



## Delta-Mendota Groundwater Subbasin SGMA Frequently Asked Questions

### Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

#### What is the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act?

The **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act**, known as “**SGMA**” (pronounced sig-ma), is a California State law that was passed in 2014. SGMA’s goal is to ensure the long-term sustainable management of the State’s groundwater resources. SGMA requires agencies throughout California to meet certain requirements. These include:

- Forming **Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA)**
- Developing **Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP)**
- Achieving balanced groundwater levels within 20 years

#### Commonly Used Acronyms

SGMA = Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

GSA = Groundwater Sustainability Agency

GSP = Groundwater Sustainability Plan

#### Why was the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act established?

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act was passed to provide local agencies with new authorities and tools to sustainably manage their region’s groundwater resources. Water management agencies in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin are using the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act to increase our understanding of the region’s groundwater resources and maintain a reliable groundwater supply for our communities.

#### Who is required to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act?

Compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is only required in groundwater basins identified by the State as medium- or high-priority. The Delta-Mendota Subbasin is a high-priority, critically-overdrafted groundwater basin, as determined by the State. Therefore, our region is subject to the requirements of the SGMA. Locally-formed Groundwater Sustainability Agencies are responsible for overseeing compliance with the SGMA in our region.

#### What is a groundwater basin?

A groundwater basin is an area underlain by permeable materials (such as sand and gravel) that is capable of storing and providing a significant supply of groundwater to wells. The California Department of Water Resources’ Bulletin 118 identifies the groundwater basin in our region as the “Delta-Mendota Subbasin”. The Delta-Mendota Subbasin is a long, relatively narrow groundwater basin on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley that covers portions of six counties: Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera and Fresno. For more information about groundwater basins, visit the California Department of Water Resources’ website at [www.water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118](http://www.water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118).

## **Who will implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin?**

Twenty-four locally-formed Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) have been established in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin. These GSAs are responsible for complying with the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, including preparing and implementing Groundwater Sustainability Plans, conducting outreach about SGMA, and maintaining local control over the region's groundwater resources.

## **What is the status of the Delta-Mendota Subbasin?**

The State identified the Delta-Mendota Subbasin as a high-priority, critically-overdrafted subbasin. The Delta-Mendota Subbasin must be determined to be sustainable by the State no later than 2040. The six Groundwater Sustainability Plans currently being developed for the Delta-Mendota Subbasin will further describe the Subbasin's health and outline actions to bring the Subbasin into sustainability.

## **What does it mean for a basin to be sustainable?**

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act defines "sustainability" as the management and use of groundwater in a basin that can be maintained long-term without causing "undesirable results." The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act identifies undesirable results as:

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels
- Significant reduction in groundwater storage
- Reduced groundwater quality
- Sinking of land caused by low groundwater levels (known as "land subsidence")
- Depletion of surface water as a result of surface water-groundwater interactions

You can find more information at about the sustainability of groundwater basins and undesirable results on the California Department of Water Resources' website at:

[www.water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/SGMA-Groundwater-Management](http://www.water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/SGMA-Groundwater-Management).

## **How will the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act affect my community?**

Six coordinated Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) are currently being developed for the Delta-Mendota Subbasin. These GSPs must be finalized and provided to the State no later than January 31, 2020. Each GSP will identify actions and projects implemented over a 20 year timeline to sustainably manage groundwater in the Subbasin. The State may also intervene or enact fees if the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act are not met.

Groundwater users and interested members of the public are encouraged to participate in the GSP development and implementation process. Ask to be added to your local Groundwater Sustainability Agency's contact list to receive email updates on their Groundwater Sustainability Plan. You may also ask if there are upcoming meetings or events you can attend. For more resources, visit the Delta-Mendota Subbasin SGMA website at [www.deltamendota.org](http://www.deltamendota.org).

## **Groundwater Sustainability Agencies**

### **What is a Groundwater Sustainability Agency?**

A Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) is one or more local public agencies that implement the provisions of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. To be eligible to serve as a GSA, an agency must be a local public agency that has water supply, water management, or land use management responsibilities with the groundwater basin. In the Delta-Mendota Subbasin, this includes cities, counties, public water agencies, irrigation districts, and a resource conservation district. Some

GSA's in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin only include a single agency. Other GSA's include multiple agencies.

### **What does a Groundwater Sustainability Agency do?**

A key part of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is maintaining local control over groundwater resources. Locally-formed Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) are responsible for complying with the requirements of SGMA and overseeing the sustainable management of our region's groundwater resources. SGMA requires GSA's to prepare Groundwater Sustainability Plans, implement actions to bring the subbasin into sustainability (or maintain sustainability), and engage local stakeholders in the SGMA process.

