



# Board Agenda Item 7

DATE: May 14, 2019

TO: Board of Supervisors

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

SUBJECT: Presentation Regarding Implementation of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act within Fresno County

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

**Receive presentation by the Department of Public Works and Planning regarding the status of implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act within Fresno County.**

The presentation will provide a status update regarding implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) within the four subbasins that underlie Fresno County. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

There is no alternative action as this is a presentation requiring no action from your Board.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended action.

DISCUSSION:

SGMA, signed into law in September of 2014, established for the first time in California history, a framework for managing California's groundwater resources at the local level by local agencies. SGMA allows local public agencies to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the State's higher priority and critically over drafted groundwater basins. Local public agencies that qualify to form GSAs are defined by SGMA as those agencies with water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities within the groundwater basin. Per SGMA land that is located within a groundwater basin subject to SGMA that is outside of the service area of a local public agency is considered "unmanaged areas" whereby which the County is presumed to be the GSA. The County may undertake that management by service as a separate GSA, or by joining with other agencies to form a GSA. Each GSA is required to develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to meet the sustainability goal of the basin to ensure operation within its sustainable yield, without causing undesirable results identified by SGMA, by 2040. Each subbasin must be completely covered by either a single GSP, or a collection of GSPs tied together by a formal coordination agreement. Failure to either form a GSA, prepare a GSP, or implement a GSP could result in the California Water Resources Control Board asserting its power to manage local groundwater resources.

On January 27, 2015, your Board participated in a joint meeting with Madera County and considered a presentation from each County's staff regarding SGMA. Staff for each County were directed to return to

their respective Boards with further information relating to groundwater management items of common interest.

On March 10, 2015, the Board received recommendations relating to the implementation of SGMA. By consensus, the Board endorsed guiding principles (maintenance of local control, preservation of existing surface and groundwater rights, preservation of existing water management practices, maintenance of the economic vitality of Fresno County, decision making based on good science, public outreach, and commitment to collaboration) intended to guide future governance agreements during the formation of GSAs. Also approved was the formation of the Fresno County SGMA Working Group, a collection of representatives from local counties, cities, water and irrigation districts, as well as other agencies who the Board thought would provide insight and status as to the administration of SGMA. The primary purpose of the Working Group was to advise the Board regarding items relating to SGMA, conduct research pertaining to implementation of SGMA by other local agencies, develop recommendations for GSA governance structure, monitor legislation, conduct meetings, and monitor potential funding opportunities. The Board appointed Supervisors Mendes and Pacheco as co-chairs of the Working Group. In addition to the appointment to the Working Group, Supervisors Mendes and Pacheco were appointed to represent the Board through the GSA formation and GSP development and implementation process representing the County for the various GSAs within which the County has membership.

To date, the County (Supervisor Mendes, Pacheco, and Department staff) have participated in the coordination and formation of local GSAs, efforts to develop multiple GSPs, and public outreach. Through this process, the County has participated in a multitude of meetings, workshops, and outreach activities with participating local agencies and the public to reach the concerted goal of sustainable groundwater management.

Fresno County currently overlies all or portions of four groundwater Subbasins, see Exhibit A. DWR Bulletin 118 identified three of the subbasins as high priority and one as medium priority. The three high priority subbasins are Kings, Westside, and Delta-Mendota. The remaining subbasin, identified as medium priority, is Pleasant Valley. As a result of ongoing collaborative efforts, the County has undertaken multiple roles participating in each of the four groundwater subbasins, with the County serving as either the exclusive GSA, a member agency of a GSA through participation in a Joint Powers Authority, Memorandum of Agreement, or Special Act District (JPA, MOA, SAD), or a party to a GSA via a Memorandum of Understanding.

### **Kings Groundwater Subbasin**

The Kings Groundwater Subbasin consists of approximately 981,000 acres and is located in the central part of the San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin and includes portions of Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties. The portion of the Kings Subbasin that is located within Fresno County is approximately 831,000 acres. The Subbasin is covered by seven GSAs: Central Kings (MOU), James Irrigation District (MOU), Kings River East (SAD), McMullin Area (JPA), North Kings (JPA), North Fork Kings (SAD) and South Central. The County serves as a member agency in the following four GSAs: Kings River East, McMullin Area, North Kings, and North Fork Kings, and has MOUs with Central Kings GSA and James Irrigation District GSA. The seven GSA's are developing individual GSPs and are at varying stages of completeness of their drafts. The deadline for completion and submittal of a coordinated GSP to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is January 31, 2020. The following is a list of key issues as well as some of the next steps that need to be taken to reach our sustainability goal within the Subbasin:

- Halt the overdraft and chronic lowering of groundwater levels;
- Planning and construction of necessary infrastructure for water storage, distribution and recharge;
- Identification and acquisition of additional surface water supplies;
- Expansion of groundwater monitoring networks to fill data gaps; and,
- Completion of required coordination agreement between the GSAs.

