



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Water Agency  
**Department No.:** 054  
**For Agenda Of:** September 21, 2021  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Tme:** N/A  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Directors, Water Agency

**FROM:** Department Scott D. McGolpin, Public Works Director, (805) 568-3010  
Director(s)  
Contact Info: Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, (805) 568-3436

**SUBJECT:** Santa Barbara County 2021 Groundwater Basins Summary Report

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Other Concurrence:** N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Directors:

- a) Receive and file the Santa Barbara County 2021 Groundwater Basins Summary Report; and
- b) Determine that the Santa Barbara County 2021 Groundwater Basins Summary Report is not subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b) (5), as it is an administrative action that will not result in direct or indirect changes to the environment.

**Summary Text:**

This item is on the agenda to receive and file the Santa Barbara County 2021 Groundwater Basins Summary Report. On March 19, 2019, the Board directed the Water Agency to return annually with a report which illustrates groundwater conditions, summarizes the various monitoring programs, and outlines the resources available for locating groundwater data throughout the County.

Only the nine defined groundwater basins recognized by the Department of Water Resources in Santa Barbara County (Carpinteria, Montecito, Santa Barbara, Foothill, Goleta, Santa Ynez River Valley, San Antonio Creek Valley, Santa Maria River Valley, and Cuyama Valley) are included in this report.

Although parts of some basins are located outside the County boundary, only data located within the County are referenced. Sub-basins within the larger groundwater basins are also differentiated as determined by management area or natural barriers to groundwater movement. Hydrographs of water surface elevation for representative monitoring wells located within each of these basins is plotted with yearly precipitation totals within the basin to clearly illustrate long-term storage trends, seasonal recharge response, and discharge. Discrete water level values illustrated in these hydrographs are representative of yearly maximum aquifer levels during early spring and before significant agricultural pumping resumes.

While several groundwater basins show preliminary signs of recovery from the impact of the 2012-2018 drought, no basins have yet rebounded to pre-drought levels. Other basins have remained fairly stable, or continue to decline. After winter with 48 percent of normal rainfall, on July 13, 2021, the Board issued a Proclamation of Local Emergency regarding the Drought Conditions within the County of Santa Barbara.

### **Background:**

The groundwater basins of Santa Barbara County are essential sources of water for both municipal and agricultural uses and provide a critical line of defense against periodic water shortages. Unlike the surface water storage network, groundwater resources may not react as quickly following precipitation events. Recharge is complex and can vary between and within each groundwater basin as a result of aquifer materials, local geology, physical barriers, hydrology, evapotranspiration, and anthropogenic activity. Water levels may rise quickly in shallow wells when located in alluvium along flowing rivers and creeks. Deeper wells however, may not show signs of recharge for many years following wet seasons.

Water level elevation data from groundwater monitoring networks have been collected throughout Santa Barbara County for decades. These networks provide representative data of the major aquifer systems and attempt to emphasize the role of local variables such as geology, topography and land use on recharge, sub-surface flow, and distribution. Data also illustrate temporal variability and are combined with meteorological data to assist in the interpretation of ambient water level changes. The temporal and spatial distribution of the monitoring network has continued to change throughout the years and may be dependent on many factors to include funding, local groundwater study objectives, legislative requirements, and landowner access. Some networks have been developed to track long-term trends, while others are more specific to modeling goals or local water distribution objectives.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was passed in 2014 to create a framework for groundwater sustainability throughout California. As part of SGMA, Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) will be responsible for the development, implementation, and oversight of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) within groundwater basins. As GSPs are implemented within the basins of Santa Barbara County during the next few years, water level monitoring will become the responsibility of each respective GSA.

### **Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

**Fiscal Analysis:**

Staff time for this work is included in the annual budget for the Water Resources Division of the Public Works Department.

**Special Instructions:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the minute order of these actions to the Water Agency office, Attn: Christina Lopez.

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: County of Santa Barbara 2021 Groundwater Basins Summary Report

**Authored by:**

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