

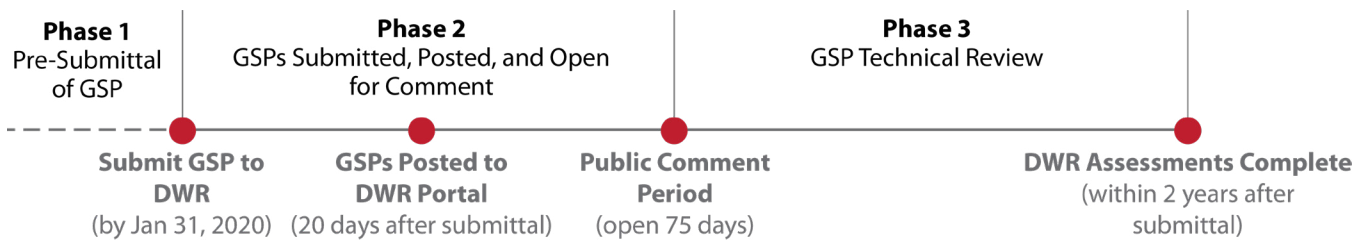


## Overview of Submittal and Evaluation of Groundwater Sustainability Plans in Critically Overdrafted Basins

Groundwater is a critical component of California’s water supply, accounting for nearly 40 percent in a normal year and up to 60 percent during dry times. After years of over pumping, many of California’s groundwater basins are out of balance. In 2014, the state of California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) into law. For the first time ever, California was given a framework for sustainable groundwater management.

SGMA requires locally led Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to bring their basins back into balance. GSPs for basins identified as critically overdrafted are due January 31, 2020. Groundwater users, local governments, the state government, and many other organizations are committed to the success of GSAs in achieving the goal of groundwater sustainability. How GSAs achieve that goal will differ from basin to basin. One of the state government’s roles is to support these local solutions.

### GSP Submittal and Evaluation Timeline



#### Phase 1 – Pre-Submittal of GSP *(GSPs due on or before January 31, 2020)*

- GSAs have flexibility as to how they reach sustainability, as each basin and the path to sustainability is different.
- DWR provides planning, technical and financial assistance to GSAs including a basin point of contact, \$250 million in grant funding for planning and implementation, as well as technical information and data.
- Prior to submission, GSAs share GSPs with cities, counties and stakeholders for their input.

### **Phase 2 – GSPs are Submitted, Posted, and Open to Public Comment**

*(DWR will post GSPs to its website within 20 days of submittal)*

- Once a plan is posted to the DWR web portal, it will be open to public comment for 75 days.
- Public comments will be compiled and considered in DWR’s assessment of the plans.
- GSAs will begin implementing their plans immediately, before DWR’s review is complete.
- If a plan is not submitted on or before January 31, 2020, the State Water Board will consider the appropriate next steps for intervention.

### **Phase 3 – GSP Technical Review**

*(DWR will have two years from date of submission to evaluate and assess the plans)*

- DWR’s technical review will be based on evaluation criteria in the GSP regulations, including whether the plan uses the best available data and science to support the plan.
- DWR will continue to provide assistance and guidance to GSAs throughout plan implementation.
- GSPs will be designated as approved, incomplete or inadequate.
  - *GSAs with approved plans will continue to implement their plan. GSAs will provide annual reports and five-year updates to DWR.*
  - *GSAs with incomplete plans are given up to 180 days to revise and resubmit to DWR.*
  - *Plans designated as inadequate will be referred to the State Water Board to consider intervention.*

### **Role of Department of Water Resources**

SGMA directs DWR to evaluate and assess all GSPs to determine whether the plans are adequate, based on best available science and information, and whether implementation of the plans is reasonably likely to achieve the basin’s sustainability goal. In 2016, DWR developed regulations describing the processes and requirements for GSAs to develop GSPs, as well as how the state will review and assess those plans.

DWR will continue its extensive planning, technical, and financial assistance through GSP development and into plan implementation, supporting GSAs and local communities in their effort to sustainably manage their groundwater basins.

## ***Role of State Water Board***

If GSAs do not sustainably manage groundwater use in their basin, the State Water Board can step in to manage the basin. Lack of a GSP, lack of coordination between GSPs, inadequate GSPs, or inadequate implementation of GSPs can trigger the state intervention process. The goal of state intervention is to protect groundwater resources in the basin until effective local management is in place.

The State Water Board may designate a basin probationary after a 90-day public noticing period and a public hearing. If the probationary designation is due to an inadequate GSP or inadequate implementation of a GSP, the State Water Board will identify the deficiencies that led to intervention and potential actions to remedy the deficiencies. During probation, pumpers in the basin will be required to measure and report groundwater extractions and pay associated fees. The State Water Board may also require groundwater extractors to install meters and conduct investigations and gather other data necessary for sustainable groundwater management. If the issues identified in the probationary determination are not fixed, the State Water Board may develop and implement an interim plan to manage groundwater use in the basin. The State Water Board will adopt the interim plan through a hearing process, similar to the probationary determination. An interim plan is intended to be a temporary measure to protect groundwater resources in the basin until local control is viable.

SGMA allows local agencies to fix deficiencies in their GSP, end state intervention, and return to local implementation of SGMA. The State Water Board will work with GSAs and other interested parties in probationary basins to improve the basin's GSP and return the basin to local control.

## ***SGMA Implementation and Statewide Coordination***

California needs its water resources to be managed sustainably and SGMA is a critical component to bringing groundwater into that fold. The state understands the impacts of SGMA may be broad, but the impacts of a business-as-usual approach to groundwater management may be devastating. DWR and the State Water Board are part of a statewide effort to identify and address the impacts SGMA may have to other statewide programs, local economies, disadvantaged communities and more. SGMA will work in tandem with other existing policies and regulatory frameworks to help the state reach our ultimate goal of managing and maintaining a reliable water supply for future generations.

