



Sustainable Groundwater Management Act: Update on Implementation and Groundwater Conditions
--

Agenda Item at a Glance

- In 2014, voters in California passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, called “SGMA,” which is a law that makes sure we use the water that is stored underground, called “groundwater”, in a way that we don’t run out of it now or in the future.
- This agenda item will provide information about how the Department of Water Resources, called “DWR,” and the State Water Resources Control Board, called “SWRCB,” are working to implement SGMA.
- This is an informational item, important to anyone interested in SGMA and California’s groundwater.
- At this meeting, the Commission will receive information from staff at DWR and SWRCB. Commissioners can ask questions of presenters and Commission staff. Tribes and the public will have an opportunity to make a comment to the Commission before the Commission discusses this agenda item.

Introduction

Groundwater can account for up to 60 percent of the State’s total water supply during dry years. The long-term sustainability of this water source is important for the State’s future water supply needs. In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) created a new regulatory framework for California to sustainably manage groundwater

At this meeting, staff from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) will present an update on SGMA as the State enters the second decade of implementation. This update will summarize progress made in SGMA’s first decade implementing the initial Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) supporting local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs). DWR will provide updates on their technical assistance and funding, evaluation of GSPs, and reporting. The SWRCB will provide updates on state intervention and enforcement of SGMA. The presentation will highlight actions that State agencies and GSAs are working through to implement the law and challenges that remain ahead.

DWR staff will provide a groundwater conditions update that summarizes the [Spring 2025 – California’s Groundwater Conditions, Semi-Annual Update](#). The presentation will highlight data collected and curated by DWR and summarize the significant amount of data collected by GSAs and reported annually as part of SGMA. Topics include groundwater elevation trends, subsidence conditions, progress in recharge, and dry well occurrence. This data is important to the on-going 2025 California’s Groundwater (Bulletin 118) . Bulletin 118 is a groundwater report published by DWR that describes all of California’s groundwater basins, how much groundwater is being used and recharged, and helps local agencies in making informed decisions about groundwater. The bulletin is updated overtime as new science, data, and groundwater conditions emerge. An update to Bulletin 118 is anticipated to be released later this year.

Background

Under SGMA, DWR and SWRCB play a key role in supporting, guiding, and enforcing sustainable groundwater management throughout the state. DWR provides support and guidance to local agencies through technical assistance and grants, evaluating GSPs, and sharing data and reports. The SWRCB plays an enforcement role in SGMA by stepping in if a local agency does not manage groundwater properly.

SGMA requires local agencies to form GSAs for the medium and high priority basins. GSAs develop GSPs to achieve their sustainability goals over a 20-year planning horizon. More than 250 local GSAs were formed across the State. SGMA gives local GSAs the authority and responsibility to manage and allocate groundwater resources within a basin. SGMA has transitioned from planning to implementation where GSAs are managing water budgets, monitoring and evaluating their sustainable management criteria and interim milestones towards sustainability, and carrying out projects and management actions that will bring the basin into sustainability. Under SGMA, GSAs must achieve their sustainability goals, operating to a sustainable yield while avoiding undesirable results, within 20 years (by 2040 or 2042, depending on the basin).

While SGMA is a long-term initiative, it requires immediate action to better manage water during all water year types (e.g., wet, normal, dry years). GSPs are central to these efforts and are complimented by annual groundwater condition reports that include up-to-date information on key data such as groundwater levels, use patterns, subsidence and recharge volumes.

This agenda item advances Goal Three of the Commission’s [Strategic Plan](#), which calls on the Commission to use its public forum to explore pressing water management issues.

Meeting Overview

At the August meeting, Keith Wallace, Assistant Deputy Director of [DWR’s Sustainable Water Management Office](#) and Natalie Stork, Director of [SWRCB Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management](#), will present updates on State implementation of SGMA. Steven Springhorn, DWR

Agenda Item: 11

Meeting Date: August 20, 2025

Page 3

Technical Assistance Section Lead, will present updates on groundwater conditions from around the State. The Commission will hear Tribal and public comment and have an opportunity to ask questions of the presenters to help the Commission and the public understand and evaluate the progress being made.

This is an informational item.

Contact

Sarah Lesmeister

Assistant Executive Officer

California Water Commission

916-450-8402