2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Colusa County Groundwater Commission Meeting
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Dan McManus
dan.mcmanus@water.ca.gov
(530) 529-7373
2014 Sustainable GW Management Legislation

Requires that a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) be adopted for the most important groundwater basins in California

- Limited to “high & medium priority basins”
  127 out of 515 basins in the state

- Adjudicated basins are exempt, except for minimal reporting

- “Low & very low priority” basins are exempt, though they are encouraged to adopt plans.

Basin Priority will be updated in January 2015 to include impacts to habitat and stream flow
Establishes a timetable for adoption of GSPs

- By 2017, local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSA) must be identified.
- By 2020, overdrafted basins must be covered by a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP). Other high & medium priority basins not in overdraft must have plans by 2022.
- By 2040, each high & medium priority basin must achieve sustainability, though this can be extended by 10 years for good cause.
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- Empowers local agencies to manage their basins sustainably
  - Gives local agencies new authority to:
    - Adopt and enforce rules,
    - Require registration of groundwater wells,
    - Measure and manage groundwater extraction,
    - Require reporting of use and assessment of fees
    - Request revisions of groundwater basin boundaries.

- “Local agency” means any local public agency that has water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities within a groundwater basin.
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Establishes Basic Requirements for GSPs:
- Description of physical setting
- Identification of groundwater conditions: (levels, quality, subsidence, groundwater – surface water interaction)
- Historic and projected water demands and supplies
- Maps: basin and agency boundaries, recharge areas.
- Measurable Objectives with Interim Milestones (every 5 yrs) to achieve sustainability in 20 yrs.
- Description of how GSP is given consideration in General Plans
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- Establishes a definition of “sustainable groundwater management”
  “The management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.”

- Establishes a definition of “Undesirable Results”
  - Chronic lowering of gw levels indicating a significant and unreasonable depletion of supply if continued over the planning and implementation horizon.
  - Significant and unreasonable reduction in groundwater storage
  - Significant and unreasonable degradation of water quality
  - Significant and unreasonable land subsidence that significantly interferes with surface land uses
  - Surface water depletions that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of surface water
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- Provides for a limited state role
  - DWR will evaluate groundwater sustainability plans within two years of submission.
  - State Water Board may temporarily intervene in four limited circumstance.
    - No governance structure for a basin after 2 ½ years
    - No plan after five years (overdrafted basins) or ten years (other basins)
    - Plan is inadequate and the basin has serious groundwater problems
    - Local agency has not adequately implemented the plan and the basin has serious groundwater problems

- State Board must return control to local agencies as soon as they adopt an adequate plan.

- State Board may limit its temporary control to the portion of the basin not being managed.
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Summary:

- Establishes new state policy for sustainable management of groundwater resources
- Requires sustainable groundwater management for High & Medium priority basins
- Establishes basic requirements for Groundwater Sustainability Plans
- Empowers local agencies to manage their basins sustainably
- Does not alter or determine any surface water rights
- Does not alter the State Water Resources existing authority under current law
- Provides for temporary State intervention in limited circumstances
Questions?

DWR Groundwater Information Center:
http://water.ca.gov/groundwater/index.cfm

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