

## Fact Sheet

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 is a comprehensive three-bill package that provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local authorities, with a limited role for state intervention only if necessary to protect the resource.

The act requires the formation of local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) that must assess conditions in their local water basins and adopt locally-based management plans. The act provides substantial time – 20 years – for GSAs to implement plans and achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. It protects existing surface water and groundwater rights and does not impact current drought response measures.

ACWA supported the legislation, which was substantially consistent with recommendations developed by the association’s Groundwater Sustainability Task Force and adopted by the ACWA Board of Directors. ACWA’s recommendations, together with recommendations from the California Water Foundation and input from other stakeholders, helped shape many provisions to protect local control and empower local agencies to achieve the sustainability goal.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 is considered just one part of a statewide, comprehensive water plan for California that includes investments in water conservation, water recycling, expanded water storage, safe drinking water, wetlands and watershed restoration. The plan is intended to ensure a reliable water supply for California for years to come.

### **GSAs and Local Sustainability Plans**

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act provides local GSAs with tools and authority to:

- Require registration of groundwater wells
- Measure and manage extractions
- Require reports and assess fees
- Request revisions of basin boundaries, including establishing new subbasins

GSAs responsible for high- and medium-priority basins must adopt groundwater sustainability plans within five to seven years, depending on whether the basin is in critical overdraft. Agencies may adopt a single plan covering an entire basin or combine a number of plans created by multiple agencies. Preparation of groundwater sustainability plans is exempt from CEQA.

Plans must include a physical description of the basin, including groundwater levels, groundwater quality, subsidence, information on groundwater-surface water interaction, data on historical and

projected water demands and supplies, monitoring and management provisions, and a description of how the plan will affect other plans, including city and county general plans.

Plans will be evaluated every five years.

## **State Involvement and Technical Assistance**

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has several tasks under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. It must:

- Designate basins as high, medium, low or very low priority by Jan. 31, 2015
- Adopt regulations for basin boundary adjustments by Jan. 1, 2016
- Adopt regulations for evaluating adequacy of GSPs and GSA coordination agreements by June 1, 2016
- Publish a report estimating water available for groundwater replenishment by Dec. 31, 2016
- Publish groundwater sustainability best management practices by Jan. 1, 2017

## **State Review and Intervention**

The State Water Resources Control Board may intervene if a GSA is not formed or it fails to adopt or implement compliant plans by certain dates.

DWR is tasked with reviewing GSPs for adequacy after they are adopted at the local level. If DWR determines in its review that a GSP is not adequate, the State Board may designate the basin as “probationary.” If the local agency does not respond within 180 days, the State Board is authorized to create an interim plan that will remain in place until a local GSA is able to reassume responsibility with a compliant plan.

## **Financial Assistance**

If approved by voters, Proposition 1 would provide \$100 million in funding to GSAs to develop and implement sustainable groundwater management plans.

## **Key Implementation Dates**

- **June 30, 2017:** Local groundwater sustainability agencies formed.
- **Jan. 31, 2020:** Groundwater sustainability plans adopted for critically overdrafted basins.
- **Jan. 31, 2022:** Groundwater sustainability plans adopted for high- and medium-priority basins not currently in overdraft.
- **20 years after adoption:** All high- and medium-priority groundwater basins must achieve sustainability.