



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 25, 2020
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

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: Groundwater Sustainability Agency Withdrawal in Fringe Areas; Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Supervisorial Districts

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

Recommended Actions:

- a) Direct staff to submit a letter to the California Department of Water Resources withdrawing the Groundwater Sustainability Agency in the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin Fringe Areas;
- b) Direct staff to submit a letter to the California Department of Water Resources withdrawing the Groundwater Sustainability Agency in the Goleta Groundwater Basin Fringe Areas; and
- c) 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 request Board approval to withdraw the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) in the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin Fringe Areas and the Goleta Groundwater Basin Fringe Areas.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has conducted a statewide basin reprioritization in two phases, following a round of basin boundary modifications in 2018. In Phase I, the Goleta Groundwater Basin was reprioritized to Very Low status in January 2019. In Phase II, the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin was reprioritized to Very Low status in December 2019. Both reprioritizations were

a result of a change in the prioritization procedure, which specified that in adjudicated basins with non-adjudicated fringe areas, if the estimated groundwater use in fringe areas is less than 9,500 acre-feet per year, the basin is automatically Very Low priority, regardless of scores in other categories.

The reclassification to Very Low priority means that there is no longer an obligation to comply with the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in both the Santa Maria and the Goleta Groundwater Basin fringe areas. These areas have minimal groundwater use and are in basins managed pursuant to adjudications. Therefore, staff recommends writing a letter to DWR for each basin formally withdrawing the GSA.

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.

The Santa Maria and Goleta Groundwater Basins were originally designated as High and Medium priority, respectively. In these basins, the majority of water users have undergone the lengthy legal process of adjudication, and are therefore not subject to most of the requirements of SGMA (Water Code § 10720.8(a)(18)). However, the boundary of the adjudication does not completely match with the basin boundary as defined in the DWR Bulletin 118, leaving "fringe" areas, which are not managed pursuant to the adjudication. SGMA requires that all portions of Medium and High priority groundwater basins be managed, and a GSA was therefore initially required for these fringe areas.

The Santa Barbara County Water Agency (Water Agency) Board of Directors elected to form GSAs in the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin Fringe Areas on May 9, 2017, and the Goleta Groundwater Basin Fringe Areas on August 22, 2017. The Board's stated intent in forming these GSAs was to protect water users in the fringe areas from State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) intervention while giving the Water Agency time to work with DWR and SWRCB on how to comply with SGMA requirements for these minor portions of basins with little groundwater use.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Fiscal Analysis:

Narrative:

Staff time associated with SGMA and GSA formation was included in the Adopted 2019-20 budget in the Water Resources Division of the Public Works Department as shown on page D-305 in the budget book. For future fiscal years, costs will likely be met from financing options available to the GSA, as authorized by SGMA. There are no General Fund monies associated with this Board action.

Special Instructions:

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment A – Santa Maria Groundwater Basin Map

Attachment B – Goleta Groundwater Basin Map

Authored by:

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