

STATE OF CALIFORNIA – CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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June 3, 2021

RECEIVED

County of Lassen
Board of Supervisors
ATTN: Chairman David Teeter
221 S. Roop Street, Suite 4
Susanville, CA 96130

JUN 28 2021

LASSEN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

Dear Chairman Teeter,

On behalf of Governor Newsom, I first want to thank you for your dedicated leadership in your community during these challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic is a continuing and unprecedented global crisis and it has impacted our communities across California in many ways. I appreciate your attention to these impacts weighing on your community.

Your recent letter(s) submitted to the Governor requests an extension of the deadline for submitting your groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and highlights your concerns over your ability to ensure robust public outreach and stakeholder engagement with the limitations on public interaction resulting from COVID-19. We recognize the limitations all state and local entities have experienced with holding meetings virtually, especially in rural and mountainous areas where internet connectivity is less available and reliable. Despite these COVID-19 challenges, public agencies, such as yours, are continuing to provide their best efforts to ensure public engagement and oversight of activities in the public's interest.

With this in mind, a suspension or change to the submittal deadline cannot be granted. The GSP submittal process and deadline is in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which cannot be changed without an amendment to the law and approval by the Legislature. If a local agency does not submit a GSP by the statutory deadline, DWR is required to refer the basin to the State Water Board for intervention.

The Administration is committed to the central tenant of SGMA which is local control. To facilitate such, SGMA establishes a timeframe of 20 years for basins to achieve their sustainability goals and provides an outcome-based process for SGMA implementation to occur. Through this outcome-based process, local agencies have an opportunity to improve plans and continue public outreach over time. A number of DWR and other state agency assistance programs have been established to help with public outreach and to assist groundwater managers in maintaining local control throughout GSP development and implementation.

DWR values the working partnership with water managers in your basin, which have been established through continued dialogue and dedicated planning and financial assistance (summarized in Attachment A) to support your plan development and facilitate engagement among stakeholders. If you find your local outreach efforts lacking, even with this assistance and the efforts we have collectively undertaken, I encourage you to review the attached summary of state assistance (Attachment B) and reach out to my staff (identified below) so you can use all applicable programs that will aid in your local SGMA efforts.

For these reasons, I encourage you to continue working towards submitting your GSP by the statutory deadline. Within that plan, you may identify any data gaps, including how stakeholder engagement has been impacted by COVID-19, and document the next steps that will be taken to fill those gaps. As locals continue to conduct engagement efforts, GSAs can amend their plans at any time to reflect stakeholder

Attachment A:

| Summary Table of DWR Facilitation and Grant Funding Support | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Subbasin | Funding Recipient | DWR Facilitation Funding | DWR Planning Funding | Total DWR Funding Support |
| Vina Subbasin, Butte Subbasin, Wyandotte Creek Subbasin | Butte County | \$173,000 | \$1,498,800 | \$1,725,800 |
| Vina Subbasin | Vina GSA | \$54,000 | — | |
| Big Valley Basin | County of Modoc GSA | \$82,000 | \$987,660 | \$2,068,845 |
| | Lassen County | — | \$999,185 | |
| Colusa Subbasin | Colusa County | \$112,000 | — | \$2,171,600 |
| | Colusa Groundwater Authority | \$60,000 | \$1,999,600 | |

- Eight new online interactive maps for the public to view and download SGMA datasets: groundwater levels, wells, environmental, land use, and subsidence data
- A water resources management and planning model that simulates groundwater, surface water, stream-groundwater interaction (C2VSim-FG)
- <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Data-and-Tools>
- **Guidance and Education:**
 - Six Best Management Practices (BMPs) and five Guidance Documents to provide clarification, guidance, and examples to help GSAs develop elements of a GSP.
 - California's Groundwater Update: State's official publication on the occurrence and nature of groundwater in California.

Financial Assistance

- **Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Grant Programs:**
 - **SGM Planning Grant Program:** provides funds to develop and implement sustainable groundwater planning and projects. Approximately \$150 million (M) has been awarded to date through three rounds of solicitations. Funding has been provided by Proposition 1 and Proposition 68.
 - **SGM Implementation Grant Program:** designed to fund projects and programs that will assist GSAs implement their GSPs. Proposition 68 authorized ~\$100M for this new program.
 - The FY 20/21 Budget directed the acceleration of \$26M for the critically overdrafted (COD) basins responsible for implementing GSPs or Alternatives to a GSP. Final awards for this first round were announced April 23, 2021.
 - The second round for the remaining funds will begin in early 2022.
- **Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant Program:** provides funding for projects and programs that implement an IRWM Plan, including groundwater management projects. Approximately \$220M of Proposition 1 funding has been awarded in 2019/2020.
 - Another \$180M in Proposition 1 funds will be available in 2021-2022 timeframe.
- **Drainage Reuse Grant Program:** provides funds to local public agencies, including public universities, in the state of California for research and/or programs that resolve agricultural subsurface drainage water issues. The program is funded by Proposition 204, through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), who has entered into a memorandum of understanding to transfer the funds, as well as the responsibility for implementing the programs required by the legislation, to DWR. Approximately \$1.1M was awarded in 2020.

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

SGMA requires the State Water Board protect basins that are not managed sustainably through a process called State Intervention. In addition to this responsibility, the State Water Board has initiated assistance that will support locals with SGMA implementation. Assistance has been organized and distributed by the following categories:

Planning Assistance

- **Recharge Permitting Options:** Capturing surface water to artificially recharge groundwater aquifers is a potential method for improving groundwater basin conditions. To help support this method, the Division of Water Rights has developed a streamlined permitting process for diversions of water from high flow events to underground storage.

government, stakeholders, and communities to develop plans and projects to improve watershed health and meet California's groundwater sustainability goals. Awarded \$1.5M in January 2021.

- Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program: SALC is a component of the SGC's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program. SALC complements investments made in urban areas with the purchase of agricultural conservation easements, development of agricultural land strategy plans, and other mechanisms that result in GHG reductions and a more resilient agricultural sector.
 - Draft Guidelines for Round 7 were released February 19, 2021

Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)

CDFA supports agricultural production by incentivizing practices resulting in a net benefit for the environment through innovation, efficient management and science.

- State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET): provides grant funding to implement irrigation systems that reduce greenhouse gases and save water on California agricultural operations. Eligible system components include (among others) soil moisture monitoring, drip systems, switching to low pressure irrigation systems, pump retrofits, variable frequency drives and installation of renewable energy to reduce on-farm water use and energy. Approximately, \$81.1M has been awarded to date to nearly 835 projects, covering over 137,000 acres. CDFA estimates that over 81,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions will be reduced annually.
- Healthy Soils Program (HSP): consists of two components: the HSP Incentives Program and the HSP Demonstration Projects.
 - HSP Incentives Program provides financial assistance for implementation of conservation management that improve soil health, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The 2020 HSP Incentives Program selected 324 projects for award, requesting almost a total of \$22M.
 - HSP Demonstration Projects showcase California farmers and rancher's implementation of HSP practices. The 2020 HSP Demonstration Projects selected 20 projects for award, requesting a total of over \$2.9M.