

SGMA Communications: Media Relations and Social Media

Introduction

Groundwater is a critical resource in California. It supports families, communities, jobs, farmers, and the environment.

An integral part of groundwater planning includes that all beneficial uses and users are identified, considered, and included in the process. However, often times, those most actively involved in activities related to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) are those who already know a lot about the topic and routinely attend meetings.

There are many beneficial users of groundwater in a community who can be active participants in groundwater planning. SGMA specifies that Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) should “encourage the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the community.”¹ The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Regulations, in turn, specify that notification and communication to all beneficial users and interested parties be included as part of GSPs.

It’s important that GSAs work to get the word out to community members who are identified as beneficial users of groundwater. Media relations and social media can help communicate to these important audiences.

To effectively use media relations and social media to share information, it’s important to understand the types of media outlets and social media channels.

You’ll also need to know what media outreach is, how it’s done, why it is important, and when you should use it.

Types of Media and Tools to Use

Each community has its own unique mix of media outlets. To effectively conduct media relations, get to know your community’s entire media market. There will be obvious media outlets that are the largest provider of news in your community, such as a television station or news radio, but don’t stop there—identify all possible outlets for getting the word out about your SGMA activities.

Media has evolved from traditional outlets like radio, television stations, and newspapers to include smaller neighborhood publications, bulletins, websites, online newsletters, blogs, and downloadable neighborhood apps that provide easier access and more localized news for viewers.

The media often relies on businesses and community members to email them timely event information and newsworthy stories. Knowing how to pass along information to the media on the right timeframe, using the right tools, will increase your media relations success.

GSP Regulations² require a communication section to include the following:

1. An explanation of the Agency’s (GSA) decision-making process.
2. Identification of opportunities for public engagement and a discussion of how public input and response will be used.
3. A description of how the Agency (GSA) encourages the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the basin.
4. The method the Agency (GSA) shall follow to inform the public about progress implementing the Plan, including the status of projects and actions.

¹Water Code 10727.8

²GSP Regulations §354.10

For successful media outreach you will need to know:

Who you can communicate with related to GSA and GSP activities when using traditional and social media channels

What type of outreach is needed
 1) notifications and sharing information or
 2) educating others

When to publish events, release newsworthy information, status updates, or public comment periods

Where to release your news and information

Why you should use media relations and social media, such as providing instant communication or a feedback loop, and reaching a broader audience

In the next sections, you'll find descriptions and key information for the two main types of media outlets: traditional media, including outlets like newspapers and television stations, and social media that is accessed via the internet or smartphone apps.

Traditional Media Outlets

When people think of media, automatically outlets like newspapers, radio, and television come to mind. Those outlets provide a great deal of news in a community and they should be contacted consistently to share SGMA updates and events. Yet these are not the only places to get the word out in your community, and you should consider other places to help communicate your information to a wider audience. Think about specific audiences, such as particular industry or neighborhood publications. Special consideration should be given to finding media outlets that provide the news in multiple or different languages.

As you consider different media outlets, keep one contact list that you update often. Media staff tend to shift to different positions, and media relations should include constant evaluation of your list, to make sure you are getting information to the right people. It's important to keep all of your media relations materials short; if a media outlet needs more information, they will ask for background. Timing is also important: make sure to get your materials to the media a few weeks before an event, but not so far in advance that your information will get lost. Each media outlet will have their own guidelines for when they need information by, to get it into their news. If those deadlines are not posted, simply ask.

The table below lists different types of traditional media outlets to consider, but your community may have others to add. The table also lists three types of media relations tools to use when sending information to different media outlets—calendar notices, media advisories, and news releases. Repeated use of these tools allows your information to have a consistent look, but it also makes it easier for you to simply fill in information, without having to create media materials from scratch every time you want to make an announcement or share information.

