



**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:** February 13, 2018  
**Placement:** Departmental/Set  
Hearing 30 minutes on  
May 8, 2018  
**Estimated Time:** 1 hour  
**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, 568-3010  
Director(s)  
Contact Info: Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, 568-3436

**SUBJECT:** Update on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation, All Supervisorial Districts

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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:**

- a) Receive and file a report on activities and progress to date related to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014;
- b) Direct staff to submit an initial notification to the Department of Water Resources for a basin boundary modification in the Santa Maria Fringe area;
- c) Set a hearing to consider a basin boundary modification for the Santa Maria Fringe Area (FOR MAY 8, 2018 ESTIMATED TIME: 30 MINUTES); and
- d) Determine that the proposed actions are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), organization or administrative activities that will not result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

This item is on the agenda to provide an update as to the Santa Barbara County Water Agency's (Water Agency) implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), in response to a request from the Board at its August 22, 2017 meeting.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has designated five basins in Santa Barbara County as medium or high-priority basins, making them subject to SGMA. These basins include the Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin, the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin, the non-adjudicated fringe areas in the Santa Maria River Valley and Goleta Groundwater Basins, and the San Antonio Creek Valley Groundwater Basin. Each basin is unique in its conditions, issues, and governance approach. The following is a summary of work that the Water Agency has conducted to date in each of the five basins.

**Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin (medium priority, critically overdrafted)**

The Water Agency created a Joint Powers Authority to act as the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the basin with five other public agencies: the Cuyama Basin Water District, the Cuyama Community Services District, and the Counties of San Luis Obispo, Ventura, and Kern (see Attachment A). The Board appointed 1<sup>st</sup> District Supervisor Das Williams and 5<sup>th</sup> District Chief of Staff Cory Bantilan to serve as the Water Agency's representatives on the 11-member GSA Board of Directors.

Because DWR designated the Cuyama Valley Basin as "critically overdrafted" the GSA has an accelerated deadline of 2020 to complete a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The GSA has worked diligently on the initial steps to meet this statutory deadline. The GSA has accomplished the following:

- Appointed ad hoc committees on hiring staff, hiring consultants, establishing an advisory committee, and developing a budget,
- Hired an Executive Director and General Counsel,
- Hired a technical consultant for preparing a grant application and for preparing the GSP,
- Appointed a seven member advisory committee that represents a variety of interests throughout the basin, and
- Submitted an application to DWR for grant funding in support of GSP preparation and activities in support of Disadvantaged and Severely Disadvantaged Communities in the basin.

Prior to the hiring of the Executive Director in October 2017, staff from the Water Agency, County of San Luis Obispo, and the Cuyama Basin Water District served as staff for the GSA. Now that the GSA is fully staffed, Water Agency staff are providing technical assistance to Directors Williams and Bantilan.

DWR is expected to award grant funding in March 2018. Once the grant is awarded, next steps include completing a budget and cost-sharing agreement and beginning the GSP preparation, which includes extensive public outreach and stakeholder engagement. The Water Agency completed a study in conjunction with the USGS in 2014 that provides a strong technical basis from which to begin GSP preparation.

### **Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin (medium priority)**

Based on jurisdictional and hydrogeological differences, the agencies in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin agreed to form three GSAs representing the three main areas of the basin (Western, Central, and Eastern Management Areas; see Attachment B). An overarching Basin Coordination Agreement will link the three GSAs, as SGMA requires in basins with multiple GSAs. The Water Agency is a non-voting member of the Western and Central Management Areas, and a voting member of the Eastern Management Area. The Board appointed Third District Supervisor Joan Hartman to sit on the GSA Board for each of the management areas.

The Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District (SYRWCD) covers the majority of this basin and is leading SGMA implementation. To date, the SYRWCD has engaged with a consultant, conducted an assessment of the data gaps required to be filled to complete a GSP, and submitted an application for grant funding to DWR. Water Agency staff provided support and technical assistance to the SYRWCD. Once grant funding is awarded, each management area will begin holding GSA meetings, conducting public outreach, and forming advisory committees. The Water Agency has budgeted money to support hydrogeological investigations in the Eastern Management Area, will begin the procurement process for a consultant to conduct these investigations in early 2018, and will bring the contract before the Board for review and approval.

### **San Antonio Creek Valley Groundwater Basin (medium priority)**

The San Antonio Creek Valley Groundwater Basin GSA is composed of the Cachuma Resource Conservation District (CRCD) and the Los Alamos Community Services District (LACSD). The GSA has established a regular meeting schedule, submitted a grant application to DWR, and solicited applications for an Advisory Committee. The Water Agency and Vandenberg Air Force Base will sit on the Advisory Committee, with additional members to be drawn from interested members of the community. The Water Agency continues to work with the US Geological Survey on the San Antonio Basin Groundwater Availability Study, which was conceived prior to SGMA, but will provide a basis for preparation of the GSP.

