The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Key elements of the law, early implementation steps and expected benefits for Colusa County
Presentation Outline

I. SGMA Background
II. Preparing to Advance SGMA Locally
III. Recent SGMA Activities
IV. Early Implementation in Colusa County
V. Next Steps
Comprehensive statewide legislation that creates a framework for sustainable groundwater management

- Became law on January 1, 2015
- All medium and high priority basins managed sustainably
- Emphasis on local control with State oversight
- Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
- Groundwater Sustainability Plans
SGMA Background

*SGMA affects all citizens of Colusa County*

- Offers beneficial opportunities to achieve sustainable groundwater conditions
- Supports agriculture, industry and domestic/public uses
- Requires residents to work together and address our common interest in groundwater resources
- The County supports a collaborative approach to implement SGMA
SGMA Background

How does SGMA define sustainability?

Sustainability: Manage groundwater to prevent undesirable results (significant and unreasonable):

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels
- Reduction of groundwater storage
- Seawater intrusion
- Degraded water quality
- Land subsidence
- Depletions of interconnected surface waters
Formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs)

- SGMA requires formation of GSAs to implement SGMA at the local level.

- Public agencies with land or water use authority are eligible to become GSAs:
  - Counties, cities, water agencies, irrigation districts, PUDs
  - GSA may include one or more local public agencies.

- May include a single GSA or multiple GSAs per basin:
  - Multiple GSAs must coordinate planning efforts.
SGMA Background

GSA Roles and Responsibilities
At their discretion, GSAs may…

• Adopt rules, regulations and ordinances
• Conduct groundwater studies / investigations
• Register and monitor wells
• Require reports of groundwater extraction
• Implement capital projects to meet goals
• Assess fees to cover management costs
SGMA Background

GSA Roles and Responsibilities

*Interested parties must be included in SGMA planning:*

- All Groundwater Users
- Holders of Overlying Rights (agriculture and domestic)
- Municipal Well Operators and Public Water Systems
- Tribes
- County
- Planning Departments / Land Use
- Local Landowners
- Disadvantaged Communities
- Business
- Federal Government
- Environmental Uses
- Surface Water Users (*if connection between surface and ground water*)
SGMA Background

How are domestic well owners affected by SGMA?

• Referred to in SGMA as “de minimis” users IF…
  – Use 2 acre-feet per year or less for domestic purposes

• De minimis users are subject to SGMA, depending on local needs
  – GSAs will decide how de minimis users are addressed
  – GSAs can decide to exclude or include
  – GSAs can decide on fees but cannot require metering
  – May be subject to reporting / fees to State if intervention occurs

• Domestic wells can also be regulated by authorities (counties, water districts, etc.) outside scope of SGMA
SGMA Background

“White Areas”

- County is presumed to be the GSA over areas that are not covered by another GSA-eligible agency

- If the County opts out, the State will manage those areas
SGMA Background

Development of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs)

- GSAs are responsible to develop GSPs

- Every high and medium priority groundwater basin must be covered by a GSP or GSPs

- Option of a single GSP covering the entire basin, or a combination of GSPs, developed by multiple GSAs, covering the entire basin

- Multiple GSPs must coordinate, utilize the same data / methodologies, and have a coordination agreement
SGMA Background

Key Implementation Milestones

• January 1, 2016 – Boundary redesignation and SB 13
• June 1, 2016 – GSP regulations due from DWR
• June 30, 2017 – GSAs must be formed
• July 1, 2017 – Counties affirm GSA status
• January 31, 2020 – GSPs complete for critically over-drafted basins
• January 31, 2022 – All other GSPs complete
SGMA Background

DWR and State Water Board Roles

- DWR:
  - Develop Basin Boundary and GSP regulations
  - Review GSPs, decide on adequacy, implementation

- State Water Board:
  - Implement State intervention
  - Reporting
  - Assess fees
  - Designate Probationary Basins
  - Develop Interim Plans, implement those Plans
SGMA Background

State Water Board Intervention
In all triggering events, intervention is the result of failure by locals to create a GSA(s) and/or adopt and implement a GSP.