Type of Traditional Media Outlet	Tools to Use
Television (Live vs. Taped Show)	Media Advisory, News Release
Print (Newspapers, Magazines, Journals, Trade/Industry Publications)	Calendar Notice, Media Advisory, News Release
Online Newspapers, Newsletters, or Event Listings	Calendar Notice, Media Advisory, News Release
Radio (Mentions, Live, Taped Show)	Media Advisory, News Release
Local Blogs, Vloggers, and YouTube Channels	Media Advisory, News Release
Community Publications (Newsletters, Shoppers)	Calendar Notice, Media Advisory, News Release

What to Consider: Most of your media relations will be focused on alerting the community to events where they can get involved, such as public meetings, or sharing information that will help educate people on groundwater issues. But this isn't the only reason to engage in media relations; it also affords you a chance to highlight efforts of the GSA's administration or advisory committees, or to provide people with a forward-looking timeline of how groundwater will be managed in the community. There will also likely be opportunities to write by-line articles or opinion-editorials (op-eds)—items that you write entirely and then share with the media—so you can provide key messages that are consistent and targeted toward your SGMA efforts.

Examples for all three media relations tools—a calendar notice, a media advisory, and a news release—are included at the end of this packet.

Social Media

Some communities have embraced social media, while others have been slow to use it. There is a high likelihood that people in your community are already using at least one kind of social media, which provides you with another opportunity to actively engage residents, businesses, and industries. Social media is defined as outlets that are accessed via smartphone apps or via websites. The key benefit of social media is that it can be done quickly, and it doesn't require drafting advisories or notices. Where the traditional media outlets, described above, publish information based on your materials, social media allows you complete control over what gets posted and shared.

The table below lists different types of social media to consider. These may change over time as new apps appear and become more widely used. The table also lists when to use the types of shared information for each social media outlet, an important consideration when you think about the kind of news you have to share.

Type of Social Media Outlets	When to Use It
Facebook	Posts, Video Share, Live
Twitter	Posts, Links
Instagram	Posts, Stories
Postings/Feeds (Nextdoor)	Posts, Links
SnapChat/TikTok	Messages, Videos

What to Consider: One of the key features of social media is it provides an opportunity to present brief, small segments of news; this allows you to build up information or to present a story via multiple posts. There should be a heavy emphasis on visuals in your social media efforts, as they catch users' eyes as they are scrolling through content. While the amount of control you have, ease of posting, and ability to build stories and news items are all justifications for using social media, they contain other benefits that are valuable for SGMA efforts. Unlike traditional media, **social media allows for collaboration in shared content**. Reposting and sharing others' content reinforces messages, reinforces partnership and collaboration, and helps you reach even more people in your community.

Examples for a variety of social media posts and shared items are included at the end of this packet.

SGMA Milestones for Media Outreach

While ongoing SGMA education and information should be shared throughout the GSP development process and implementation, there are important milestones and tasks that call for media relations and social media efforts. These include:

- News about any changes to the GSA structure or its participants
- Notices for regular or ad-hoc committee or board meetings
- Official updates at Board of Supervisors meetings
- Technical review sessions
- The GSP public review period
- With GSP submission
- During the annual reporting period
- When grants are awarded to assist with development or implementation

Useful Links and Resources

Media relations is about gathering and sharing information. This section provides links to resources and references that you can use for SGMA communications. As you develop your own local resource list, don't forget to add links for your community's social media accounts, including things like city, county, or regional entities' social media pages.

DWR SGMA Communication and Engagement Toolkit

<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Assistance-and-Engagement>

In the SGMA Communication and Engagement Toolkit you will find a Groundwater Media Contacts list of reporters throughout the state covering groundwater and related issues.

California Media Outlets

<https://mediacontactslist.com/dir/california>

DWR Social Media Accounts

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CADWR/>

Twitter https://twitter.com/CA_DWR

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/cadepartmentofwaterresources/>

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/calwater>

State Water Board Social Media Accounts

Twitter <https://twitter.com/CaWaterBoards>

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/BoardWebSupport>

Frequently Asked Questions

Following are a few questions we've received from GSAs, pertaining to SGMA media relations and outreach. If you have additional questions about SGMA media relations, please contact us at sgmps@water.ca.gov.

