



WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

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NOTICE TO LANDOWNERS

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The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) recently passed by the Legislature fundamentally changes management of California's groundwater basins. The Act mandates the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and requires the adoption of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) for basins designated as medium or high-priority by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). GSPs are mandatory to eliminate overdraft conditions in aquifers and to return them to conditions that assure long-term sustainability within 20 years of implementation.

Madera County is comprised of three basins, designated by Department of Water Resources (DWR) as critically overdrafted, and "high priority:" (1) the Chowchilla Subbasin, (2) the Madera Subbasin and (3) a portion of the Delta-Mendota subbasin. Each of these basins must complete and submit a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by January 2020, and these basins are required to achieve "sustainability" by the year 2040. The method by which sustainability will be achieved will be illustrated in the GSP, which will be drafted in partnership by the Irrigation Districts, Water Districts, cities and Madera County. The SGMA process is meant to be a public and participatory process. Madera County intends to engage the public and solicit input from stakeholders in order to craft a GSP that is effective in achieving public support toward a common goal of long-term sustainability.

In reaction to SGMA, Madera County has created the Department of Water and Natural Resources. This department is dedicated to fully servicing your needs as it relates to the SGMA. The Department Director is a graduate of the Cal Poly School of Agriculture and has 20 years' experience in agricultural advocacy and agricultural policy, serving as the Executive Director of Madera County Farm Bureau from 2004-2011.

What does this mean for you?

The location of your property will determine which GSA will take responsibility. Properties located outside the service boundary of cities, irrigation and water districts will be the responsibility of Madera County. Madera County will work with these agencies to develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan, while soliciting input from countywide stakeholder groups. Lands which fall into the responsibility area of the County will be fully represented in this process, having the same rights and stand on equal footing with lands located within other agencies, including those with and without surface water supplies.

Where are we in the process?

Before June 30, 2017, local agencies are expected to file paperwork with the Department of Natural Resources (DWR) identifying each geographic area for which they will take responsibility by the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies. Many irrigation districts, water districts and cities in the county have already completed this process. Madera County will assume responsibility for any properties that are not claimed by the various GSAs, as is prescribed by law. It is for this reason that Madera County will file its GSA formation documents last, after all other local agencies in the county.

How can you get involved?

The Department of Water and Natural Resources is forming Advisory Committees throughout the county to help guide the process and to provide input from landowners. Additionally, staff will launch an informational website and hold public meetings on SGMA. To get involved or make an inquiry, please email: mcwater@madera-county.com, or call Julia Berry at (559) 675-7821, Ext. 3451.