**Westside Groundwater Subbasin**

The Westside Groundwater Subbasin consists of approximately 622,000 acres and is located on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley and includes portions of Fresno and Kings Counties. The portion of the Subbasin within Fresno County is approximately 540,000 acres and consists primarily of the land in the Westlands Water District. The County serves as the exclusive GSA for the City of Huron and the unmanaged areas located outside of the Westlands Water District GSA (approximately 10,183 acres). Together, the Fresno County-Westside Subbasin GSA and the Westlands Water District GSA are working cooperatively on the preparation of a single GSP. Below is the key issue within the Subbasin:

- Halt overdraft and chronic lowering of groundwater levels; and,
- Address subsidence within the Subbasin.

**Delta-Mendota Subbasin**

The Delta-Mendota Groundwater Subbasin consists of approximately 747,000 acres and is located in the San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin lying along the western border of the San Joaquin Valley and includes portions of Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Stanislaus Counties. The portion of the Delta-Mendota Subbasin within Fresno County is approximately 215,680 acres and is located within northwestern Fresno County.

Twenty-three GSAs have formed within the Delta-Mendota Subbasin, two of which Fresno County serves as the exclusive GSA, known as Fresno County Management Area A and B. The combined acreage of Management Areas A and B is approximately 24,000 acres. The third GSA within which the County participates is the Central Delta-Mendota Region Multi-Agency GSA. Fresno County unmanaged areas comprise approximately 47,000 acres. There are six GSPs being prepared for the Subbasin, one of which is comprised of Fresno County Management Area A and B. Similar to what is occurring in the Kings Subbasin, the GSPs are at varying stages of completeness. These coordinated plans must also be submitted to DWR by January 31, 2020. Below is list of key issues within the Subbasin:

- Halt overdraft and chronic lowering of groundwater levels;
- Mitigation of subsidence along the Delta-Mendota Canal;
- Acquisition of additional surface water supplies; and,
- Expansion of groundwater monitoring networks to fill data gaps.

**Pleasant Valley Groundwater Subbasin**

The Pleasant Valley Groundwater Subbasin consists of approximately 48,000 acres and is located along the western side of the San Joaquin Valley, north of the Kings-Kern County line. On February 16, 2017, the Pleasant Valley Water District (PVWD) submitted a notice of intent to DWR to form the Subbasin. The filing included portions of Fresno County and the City of Coalinga which are outside of PVWD's jurisdictional boundary, where PVWD would have no power to implement a GSP. As a result, both the County and the City of Coalinga are required to file a notice of intent to form its own GSA for areas outside of the jurisdictional boundary of PVWD. The approximate acreage of the unmanaged areas that would be covered by the proposed Fresno County-Pleasant Valley Subbasin GSA is approximately 9,300 acres. Because the Subbasin is a medium priority subbasin that does not require submittal of a GSP until January 31, 2024, the only key issue is the need to enter into an MOU with PVWD to facilitate the development of a single GSP for the Subbasin.

**Focus of Staff Activity:**

Over the next several months, Department staff will focus its efforts on the following tasks and priorities:

- Assist in the completion and review of the various GSPs where the County is partner agency with other local agencies.
- Complete preparation of Fresno County Management Area A and B GSP where the County is the Exclusive GSA.
- Participate to complete the required coordination agreements.
- Conduct and/or participate in public outreach meetings to solicit and receive public comments on the various draft GSPs.
- Conduct and/or participate in all required public hearings before the various GSA Boards and your Board as part of the GSP adoption process.
- Partner with local agencies to assist in GSP implementation.
- Evaluate and recommend revisions as necessary to County General Plan policies, ordinances, and development standards to address consistency with adopted GSPs.
- Continue to monitor and participate in the State legislative process to leverage SGMA implementation resource assistance and funding.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI #8, March 10, 2015

BAI #6, January 27, 2015

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

Exhibit A

CAO ANALYST:

Sonia M. De La Rosa