



Board Agenda Item 45

DATE: March 11, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Steven E. White, Director
Department of Public Works and Planning

SUBJECT: Fresno County Management Area A and Management Area B Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Pumping Reduction Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Approve and adopt the Fresno County Management Area A and Management Area B Groundwater Sustainability Agency's (GSA) Pumping Reduction Plan.

Approval of the recommended action will adopt the Delta-Mendota (DM) Groundwater Subbasin Pumping Reduction Plan for the Fresno County Management Area A and Management Area B (FCMA) GSA, which includes well metering, monitoring, and reporting guidelines as outlined in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), as required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This item pertains to locations in District 1.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Your Board may determine not to approve the recommended action; however, it would delay the adoption of the Pumping Reduction Plan (PRP) required by SGMA and Section 16.1.1 of the GSP to achieve sustainability.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no increase in Net County Cost associated with the recommended action. The County's costs to develop the PRP are included in Agreement 24-133 between the County and Luhdorff and Scalmanini Consulting Engineers (LSCE). Sufficient appropriations and estimated revenues are included in the County Administrative Office's FY 2024-2025 Adopted Budget Org 2540 (Interest and Miscellaneous Expenditures) to cover the tasks expected to be completed.

DISCUSSION:

SGMA was signed into law September 16, 2014, and codified at Water Code sections 10720 to 10737.8, which established a new structure for managing California's groundwater resources at a local level by local agencies. SGMA allowed the formation of locally controlled Groundwater Sustainability Agencies in Department of Water Resources (DWR) higher priority groundwater basins. Each GSA was then required to develop a GSP by January 31, 2020. Failure to implement a GSP and meet its sustainability goal could have resulted in the State Water Resources Control Board

(State) asserting its authority to manage local groundwater resources.

The County of Fresno serves as the GSA for two areas designated as Management Areas A and B in the Delta-Mendota Groundwater Subbasin (Subbasin), approved by the Board on May 2, 2017, to provide sustainable groundwater management and to serve as the exclusive GSA in those portions of the Subbasin (Exhibit A). The Subbasin includes a total of 23 GSAs.

Initially, six GSPs were developed and submitted for approval by the required date of January 31, 2020, but after an approximately two-year review, DWR determined that the coordinated groundwater sustainability plans in the Subbasin were “incomplete” on January 21, 2022, and required that the GSPs be revised to address certain actions by July 20, 2022. The amended GSPs were re-submitted in a timely manner, however, the revised GSPs were deemed “inadequate” under SGMA by DWR on March 2, 2023. Because of DWR’s “inadequate” determination of the GSP, it was understood that SGMA can authorize the State to seek to intervene and exercise jurisdiction over the affected Subbasin.

In lieu of the possible intervention by the State, the GSAs agreed to abandon the attempt at multiple GSPs to cover the Subbasin and adopt a single GSP to avoid being placed in a probationary status by the State Water Resources Control Board at a hearing later this year. The efforts to address the deficiencies and develop a single GSP is being led by EKI Environment and Water, Inc. (EKI), a consultant hired by the San Luis and Delta Mendota Water Authority who manages the Subbasin for the various GSAs. LSCE has provided technical support to EKI in an effort to address the identified deficiencies and continue with GSP implementation on behalf of the FCMA GSA and will also provide support to create and implement the requirements of the PRP on behalf of the FCMA GSA. LSCE has already developed an understanding of the geology and hydrogeology (conceptual model) of Management Areas A and B, as well as surrounding areas that have been utilized in the single GSP efforts on behalf of the County that was approved by your Board on September 10, 2024.

The Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs will continue to utilize LSCE to provide technical support for the implementation of the PRP, applicable to all production wells and required pursuant to Section 16.1.1 of the GSP. Section 16.1.1 requires the PRP to include the following six required components:

1. Monitoring and Data Collection Plan
2. Overdraft Mitigation Plan
3. Groundwater Level Minimum Threshold Avoidance Plan
4. Water Quality Minimum Threshold Exceedance Plan
5. Subsidence Avoidance Plan
6. Groundwater Allocation Backstop

As part of the PRP, each GSA was required to commit to adopting a Monitoring and Data Collection Plan that includes policies for mandatory well registration, metering, groundwater pumping measurement and reporting at all non de minimis wells by October 2024. Implementation of the Monitoring and Data Collection Plan began in January 2025, and complete implementation of meters, registration, monitoring and reporting requirements must begin no later than January 1, 2026, to maintain compliance with the requirements of the PRP as required by SGMA.

Applicable PRP components, specific triggers and procedures are defined. These include an entry trigger to activate the PRP, a zone of impact to determine where the PRP will be applied, a cutback

approach to provide quantitative estimates of pumping reductions, an exit trigger to conclude the cutback once objectives are met, and enforcement measures to ensure successful implementation. Additional monitoring and reporting requirements are outlined in each component, aligning with the Monitoring and Data Collection Plan.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI #6 September 10, 2024
BAI #14 July 12, 2022
BAI #5 January 7, 2020
BAI #13 May 2, 2017

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

Exhibit A
On file with Clerk - Pumping Reduction Plan

CAO ANALYST:

Salvador Espino