



WORKING DRAFT

Outreach & Public Engagement Plan

Cosumnes Subbasin Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
Implementation

October 30, 2017

Developed by the Consensus Building Institute

Activities Overview

SGMA-REQUIRED

Interested Persons List
Inform Public about SGMA
Transparency

SGMA-Implied

Regular Email Updates
Briefings
Information Materials
Website & Social Media
Public Workshops
 GSA-specific (as needed)
 Basin-wide
Talking Points

Purpose and Outcome

The purpose of this communication and outreach plan is to share information, foster active engagement, solicit feedback, and develop widespread support for Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation in the Cosumnes Subbasin. The goal is to transparently develop a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) by fostering input from interested water users and stakeholders. The subbasin's approach to outreach and public engagement has been informed by DWR's Guidance Document for GSP Stakeholder Communication and Engagement ([link](#)).

The purpose of SGMA is to ensure local sustainable groundwater management in medium- and high-priority groundwater basins statewide. **The Cosumnes Subbasin is a medium-priority basin, subject to SGMA implementation.**

How Public Input will be Used

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the Cosumnes Subbasin are committed to keeping the **public involved** by providing the public with comprehensive, accurate and timely information about SGMA and by **providing multiple opportunities for public input and engagement**. The public should be able to understand SGMA's groundwater sustainability plan requirements and provide recommendations on plan formation and SGMA implementation. The primary opportunities for public involvement are through attendance and public comment periods at Working Group and Technical Advisory Committee meetings and through periodic public workshops where public input will be synthesized and brought back to the GSAs for consideration.

Public Input into GSP Development

The outreach plan outlines several key pathways for fostering public awareness and informed public input into plan development. These include the following:

SGMA Working Group – Comprising GSAs (local public agencies with water supply, water management, and land use responsibilities) in the Cosumnes Subbasin, the Working Group (or its successor) will make decisions on developing the groundwater sustainability plan and implementing SGMA. Working Group meetings are open to the public and will have designated public comment periods at each meeting; the intent is to ensure that the GSAs have the opportunity to hear regularly from interested parties on topics under discussion.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) - Comprising representatives from GSAs, the TAC develops recommendations to the Working Group (or its successor) on technical issues pertaining to SGMA implementation. TAC meetings are open to the public and will have a designated public comment period after each agenda item; the intent is to ensure that the GSAs have the opportunity to hear regularly from interested parties on topics under discussion. Additionally, representatives of affected water users will be invited to make periodic presentations at TAC meetings to foster in-depth discussion of GSP-related topics. TAC representation will be revisited on a periodic basis to ensure development of the GSP is well informed.

Public Workshops - Periodic public workshops throughout the subbasin will shape the overall process for SGMA implementation by providing an opportunity for broad stakeholder education, participation and input. Public workshops are expected to take place both in individual GSAs and basin-wide, as needed; the exact approach to structuring public workshops is still under discussion by the Working Group. Public workshops are specifically designed for members of the public and stakeholders who are interested in groundwater to learn about and provide input on GSP development and SGMA implementation. Major decision points on SGMA implementation will be vetted at the workshops. At each workshop, the GSAs will work with the Water Forum to provide information on the progress to-date and request input from interested parties. As possible, other GSA members are encouraged to participate in (or at least attend) all workshops to demonstrate the cross-GSA collaboration and ensure consistency in message.

Standing Advisory Body - The Working Group will assess on an ongoing basis the need, focus and structure of a standing stakeholder advisory body as discussions shift to development of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Project Website - The project website (<http://cosumnes.waterforum.org>) offers a standing opportunity for any interested water users and members of the public to provide ongoing comment. See below for further information about the website.

Point of Contact - The Water Forum will serve as a general point of contact.

Communication Tools

Interested Persons Email List

SGMA mandates the creation of an interested persons list. The facilitator will send periodic email updates to the list, particularly leading up to and following each public workshop. Interested parties can sign up on the website, and staff from all agencies and stakeholders can contribute names of organizations, agencies, and individuals. Whenever individuals inquire about the process or attend a meeting, the project team adds them to the list. The list is broad and includes anyone who would like to stay informed about SGMA activities.

In addition to the interested persons email list, the Water Forum will work with the GSA to identify organizations interested in providing more in-depth briefings and presentations to the TAC, Working Group or both on GSP-related topics. The Water Forum will maintain regular contact with these organizations and their designated representatives.

