



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT OFFICE

901 P Street, Room 313-B | Sacramento, CA 95814 | P.O. Box 942836 | Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

November 13, 2019

Mr. Guadalupe Rivera
Sutter County
1130 Civic Center Blvd.
Yuba City, CA 95993

RE: Disapproval of the Sutter Subbasin Alternative

Dear Mr. Rivera:

The Department of Water Resources (Department) notified the County of Sutter (County) on July 17, 2019 that Department staff had not recommended approval of the Sutter Subbasin Alternative (Alternative). The July 17 letter described that the County could respond within 30 days to identify where information in the original Alternative submittal could be found to address specific deficiencies identified in the Department's Sustainable Groundwater Management Program Alternative Assessment Staff Report, Sutter Subbasin (Staff Report). The County requested, and was granted, an extension of time to respond and ultimately provided the Department with its response letter on September 26, 2019.

Department staff reviewed the information provided in the September letter and maintain the recommendation to not approve the Alternative, as outlined in the Staff Report Addendum included as an exhibit to the attached Statement of Findings. The Department concurs with the recommendation of staff and, therefore, has decided to not approve the Alternative.

The alternatives process represented a point-in-time opportunity for basins to submit either an existing plan that would achieve the objectives of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) or an analysis of basin conditions demonstrating operation within the sustainable yield for ten years. The County selected the latter option for their alternative submittal. The definition of sustainable yield in SGMA presents a high bar – effectively requiring that none of the six undesirable results identified in SGMA were present. Demonstrating that undesirable results were absent for a ten-year period required that basins had determined what those groundwater conditions representing undesirable results (or something functionally equivalent to undesirable results) are, and had been monitoring and managing the basin, as necessary, to ensure the undesirable results were not present or did not occur.

Relatively few basins in the state could successfully claim to have been operating in a functionally-equivalent manner to SGMA for the prior ten years, sufficient to demonstrate operation within the sustainable yield as defined in statute. At the same time, there are many basins in the state taking proactive steps to manage groundwater

and surface water. Some of those basins submitted alternatives that were not successful. That outcome is not a penalty or an indictment of water management in those basins. Rather, it is a finding that those basins did not meet the specific requirements for an alternative and that they must move forward with SGMA compliance in the manner outlined in statute for the medium- and high-priority basins in California.

It is clear that the County and groundwater users within the County have taken steps to manage groundwater and pursue conjunctive use opportunities in the Sutter Subbasin. The County appears to be well positioned for successful and efficient implementation of SGMA.

The Department stands ready to provide assistance to the County in development of a GSP. Information on the Department's technical, planning and financial assistance may be found on our website at <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/SGMA-Groundwater-Management>. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my staff if you have any questions about the Department's SGMA-related assistance.

Signed:

Date:



November 13, 2019

Taryn Ravazzini
Deputy Director, Statewide Groundwater Management

Attachment:

1. Statement of Findings Regarding the Disapproval of the Sutter Subbasin Alternative