SGMA grants the following authorities to all GSA's to aid in the implementation of GSP's:

- Adopt rules, regulations, ordinances, and resolutions to implement SGMA
- Monitor compliance and enforcement
- Require registration of groundwater wells
- Require appropriate measurement devices and reporting of extractions
- Investigate, appropriate and acquire surface water rights, groundwater and groundwater rights into the GSA
- Acquire or augment local water supplies to enhance the sustainability of the groundwater basin
- Propose and collect fees
- Adopt and fund a GSP according to existing laws

The GSA's in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin may choose to use some, all or none of these authorities.

## How many Groundwater Sustainability Agencies are there in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin?

Twenty-four Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) have formed in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin:

- Aliso Water District GSA
- Central Delta-Mendota Region Multi-Agency GSA
- City of Dos Palos GSA
- City of Firebaugh GSA
- City of Gustine GSA
- City of Los Banos GSA
- City of Mendota GSA
- City of Newman GSA
- City of Patterson GSA
- County of Madera GSA #3
- DM-II GSA
- Farmers Water District GSA
- Fresno County, Management Area A GSA
- Fresno County, Management Area B GSA
- Grassland Water District GSA
- Merced County, Delta-Mendota GSA
- Northwestern Delta-Mendota GSA
- Ora Loma Water District GSA
- Patterson Irrigation District GSA
- San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority GSA
- Turner Island Water District GSA #2
- West Stanislaus Irrigation District GSA #1
- West Stanislaus Irrigation District GSA #2
- Widren Water District GSA

## **Groundwater Sustainability Plans**

### **What is a GSP?**

A Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is a plan developed by a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), or multiple GSA's, under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. A GSP must outline how the GSA(s) will implement, manage, and measure specific actions to sustainably manage the groundwater levels in the groundwater basin. The GSPs for the Delta-Mendota Subbasin must be submitted to the California Department of Water resources no later than January 31, 2020. The GSAs will then be required implement the actions outlined in the GSP.

### **How many Groundwater Sustainability Plans will be developed in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin?**

Currently, six Groundwater Sustainability Plans are being developed in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin:

- The Central Delta-Mendota Multi-Agency Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Widren Water District GSA, Delta-Mendota II GSA, Northwestern Delta-Mendota GSA, City of Patterson GSA, Patterson Irrigation District GSA, and West Stanislaus Irrigation District #1 and #2 GSAs are collaboratively developing one GSP.
- The City of Dos Palos GSA, City of Firebaugh GSA, City of Gustine GSA, City of Los Banos GSA, City of Mendota GSA, City of Newman GSA, Madera County GSA, portion of Merced County GSA, portion of Fresno County Management Area B GSA, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors GSA, and Turner Island Water District GSA are collaboratively developing one GSP.
- Farmers Water District GSA is developing one GSP.
- Aliso Water District GSA is developing one GSP.
- Grassland Water District GSA is developing one GSP.
- Fresno County Management Areas A and B GSAs are developing one GSP.

### **How will the Groundwater Sustainability Plans be coordinated?**

All six Groundwater Sustainability Plans in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin are being developed through a collaborative process. Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) representatives meet monthly to discuss key topics at public Coordination Committee meetings. In addition, a Coordination Agreement is currently being developed between the GSAs in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin. The Coordination Agreement describes how key technical information in the GSPs were coordinated. The Coordination Agreement will be submitted to the State with the GSPs.

### **When will the Groundwater Sustainability Plans be developed?**

All six Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) covering the Delta-Mendota Subbasin will be submitted to the California Department of Water Resources no later than January 31, 2020. The GSPs will be submitted together; however, some GSPs may be finished before others. For specific GSP development timelines, visit your local Groundwater Sustainability Agency's website or the Delta-Mendota SGMA website at [www.deltamendota.org](http://www.deltamendota.org).

### **How can I participate in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan development process?**

Six Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) covering the Delta-Mendota Subbasin are currently being developed. All six GSPs will be submitted to the California Department of Water Resources together. However, they are currently being developed at different rates. Each GSP will be adopted at a public meeting. Prior to adoption, the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) will hold public comment periods to receive input on the GSPs. The GSAs will also conduct public outreach throughout the GSP development process. Ask to be added to your local GSA's contact list to receive email updates on their GSP and notices about GSP workshops, public meetings, and opportunities for public comment.