Do I have to do media outreach or use social media?

SGMA does not require your GSA to do media relations, but the regulations do require GSAs to document in their plans how they have actively engaged the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of their community. Engaging community members beyond more than listing them in an Interested Parties database and sending them occasional notices can include using media relations to extend the opportunities to inform, educate, and actively engage all people in a community. Utilizing media relations is a good communications practice and provides a way to reach a variety of community members that in turn brings more diverse voices to

SGMA conversations and the decision-making process.

How often should I do media relations outreach?

The answer depends on how many activities you have to highlight, but it also depends on how much you want media relations to benefit your program. Providing the media—and thus the community—with frequent and ongoing communications will increase awareness of your efforts and provides greater opportunities to educate and inform.

I don't have a large staff; can I still do SGMA-related media relations?

Of course. If you have something as simple as a date, place, time, and event details, you already have the material you need for a calendar notice. You will likely have all of the information and descriptions on hand to explain your event or activities, and the examples provided in this package make it easy for a GSA to assemble that information and to share it with the media.

We don't normally get large turnouts for our meetings, is media relations worth the effort?

Yes! In addition to the fact that you're broadening your list of possible attendees, keeping SGMA information as a regular news item helps keep people informed, allows them to receive updates, provides message repetition, and at the very least, will likely encourage new opt-in entries for your Interested Parties database.

What other ways can we improve our media relations outreach, beyond sending advisories and making posts?

While a GSA will benefit from basic media relations—sending out notices and advisories and regularly posting content—you can improve the length and depth of media coverage by establishing a good working relationship with each local or regional reporter. With you becoming a trusted source of timely information, your media contacts become more likely to run information about your developments or your activities when you send them. The relationship you have with reporters will also give them a chance to share with you the kind of content that they are interested in covering, and you can provide that targeted information to help them create their stories.

Examples

To assist GSAs with media relations, the next several pages offer examples of traditional media tools and social media posts. As you review the examples, be thinking about ways that you can provide information to your own community, considering your unique mix of media outlets and social media usage.


Traditional Media Examples

Calendar notice
Media advisory
News release

Social Media Examples

Original Facebook post and shared item
Original Twitter tweet and retweet

SGMA Communications: Media Relations and Social Media Examples

1 
ANYTOWN GSA

2 **March 1, 2021**

3 **Contact Information:** Joe Smith, Public Affairs (916) 555-5555

4 **Calendar Notice**


5 **Community Education Meeting to Spotlight Local Groundwater Efforts**

6 **Date:** March 8, 2021
Time: 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Location: Virtual meeting being held on Zoom
Access: Zoom link
<https://anytown.zoom.us/j/69357395?pwd=cWla3N5UXViZz21>

7 **Description:** Anytown GSA is hosting a public meeting to help the community better understand groundwater, how it is managed, and what efforts are being done locally to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

1. Use your logo or letterhead for all media relations' activity, for consistency.
2. This date is when you release the information to the media.
3. The contact person should be someone who is easily accessible and can answer any questions about the event.
4. Including this header helps the media understand that this is a calendar notice or event listing.
5. The headline should convey what the event is and what it is for.
6. Event date and time.
7. A calendar notice should include a short event description.

1



ANYTOWN GSA

2

March 1, 2021

3

Contact Information: Joe Smith, Public Affairs (916) 555-5555

4

Media Advisory

5

Anytown GSA Announces New Groundwater Data for Local Basin

6

What: Anytown Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Releases New Data for Anytown Basin

- Agency scientists will be available to discuss information, groundwater management, and what this means to residents and businesses.
- Water Resources staff will discuss how the data will be used to inform local groundwater activities.

