

# Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation in the Kings Basin

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) is comprehensive legislation that governs the management and use of groundwater in the state. SGMA's intent is to provide for sustainable management of groundwater basins and to locally manage groundwater basins while minimizing state intervention to only when necessary. The preservation of local management of the region's groundwater is a fundamental principle for implementing SGMA in the Kings Basin. SGMA defines sustainable groundwater

management as the management and use of groundwater in a manner that does not cause undesirable results including:

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels
- Reductions in groundwater storage
- Seawater intrusion
- Degraded water quality
- Land subsidence
- Surface water depletions that have adverse impacts on beneficial uses

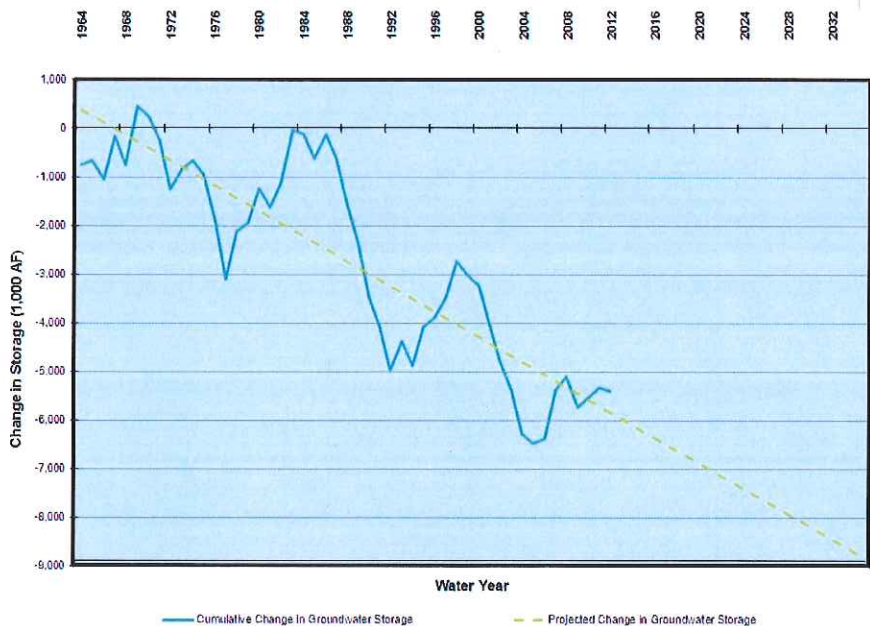
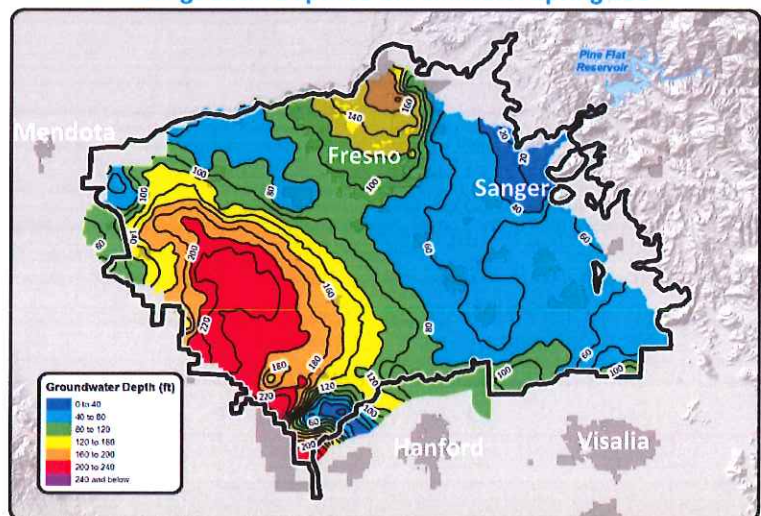
## Kings Basin Groundwater Conditions

There are 515 groundwater basins and subbasins in California. These basins contribute close to 40 percent of the California's annual water supply in an average year and as much as 45 percent in dry years. During extensive dry or drought years, groundwater can provide close to 60 percent of the water supply. Of California's 515 groundwater basins and subbasins, 127 have been designated by the state as High and Medium priority meaning they are not in a sustainable condition. The Kings Basin is one of those 127 basins.

