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California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

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2014 California Groundwater Legislation

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014 consists of three bills — SB 1168, AB 1739 and SB 1319. Together, the bills commit the State to locally controlled, sustainable groundwater management. They provide tools and authorities for local agencies to achieve and enforce the sustainability goals over a 20-year implementation period. Each of the three bills were enacted on September 16, 2014.

Senate Bill 1168 - instructs local agencies to create management plans

SB 1168 requires basins designated by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as either high or medium priority basins, that are subject to critical conditions of overdraft, be managed under a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) or coordinated GSPs by January 31, 2020. High and medium priority basins that are not subject to critical conditions of overdraft must be managed pursuant to a GSP by January 31, 2022.

SB 1168 allows a local agency, which is defined as “a local public agency that has water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities within a groundwater basin,” to elect to be a groundwater sustainability agency (GSA). A combination of local agencies may form a GSA using a joint powers agreement or memorandum of agreement. If an area overlying a groundwater basin is not within the management area of a GSA, the county within which the unmanaged area lies will be presumed to be the GSA for that area, unless the county opts out.

SB 1168 authorizes GSAs to require groundwater well registration, measurement of groundwater extractions, and filing of annual extraction reports.

SB 1168 also authorizes GSAs to regulate groundwater extractions by imposing well spacing requirements, limiting extractions, and establishing extraction allocations.

Within 20 years following implementation of GSPs, each basin is required to be managed within the operating sustainable yield, or the maximum quantity of water that can be withdrawn over a period of years without resulting in one or more of the following:

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels;
- Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage;
- Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion;
- Significant and unreasonable degraded water quality;
- Significant and unreasonable land subsidence that substantially interferes with surface land uses; and
- Depletions of interconnected surface water that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of the surface water.

Assembly Bill 1739 - establishes when the DWR and SWRCB can intervene if GSAs have not moved forward to sustainably manage local groundwater basins.

AB 1739 requires the DWR to:

- Review GSPs to ensure they conform to SB 1168 requirements;
- Adopt regulations for evaluating GSPs;
- Adopt regulations for the implementation of GSPs;
- Review GSPs every five years; and
- Develop coordination agreements between DWR, SWRCB, and GSAs.

Senate Bill 1319 – postpones implementation of SB 1168 in places where surface water has been affected by groundwater pumping.

SB 1319 works in conjunction with AB 1739 to establish new regulatory authorities for the SWRCB. Specifically, these bills would allow the SWRCB to designate groundwater basins as probationary basins and adopt an interim plan and schedule for regulation of groundwater extractions under SB 1168.

Basin Rankings by DWR Region

Region	Basin Ranking				Basins per Region
	High	Med.	Low	Very Low	
North Coast	0	8	2	53	63
San Francisco Bay	0	7	0	26	33
Central Coast	9	15	0	36	60
South Coast	13	22	4	34	73
Sacramento River	5	18	4	61	88
San Joaquin River	7	2	0	2	11
Tulare Lake	7	1	1	10	19
North Lahontan	0	2	3	22	27
South Lahontan	2	4	4	67	77
Colorado River	0	5	9	50	64
Statewide Total	43	84	27	361	515

Source: California Department of Water Resources Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring Program (CASGEM)

Implementation Schedule and Sustainability Goals

1. Establish basin priorities by 1/1/15	6. Submit alternative to sustainability plan by 1/1/17	10. High- & medium-priority basins with critical overdraft managed by 1/31/20	15. All high- and medium- priority groundwater basins managed by 1/31/22	20. Basins managed by 2022 achieve sustainability by 1/31/42
2. Develop emergency regulations for basin boundary revisions by 1/1/16	7. Groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) formed by 6/30/17, and outside management areas must report extractions by 7/1/17	11. Basins placed on Type 2 or 3 probation by 1/31/20	16. Basins placed on Type 4 or 5 probation / develop interim plans by 1/31/22	21. Basins managed by 2020 with one extension achieve sustainability by 1/31/45
3. Develop emergency regulations for evaluating plans by 6/1/16	8. SWRCB can put basins on Type 1 probation after 6/30/17	12. Develop interim plans for basins on Type 2 probation by 7/31/20	17. Evaluate all plans submitted on 1/31/22 by 1/31/24.	22. Basins managed by 2022 with one extension achieve sustainability by 1/31/47
4. Estimates of water available or groundwater replenishment by 12/31/16	9. Develop interim plans for basins on Type 1 probation by 1/1/18	13. Develop interim plans for basins on Type 3 probation by 1/31/21	18. Put basins placed on Type 6 probation, and develop interim plans by 1/31/25	23. Basins managed by 2020 with two extensions achieve sustainability by 1/31/50
5. Develop best management practices for sustainable management by 1/1/17		14. Evaluate all plans submitted on 1/31/20 by 1/31/22.	19. Basins managed by 2020 achieve sustainability by 1/31/40	24. Basins managed by 2022 with two extensions achieve sustainability by 1/31/52

