017. Each GSA for these high- and medium-priority basins must then develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that details how sustainable groundwater management will be achieved within 20 years of implementing the GSP. *Sustainable groundwater management* is defined by SGMA as “the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.” This avoidance of undesirable results is measured through six sustainability indicators:

1. Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a **significant and unreasonable** depletion of supply if continued over the planning and implementation horizon
2. **Significant and unreasonable** reduction of groundwater storage
3. **Significant and unreasonable** seawater intrusion
4. **Significant and unreasonable** degradation of water quality
5. **Significant and unreasonable** land subsidence

The GSP is a tool used to help the GSA sustainably manage the basin. The criteria for sustainable management, including determining what is **significant and unreasonable** within the parameters of SGMA for the groundwater basin managed by that GSA, must be assessed, with input from stakeholders, before the GSP can be adopted.