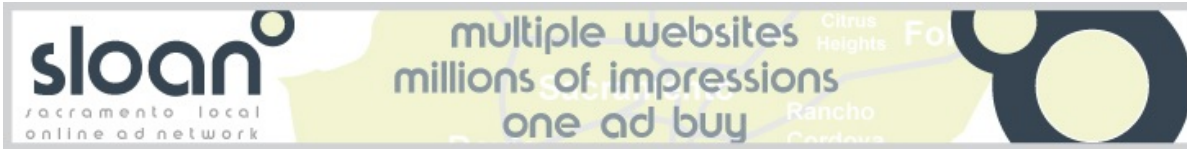


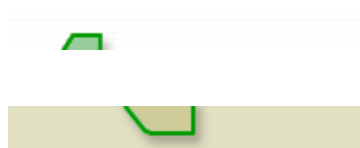
Central Valley Business Times



Local Guides

State says it now has a barebones plan to impose groundwater laws

SACRAMENTO
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- DWR wants idea from public to form a final plan
- “Successful implementation of these laws will require good communication and engagement”



The California Department of Water Resources says it wants public input on its draft strategic plan for its role in implementing the state’s first-ever laws governing groundwater.

In a typical year, groundwater provides about a third of the water used by residents, farms, and businesses. In dry years, the proportion may be as high as 60 percent. Many communities around the state depend entirely upon groundwater.

In some regions, heavy groundwater pumping has dropped groundwater levels too low for wells to function, caused degradation of water quality, created an irreversible sinking of the land above overdrafted groundwater basins, and harmed wildlife by reducing the connection between groundwater and surface streams.

The draft plan describes DWR's responsibilities and vision for carrying out the law, dubbed by Sacramento as the “Sustainable Groundwater Management Act,” the department says.

It’s actually a package of laws that aim to protect the groundwater basins that provide more than half of the water Californians use in dry years.

“Successful implementation of these laws will require good communication and engagement,”

says David Gutierrez, executive program manager for DWR's Groundwater Sustainability Program. "We spell out DWR's vision for providing support and technical advice in our draft strategic plan, and we want stakeholders to help us improve and refine that vision."

The new laws charge DWR with providing guidance and technical support to local agencies. Under the act, local agencies must form sustainable groundwater management agencies by June 30, 2017 for basins established by DWR as high and medium priority under the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring Program.

By the beginning of 2020, these groundwater sustainability agencies must have adopted groundwater sustainability plans for high and medium priority groundwater basins in critical conditions of overdraft.

Groundwater sustainability agencies for all other high and medium priority basins must adopt groundwater sustainability plans by 2022.

The laws allow for state intervention through the State Water Resources Control Board if a local agency fails to manage its groundwater sustainably.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act also directs DWR to complete multiple activities including:

- Adoption of regulations for local agency proposed revisions to groundwater basin boundaries;
- Adoption of regulations for evaluating and implementing local agency prepared groundwater sustainability plans
- Update the prioritization of basins, and conduct groundwater assessments into the next decade.

DWR says it will consider all comments before finalizing the plan. Those with ideas or comments are being asked by DWR to send them by email to sgmps@water.ca.gov.



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