7

Who: Environmental scientists and civil engineers
Kate Williams, PhD
Alan Jones, P.E., M.S.
Director Janet Young, Anytown Water Resources

8

When: Monday, March 1, 2021
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Where: In person: 15 Water Street, Anytown, CA
By phone: (916) 555-5555
Zoom link: <https://anytown.zoom.us/j/69395?pwd=cWla3NiZz21>



9

Editorial Features:

- Multiple visual and sound opportunities for broadcast crews
- Links for high-resolution maps and illustrations will be shared at event
- Radio and podcast interviews may be scheduled by calling (916) 555-5555

1. Use your logo or letterhead for all media relations' activity, for consistency.
2. This date is when you release the information to the media.
3. The contact person should be someone who is easily accessible and can answer any questions about the event.
4. Including this header helps the media understand that this is an event opportunity for the media to attend.
5. The headline should convey what the event is and what it is for.
6. This will give the media a quick overview of what will happen at the event.
7. This alerts the media as to who will be speaking or available at the event.
8. Event date and time.
9. This section tells the media what type of visuals, sound bites, or materials that can be collected at the event.

News Release

1

2 NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3 **January 31, 2020**
 Contact:
 Joyia Emard, Information Officer, Public Affairs, Department of Water Resources
 916-651-9258 | joyia.emard@water.ca.gov

 George Kostyrko, Director, Public Affairs, State Water Resources Control Board
George.kostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov

4 **California Marks Key Step Toward Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Management**

5 *Critically overdrafted groundwater basins are required to submit groundwater sustainability plans to the state by January 31, 2020*

Plans outline how the basins will reach sustainability over the next 20 years

Groundwater makes up about 40 percent of California's total water use and years of overpumping has led to subsidence, sea water intrusion, degraded water quality and other negative effects

6 SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Local agencies representing 19 of the state's most stressed groundwater basins are required to submit plans to the state by midnight tonight on how they will manage their basins to achieve sustainability by 2040. Several plans were submitted early

7 and were posted [online](#) today, starting a [public comment period](#) which closes on April 15, 2020. The remaining plans will be posted online in the coming weeks for a 75-day public comment period.

8 Overpumping of groundwater has led to a variety of negative effects including reduced groundwater levels, seawater intrusion, and degraded water quality. It has also led to subsidence, which causes damage to critical water infrastructure. In some cases, years of overpumping have left entire California communities and farms without safe and reliable local water supplies.

1. Use your logo or letterhead for all media relations' activity, for consistency.
2. This date is when you release the information to the media.
3. The contact person should be someone who is easily accessible and can answer any questions about the news being released.
4. The headline should offer the media a big-picture idea of the news item.
5. The subhead(s) should convey key pieces of the news story that you'd like the media to highlight. This will give the media a quick overview of what will happen at the event.
6. The dateline should be the city where the GSA is located.
7. The lead paragraph should give all of the news details up front.
8. Any additional paragraphs can give the media background information or other relevant details about the news item.


Facebook Post and Shared Content

1

California Department of Water Resources
1 March at 15:35 · 🌐

Groundwater Awareness Week starts March 7, and is a great opportunity to share the importance of community involvement in groundwater planning. When creating long-term groundwater management plans, local water agencies must reach out to community members to ensure all beneficial groundwater users– including domestic well owners who rely entirely on groundwater for their water supply – are considered.

DWR helps with public outreach by providing meeting fac... See more



4

Like Comment

Write a comment...

2

California Department of Water Resources
2 February · 🌐


Isolated thunderstorms will be possible this afternoon, mainly across the northern Sacramento Valley.

Isolated Thunderstorms Today
Tuesday February 2, 2021

Most Likely Timeframe
11 AM – 7 PM

Thunderstorms Possible

- Small hail
- Brief downpours
- Lightning



US National Weather Service Sacramento California ✓
2 February · 🌐

Isolated thunderstorms will be possible this afternoon, mainly across the northern Sacramento Valley.