• Data
  • Same data needed by a GSA, but now managed by State
  • Higher frequency (monthly minimum reporting)

• Fees
  • Fees associated with reporting
  • Board recovers cost for all intervention-related activities (monitoring plans, well construction, facilitation, technical studies, models)

• Interim plans
  • Pumping restrictions are most straight-forward
  • State developed physical solutions are unlikely
Initial comments and/or questions
What has the County done to advance SGMA locally?

- Dedicated staff resources
- Fostered early communication with GSA filers, many of whom are here tonight to join the conversation
- Maintained communication with surrounding counties
- Received grant for impartial facilitation services from the Center for Collaborative Policy
- Initiated a local county-wide groundwater assessment
- Pursued DWR grant to support local planning efforts through a groundwater monitoring and data management program
- Committed to sharing resources with local partners
Recent SGMA Activities

GSA Notifications in Colusa County

- Provident Irrigation District and Princeton-Codora-Glenn Irrigation District
- Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
- Colusa County Water District
- Reclamation District 1004
- Reclamation District 108
- County of Colusa
Recent SGMA Activities

SB 13 Amendment – Interpreted by DWR as retroactive

- Removed the Notice of Intent to be a GSA
- Allows a mutual water company to be part of a GSA through a legal agreement
- Prohibits overlap of service area boundaries
- Prohibits local agencies from imposing fees or reg. requirements on entities outside their boundaries
- Requires DWR to post all “complete” notices within 15 days of receipt
Recent SGMA Activities

**Basin Boundary Modifications**

- Existing groundwater basins or subbasins defined in DWR’s Bulletin 118
- Local agencies may request boundary modifications
- May include scientific or jurisdictional modifications
- Starting January 1, 2016: 90 day window for local agencies to submit requests for DWR consideration
Recent SGMA Activities

Groundwater Sustainability Plan Regulations

- By June 1, 2016 DWR shall adopt regulations for:
  - Evaluating GSPs
  - Implementing GSPs
  - Coordination agreements

- The regulations shall identify:
  - Required GSP components and additional elements
  - Coordination of multiple GSPs in a basin
  - Additional information that assists GSAs
Proposed Process In Colusa County

The County received Department of Water Resources grant funding for facilitation services from the Center For Collaborative Policy (CCP).

- Background preparation
- Outreach and education
- GSA Governance development
Proposed Process in Colusa County

Background Preparation

- Review background materials
- Conduct initial interviews with eligible GSA agencies
- Prepare 90-Day Plan
- Prepare initial facilitation strategy
Proposed Process in Colusa County

Outreach and Education

- Prepare education and outreach materials
- Coordinate and facilitate local outreach and education meetings for agencies and private well owners
- Facilitate collaboration so all interested parties can participate and work together towards sustainability
Proposed Process in Colusa County

GSA Governance

- Coordinate and facilitate public meetings about governance
- Coordinate and facilitate meetings of several GSA eligible agencies
- Conduct meetings with individual GSA eligible agencies
- Support representation of domestic well owner interests
Panel Discussion with Eligible GSAs
Summary of Steps Towards Sustainability

Step 1
• Local agencies form GSAs by June, 2017

Step 2
• Local agencies in medium and high priority basins adopt GSPs by January, 2022 (faster if in critical overdraft)

Step 3
• Local agencies have 20 years to demonstrate they are meeting measurable goals and achieving sustainability
Key Considerations as We Move Forward

The County believes a partnered approach is best

- We all have a vested interest in our groundwater
- GSA formation, GSP preparation, and long-term implementation will create costs for many users
- Pooling resources will improve efficiencies and capitalize skills and strengths of various partners
Panel Questions / Topics

• Your vision of SGMA implementation to your District members and all groundwater users in the County?

• Steps you’ve taken so far to form a GSA and to implement SGMA?

• What you want to be sure your District achieves and avoids as you, the other organizations, and the County form GSAs?

• Thoughts you have about impacts to private well owners?
**Next Steps**

*So where do we go from here?*

- Convene Governance Workgroup
- Hold additional public meetings
- Continued coordination with adjacent subbasins
Discussion

Your comments, questions and input