



# GSP Requirements



The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is State law enabling certain local agencies to manage their groundwater basins sustainably. It allows local agencies, such as San Benito County Water District (SBCWD), to form a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) which must produce a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) describing how sustainability will be achieved. SBCWD is the GSA for the Bolsa, Hollister, San Juan Bautista and Tres Pinos basins (in partnership with Santa Clara Valley Water District for small areas of the basins that extend into that county). SBCWD has actively managed groundwater resources for decades, and is now incorporating its management into the framework of SGMA's new extensive, detailed technical requirements and tools for GSPs.



*West Hills Water Treatment Plant*

## Groundwater Sustainability Plan Outlines How Sustainability Will Be Achieved

### What's required in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)?

The GSP must document:

- The GSA and its decision-making process
- Stakeholder outreach and communication
- The GSP Plan Area and its local agencies, land uses, planning, water

supply and demand, and existing groundwater monitoring and management

- The physical setting of the groundwater basins including geology, current and historical groundwater conditions, water budgets, and interactions between the groundwater and surface water systems

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SGMA defines sustainable groundwater management as the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained without causing undesirable results. Undesirable results are defined with these sustainability indicators:

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels (not including drought conditions, if offset during non-drought)
- Reduction of groundwater storage
- Degraded water quality (including migration of contaminant plumes)
- Land subsidence that substantially interferes with land uses
- Depletions of interconnected surface water with adverse impacts on beneficial uses

Each of these indicators must be evaluated in the GSP. The GSP must also document the minimum threshold conditions at which a sustainability indicator becomes significant and unreasonable. Then, the GSP must estab-

lish a measurable objective reflecting the basin’s desired groundwater conditions, and provide for achievement of the sustainability goal within 20 years.

With the guidance of minimum thresholds and measurable objectives—locally established with stakeholder and public input—the GSP must provide detailed descriptions of the projects and management actions that will achieve sustainability. These projects and management actions will be evaluated, using a numerical model of the groundwater/surface water system, to demonstrate their effectiveness. The GSP also must lay out the implementation plan that puts the projects and actions in motion, and provide an estimate of implementation costs and a description of how the GSP will be funded into the future. The GSP must describe a monitoring program that will: 1) provide data for better understanding of the groundwater system, 2) provide tracking and



early warning regarding groundwater conditions and undesirable results, and 3) demonstrate progress toward and achievement of sustainability.

While establishing rigorous requirements, SGMA also provides a GSA with management tools that it may need. For example, a GSA may adopt regulations requiring the installation of water-measuring devices on all groundwater wells within the basin boundaries at the expense of the operator or owner. Other management tools may include groundwater extraction statements, reporting on diversions of surface water to storage, or fee assessment to establish and implement local groundwater management plans.

A GSA may also adopt the following tools, many of which SBCWD already uses:

- Conduct investigations of water rights
- Acquire property and water rights
- Adopt rules, regulations, and ordinances
- Require the registration of wells
- Utilize recycled water as a supply source