Many surveys and studies show that groundwater supplies are declining within the Kings Basin. This condition, considered generally as overdraft, is created when more water is pumped out of the ground than is replenished by rainfall, runoff or recharge.

The Department of Water Resources estimates that total Kings Basin groundwater in storage is about 93 million acre-feet to a depth of more than 1,000 feet. Over the past 50 years, the basin has experienced roughly 6 million acre-feet of groundwater storage reduction. Today, experts predict a decline in groundwater storage at a rate of 140,000 to 150,000 acre feet annually. (An acre foot equals 325,900 gallons, or enough water to cover a football field to a depth of one foot.)

Kings Basin Depth to Groundwater Spring 2014

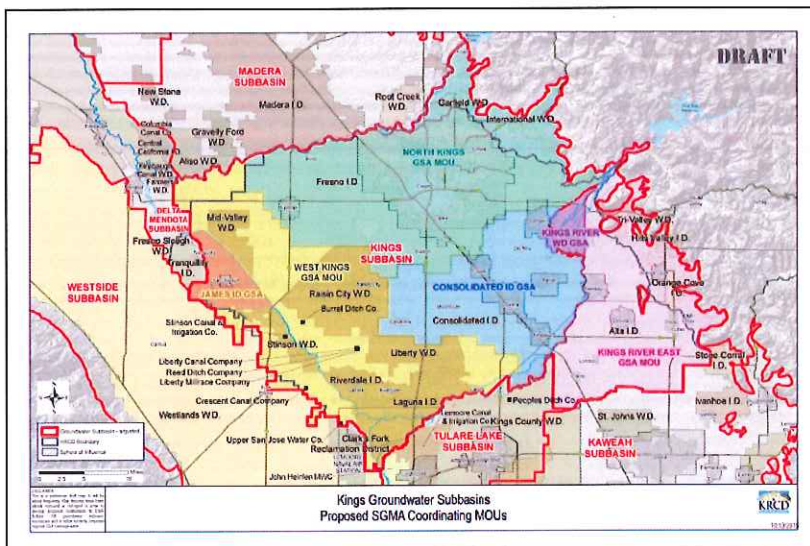


Groundwater storage in the Kings Basin has decreased over time.



*Steps for Implementation of SGMA*  
 SGMA lays out a process and procedures on how sustainability will be achieved. For those agencies that will be responsible for its implementation, the requirements and objectives of SGMA are significant and will take years to accomplish.

The first step for local agencies is the formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency or Agencies (GSA). Formation of a GSA will likely take up to two years. GSAs are given both the mandate and broad array of tools to regulate groundwater in their basin. Those tools will include the ability to limit extractions and to impose fees related to groundwater use. Some of the eligible agencies in the basin include irrigation districts, cities, counties, and community service and public utility districts.



The second step in SGMA implementation is the development of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by the basin’s GSA(s). Developing a GSP will be a significant and costly undertaking that will likely take two to three years. The GSP must include measurable objectives, as well as interim milestones to achieve the sustainability goal for the basin. The GSP will physically describe the basin including groundwater levels, quality, subsidence; include a water budget; have a planning and implementation horizon; include monitoring and management of the basin; and mitigation of overdraft. It is important to note that GSPs will not establish or determine groundwater rights. The final step for SGMA is the implementation of the GSP to achieve basin sustainability over a 20-year timeframe.

While all of these efforts will be conducted locally, the State Water Resources Control Board may intervene if the local agencies do not form a GSA before the deadline and/or fail to adopt or implement a GSP.

*SGMA Implementation Timeline*

Deadline	Action
6/30/2017	Formation of Kings Basin GSAs
1/31/2020	Completion and adoption of GSPs in Kings Basin
1/31/2040	Kings Basin achieves sustainability

*Current Implementation Activities in the Kings Basin*

Much work and planning is required over the next several years to meet the requirements of SGMA within the deadlines set out in the law. Many Kings Basin agencies have begun to meet and discuss how SGMA implementation will be accomplished. Some of the first discussions and tasks include:

- Reaching out to local public agencies and stakeholders
- Identifying possible adjustments to the Kings Basin boundaries
- Considering different governance options for GSA formation

It is important that the many diverse stakeholders participate in the process to achieve the best possible outcome for the region. For more information on how you can become involved, contact Cristel Tufenkjian, Kings River Conservation District Manager of Community & Public Relations at ctufenkjian@krkd.org or at 237.5567, ext. 118.