### **Adjudicated Basins**

Basins that have been previously adjudicated are not subject to SGMA, with the exception of specific reporting requirements. There are two medium- and high-priority adjudicated basins in the County: the Goleta Groundwater Basin and the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin. For both of these basins, the boundary of the adjudication does not completely match with the basin boundary as defined in DWR's Bulletin 118, leaving "fringe" areas which are unmanaged. SGMA requires that all portions of a basin be managed, and a GSA is therefore required for these fringe areas. In forming GSAs in these areas, the Board did not commit to developing GSPs, but rather avoided immediate consequences for groundwater users in these areas.

Water Agency staff have been in frequent communication with representatives of the State Water Resources Control Board and DWR regarding options to avoid preparing a full GSP, including relying on existing reports provided by the agencies managing the adjudicated portions of the basins. State staff have been encouraging about the potential for alternative reporting requirements, but have been unwilling to commit to anything formal to date.

**Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin Fringe.** In the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, there are small fringe areas on the eastern edge of the adjudicated basin with limited groundwater use or

agricultural production. These areas, shown on the map included as Attachment C, include a portion of the Cuyama River Valley from Twitchell Reservoir to the adjudicated basin, an area along Tepesquet Road, and a short reach of the Sisquoc River. Larger fringe areas are located in the County of San Luis Obispo. The Water Agency has been working closely with the County of San Luis Obispo and local landowners to better understand water use in these fringe areas.

DWR has established a process for modifying the Bulletin 118 boundary of a basin when appropriate. Based on preliminary reviews of the geology and water use in the fringe areas, a boundary modification to remove some of the fringe areas from the basin appears to be appropriate. The first step in the process is to submit an initial notification to DWR that the Water Agency is considering Basin Boundary Modification to eliminate some of the fringe areas from DWR's definition of the basin. Once the initial notification is submitted, Water Agency staff will prepare technical information supporting the modification, hold a public meeting with stakeholders in the fringe areas, and coordinate with the County of San Luis Obispo, which also intends to submit a Basin Boundary Modification request. The Water Agency will bring the proposed final basin boundary modification request to your Board prior to DWR's June 30, 2018 deadline for submittal.

**Goleta Groundwater Basin Fringe.** The Goleta fringe areas are primarily located north of Cathedral Oaks Road and include larger areas west of the Goleta city limits and along San Antonio Creek north and east of Tucker's Grove County Park (Attachment D).

When the Board met to form the GSA in August 2017, the City of Goleta sent a letter indicating it had not yet taken a position on whether or not to join in GSA formation. The Board directed staff to continue to discuss GSA participation with the City of Goleta, with a 90-day timeline for a decision to be made. After several discussions between the Water Agency staff and Goleta staff, the Goleta City Council voted on January 16, 2018 not to participate in the GSA.

Based on a preliminary review of basin geology, a basin boundary revision to remove some of these areas from the DWR Bulletin 118 basin is unlikely to be successful. Staff will continue to work with the State agencies on a solution to avoid or minimize GSP preparation.

### **Background:**

SGMA was signed into law by Governor Brown in 2014. SGMA provides a framework for the sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local agencies and provides tools, authority, and a timeline for local agencies during the 20-year implementation period. SGMA requires sustainable management of the County's basins that are designated as medium- or high-priority by DWR. In Santa Barbara County these basins include the Cuyama Valley, San Antonio Creek Valley, Santa Ynez River Valley, Santa Maria River Valley, and Goleta Groundwater Basins.

Each basin's GSA will be responsible for developing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the basin. DWR regulations to guide local GSP development were approved by the California Water Commission on May 18, 2016 and went into effect in June 2016. GSPs must be adopted by January 31, 2020 for those basins deemed by the State to be critically overdrafted and by January 31, 2022 for all other medium- or high-priority basins (including fringe areas). SGMA and DWR's regulations require a GSA to engage interested parties in the development and implementation of the GSP. In addition, a GSP may only be adopted at a public hearing 90 days after the GSA has provided notice to the County

of its intent to adopt a GSP. The County may request consultation with the GSA after receiving the notice (Water Code § 10728.4). Once a GSP is adopted, it must be submitted to DWR for approval, which starts a 60 day public comment period.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

**Fiscal Analysis:**

Narrative:

The costs associated with SGMA implementation are included in the adopted FY 2017-18 budget in the Water Resources Division of the Public Works Department on page D-325 in the budget book. No General Fund monies will be utilized for this project.

**Special Instructions:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to:

1. publish the Notice of Public Hearing (Attachment E) pursuant to Section 6066 of the Government Code (publish notice on April 24 and May 1, 2018) in the Santa Barbara Newspress and the Santa Maria Times; and
2. send a copy of the minute order of these actions to the Water Agency office; Attn: Christina Lopez.

**Attachments:**

Attachment A –	Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin Map
Attachment B –	Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Map
Attachment C –	Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin Fringe Area Map
Attachment D –	Goleta Groundwater Basin Fringe Map
Attachment E -	Notice of Public Hearing
Attachment F –	PowerPoint Presentation

**Authored by:**

Matt Young, Water Resources Program Manager, 568-3546