

July 2020

**Department of Water Resources | California's Groundwater (Bulletin 118)
Frequently Asked Questions**

What is California's Groundwater?

California's Groundwater is an inventory and assessment of available information on the occurrence, nature, and state of California's groundwater, which can inform decisions affecting the protection, use, and management of this precious resource. The publication defines California's groundwater basin boundaries and provides the status of groundwater management; describes groundwater conditions, monitoring efforts, and patterns of groundwater extraction in those basins; assigns basin priority; and identifies basins subject to critical conditions of overdraft. A companion [California's Groundwater webpage](#) is maintained and is periodically updated with relevant information.

Why is California's Groundwater being updated?

The California Water Code (Section 12924) requires Department of Water Resource (DWR) to investigate the state's groundwater basins and report findings in years ending in "5 and 0."

The last comprehensive update to *California's Groundwater* was published in 2003. An interim update was published in 2016 and addressed a limited number of issues important for implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Much has changed in water management in California since the 2003 update, including a five-year drought which began in 2012, and the passage of SGMA in 2014.

What is included in California's Groundwater Update 2020?

California's Groundwater Update 2020 builds on the expanded content of DWR's *California's Groundwater Update 2013* Water Plan - 2013 Groundwater Report, which at the time was the most comprehensive report on the State's groundwater.

DWR is coordinating the development of the 2020 update with other federal, State and local agencies. This update will include comprehensive information on the occurrence and characteristics of groundwater in California including groundwater basin boundaries updated in 2018, hydrologic and geologic characteristics of the individual hydrologic regions, and general information on groundwater quality conditions. The 2020 update will also include new information on groundwater management.

The report is organized as follows:

- Introduction to California's Groundwater
- Groundwater in California
- California's Water Use
- California's Groundwater Management
- California's Groundwater Monitoring
- California's Groundwater Conditions
- Hydrologic Region Summaries

The update will include recommendations for solutions to knowledge and technology gaps, and recommendations for *California's Groundwater Update 2025*. The 2025 update will include comprehensive information expected to be received from the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) through their SGMA implementation activities.

How can you be involved in the 2020 update process?

There are many opportunities for involvement in the 2020 update.

Public Meetings

Public meetings or webinars will be held in fall 2020. Stay informed by [signing up](#) to receive emails from the Sustainable Groundwater Management Office.

California's Groundwater Webpage

[California's Groundwater webpage](#) contains information about the development of the 2020 update and on upcoming meetings, and other new information.

Public Survey

A public survey is available to submit preliminary feedback to DWR regarding use of past Bulletin 118 publications and needs for future use of *California's Groundwater*. [Take the survey](#).

What is the history of California's Groundwater (Bulletin 118)?

The publication history of statewide editions of *California's Groundwater* is presented below. You can view a more detailed timeline [here](#).

1952: State of California issued a report on the water quality of groundwater basins in the state. This was the first formal report to describe how the basins were defined, and to create a uniform name and numbering system for the basins in California. The publication was not an official *California's Groundwater* report (Bulletin 118), but subsequent reports utilized and expanded on this information.

1975: The first official *California's Groundwater* report summarized the technical information available for groundwater basins and identified use/misuse of basins with recommendations on how basins could be better managed in the future.

1980: This update identified the State's groundwater on the basis of geological and hydrological conditions with consideration of political boundary lines whenever practical. This report also contained existing general patterns of groundwater pumping and groundwater recharge to identify basins subject to critical conditions of overdraft.

2003: The most recent comprehensive update describes California's groundwater basins and sub-basins, including basin boundaries, hydrologic and hydrogeologic summaries, groundwater storage capacity and water budget, groundwater level and quality trends, well yields, basin management, and references.

2013: *California Water Plan Enhanced Groundwater Content, Standalone Report* was published. While not an official update, the report provided the most detailed statewide and regional groundwater information since 2003 and serves as the foundation for *California's Groundwater Update 2020* and future reports.

2016: An interim update was published and included critically overdrafted basin designations and basin boundary revisions, and information important to implementing the SGMA. Additionally, a new procedure for basin descriptions was developed as part of the basin boundary modification process. All basins with boundary modifications in 2016 have revised basin boundary descriptions that replace their 2003 descriptions.

What is happening with the Basin Reports?

Descriptions of each of the 515 groundwater basins in California were developed for the 2003 update. The descriptions included the definition of the legal basin boundary, the hydrologic setting of the basin, hydrogeologic information about the basin including lithology; storage; transmissivity, groundwater management efforts within the basins, and water quality conditions.

Due to the amount of information contained in the basin descriptions, they were made available for download on the B-118 webpage. Some of the information in the basin descriptions is outdated or no longer relevant. Therefore, DWR intends to update the individual basin descriptions with newer information and data, including information received from GSAs in their groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs), annual reports, and other submitted SGMA implementation data. These updated descriptions will be called "basin reports" to more accurately define the basin descriptions and conditions. Updating all 515 basin reports is expected to take eight to 10 years to complete. Basin information will be updated based on basin priority, starting with high-priority basins.

What is planned for the California's Groundwater webpage?

The former Bulletin 118 webpage has been renamed [California's Groundwater webpage](#) and will continue to serve multiple purposes. Links to historical Bulletin 118 documents and the current *California's Groundwater* update will be made available for download. Links to basin reports will also be maintained, as well as archived basin descriptions. If documents are not linked on the webpage, please email sgmps.water.ca.gov to request a copy.

The GIS dataset for basin boundaries will also continue to be available. Information and data will be made available through the webpage more frequently than the five-year report intervals. The webpage may serve as a "living" document to provide up-to-date information related to groundwater in California. To complement this concept, a California's Groundwater data viewer will be made available to interactively view spatial data sets associated with the update. Changes will be implemented as *California's Groundwater Update 2020* is published.