5 1 comment 1 share

Like Comment Share

Most relevant ▾

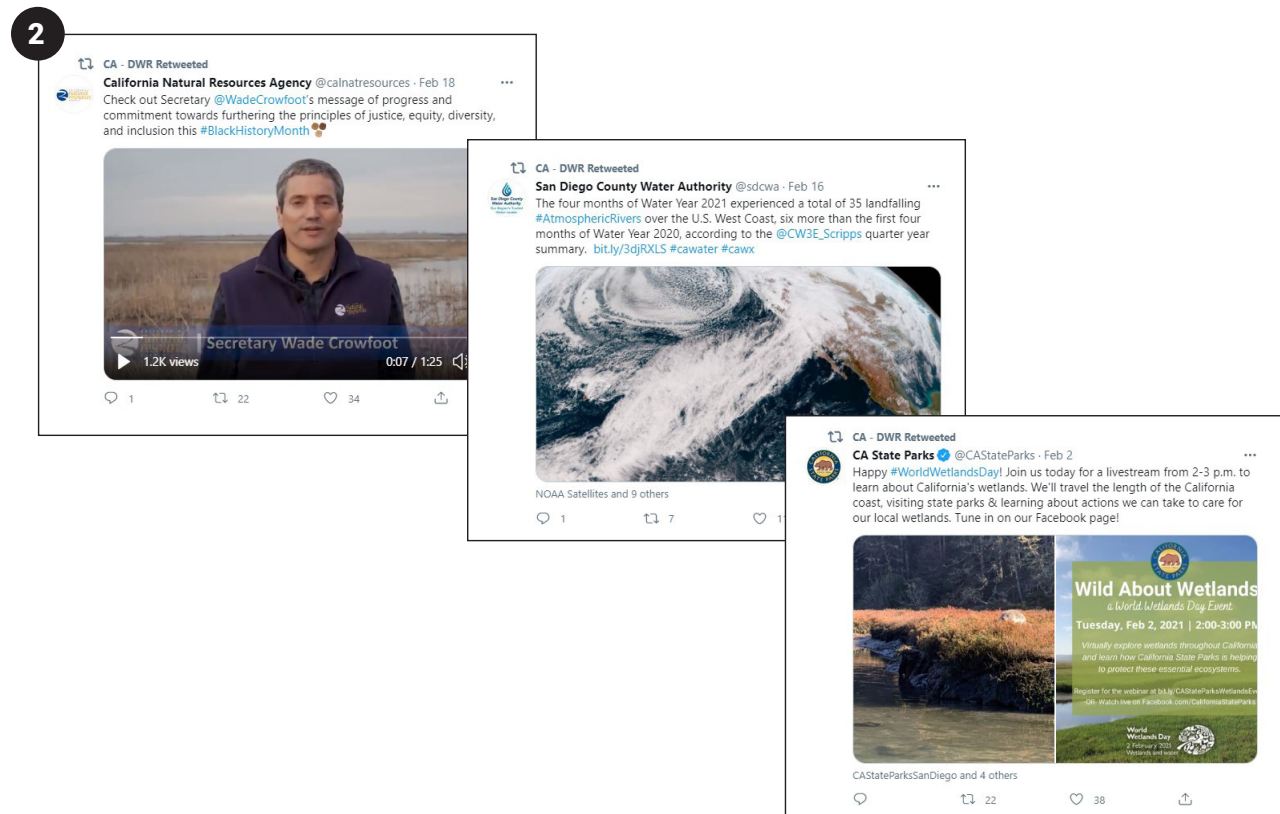
Write a comment...

Marc Perry
Will the temperature fluctuations be enough to spawn some funnel clouds?
Like · Reply · 4 w

1. A Facebook post offers original content and should have a visual element.

2. A Facebook shared post allows you to comment or provide additional details above the original content that is being shared.

Twitter Tweet and Retweets



1. A Twitter tweet provides original content and should have a visual element.

2. A Twitter retweet allows you to directly share or to comment on shared content.