Website – <http://cosumnes.waterforum.org>

The project website, cosumnes.waterforum.org, is an information repository for the Cosumnes Subbasin groundwater planning process. Background information, meeting materials to date, and a schedule of relevant meeting dates are available on the site. The site also includes a link for interested persons to sign up for regular updates on SGMA-related activities within the subbasin.

Meeting Summaries

The facilitation team will develop a meeting summary following each Working Group and Technical Advisory Committee meeting. These meeting summaries will be reviewed and confirmed by Water Forum and GSA staff before being finalized and posted to the project website. The website contains a publicly accessible archive of all meeting summaries to-date. GSAs and interested parties can share key outcomes with their organizations and interested parties.

Talking Points

The Water Forum will develop and update shared talking points to convey a consistent, unified message across GSAs and throughout the subbasin. Talking points will be organized by category (e.g., governance; public engagement) and drafted with guidance from GSAs.

Public Information Officer

GSAs designated the Water Forum to serve as the Public Information Officer. The Public Information Officer's role is to serve as spokesperson and primary point of contact for the Working Group. Following initial contact, the Public Information Officer may direct media inquiries to GSAs as appropriate. Working Group members are encouraged to forward any media inquiries to the Water Forum. When talking to the press, Working Group members are asked to represent their own views only.

Communications Committee

At this time the Water Forum, with support from the Consensus Building Institute, will manage and guide stakeholder outreach and engagement, with input and direction from the Working Group. The Working Group may elect to form a focused Communications Committee at a later date.

Informational Materials, Developed at Milestones

Informational materials are critical for successful education and the circulation of consistent, accurate information. The Water Forum and facilitation team will develop a range of materials that are Cosumnes Subbasin-specific as well as capitalize on materials developed by the State of California when available. All materials will be posted to cosumnes.waterforum.org.

Strategic Organizational Briefings

Working Group members and other staff may, as appropriate, conduct briefings for organizations to expand outreach to other interest groups or to inform a broad section of the community that might not otherwise attend a public workshop. These outreach efforts will be discussed and confirmed in advance with the Working Group. Interested organizations are encouraged to contact the Water Forum to arrange a briefing.

Advertising Public Engagement Opportunities

The Water Forum will be working to ensure that its outreach efforts are comprehensive in reaching any and all interested stakeholders. Its outreach approach will be updated as it identifies new and better ways to reach interested parties. Public engagement opportunities may be advertised via:

- **Email blasts to the Interested Parties list** – Interested parties can sign up to receive updates and information about upcoming engagement opportunities via periodic email blasts.
- **One-paragraph update** – Text that Working Group members can incorporate into organizational newsletters, blogs, and Facebook posts to reach interested parties.
- **cosumnes.waterforum.org website** – Date and location of the meetings and public workshops will be highlighted on the cosumnes.waterforum.org homepage.

Additionally, the Water Forum will make use of meeting flyers, press releases and direct mailings to residents to ensure interested parties are kept apprised of recent decisions and upcoming public engagement opportunities.

Interested Parties Required for Consideration and Engagement (CA Water Code sec. 10723.2)

California Water Code requires that GSAs consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater, along with an explanation of how their interests will be considered in the development and implementation of a groundwater sustainability plan. GSAs are required to maintain an interested parties list. Interested parties include the following:

- Holders of overlying groundwater rights, including **agricultural users** (irrigated and range lands) and **domestic well owners**
- **Municipal well operators**
- **Public water systems**
- Local **land-use** planning agencies
- **Environmental** users of groundwater
- **Surface water** users (when there is a connection between surface and groundwater bodies)
- The **federal government**
- California Native American **Tribes**
- **Disadvantaged communities** (including but not limited to those served by private domestic wells or state small systems)
- Entities **monitoring and reporting** groundwater elevations

Working Group members will also conduct outreach to engage public agencies (including fire departments and Cal Fire), treaty lands, and other interested parties.

Appendix A: Completed Outreach Activities & Meetings

Date, Activity

March 2017: First public workshop

July 2017: Cosumnes Subbasin website launched (cosumnes.waterforum.org); TAC and Working Group meetings open to the public

October 2017: Three public workshops held in Jackson, Wilton, Galt

Appendix B: Cosumnes Subbasin SGMA Implementation in the Press

Date, Media

October 25, 2017: Galt Herald article – “Groundwater Workshop Tomorrow”

October 18, 2017: River Valley Time article – “Groundwater Workshop Slated in Wilton on Oct. 24”