

# The DWR Releases Proposed Groundwater Sustainability Plan Emergency Regulations Under SGMA

On May 10, 2016, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released proposed regulations that outline a process for developing, evaluating and implementing groundwater sustainability plans (GSP) under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The proposed regulations revise DWR's February 18, 2016 draft regulations making substantive changes throughout. The proposed regulations specify the technical, monitoring and reporting requirements of GSPs, alternatives to GSPs, agency coordination agreements prepared pursuant to SGMA, and the methods and criteria used by DWR to evaluate those plans and agreements.

The groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) created under SGMA must comply with DWR's regulations in order to sustainably manage California's high and medium priority groundwater basins. The GSA formation date for such basins is June 30, 2017. The GSP must cover the entire basin and can be any of the following: (a) a single plan developed and implemented by one GSA, (b) a single plan developed and implemented by multiple GSAs, or (c) multiple plans implemented by multiple GSAs and coordinated pursuant to a single coordination agreement.

SGMA requires high and medium priority basins that are subject to critical conditions of overdraft to be managed under a GSP by January 31, 2020. All other high and medium priority basins must be managed under a GSP by January 31, 2022. Alternative plans must be submitted by January 1, 2017. Although not subject to SGMA, local public agencies in basins designated as low and very-low priority are encouraged and authorized to form GSAs and develop GSPs, or coordinate with others to develop plans in accordance with SGMA.

Under the proposed regulations, GSPs must identify when and where groundwater conditions cause problems (e.g. seawater intrusion and subsidence), the management actions that local agencies will implement to prevent the problems, milestones to track plan progress, and a description of how local agencies will monitor groundwater and how monitoring data will be used to improve conditions in the basin.

DWR is required to draft and adopt emergency regulations by

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June 1, 2016. The proposed GSP Emergency Regulations will be presented to the California Water Commission on May 18, 2016 for consideration and adoption.

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