

Implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in the Cosumnes Subbasin

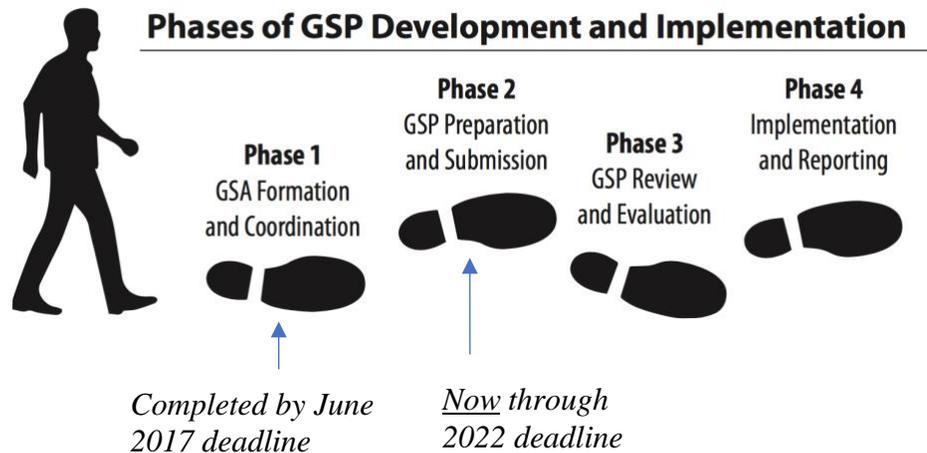
A Summary of October Public Workshops

Background: SGMA Implementation in the Cosumnes Subbasin

Under California law, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) required the Cosumnes Subbasin to form a groundwater sustainability agency or agencies (GSAs) by June 30, 2017. The following seven agencies filed with the state to form a GSA within the Cosumnes Subbasin:

- Omochumne-Hartnell Water District ([link](#))
- Sloughhouse Resource Conservation District ([link](#))
- Galt Irrigation District ([link](#))
- Clay Water District ([link](#))
- City of Galt ([link](#))
- Amador County Groundwater Management Authority ([link](#))
- Sacramento County ([link](#))

SGMA further requires that GSAs **develop one or more coordinated subbasin groundwater sustainability plan(s) (GSP) by 2022**. To this end, the seven GSAs are now engaged in a collaborative group, called the **Cosumnes Subbasin SGMA Working Group**, to develop a roadmap for creating a groundwater sustainability plan(s). The Working Group meets monthly, as does a Technical Advisory Committee that consists of representatives from each GSA and develops technical recommendations in service of the Working Group. The Sacramento Water Forum convenes the Working Group and the Consensus Building Institute, a nonprofit organization specializing in collaborative group process, facilitates Working Group and Technical Advisory Committee meetings.



Background: October Public Workshops

In October 2017, the Water Forum and local groundwater sustainability agencies held a series of three public workshops across the Cosumnes Subbasin. The workshops offered an opportunity for local residents to learn more about the Cosumnes Subbasin's efforts to meet the requirements

of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and to share input on how their area can best implement SGMA locally. The Working Group developed and issued a press release ([link](#)) and fact sheet ([link](#)) in advance of the workshops.

The October workshops took place at the following dates and locations:

Amador Workshop	Mid-County Workshop	West-County Workshop
October 12, 6:30-8:00 pm	October 24, 6:30-8:00 pm	October 26, 6:30-8:00 pm
Amador County Administration Center - Board Chambers 810 Court Street, Jackson	Wilton Community Center 9717 Colony Rd, Wilton	Galt City Council Chambers 380 Civic Drive, Galt

Workshop Attendance

Amador: While eight Working Group members and others directly involved in SGMA implementation attended the October 12 Amador workshop, no members of the public attended. However, Amador County Supervisor Richard Forster posted live updates about the meeting on Facebook. Five or more members of the public responded to the Facebook posts with real-time questions and comments; Working Group members then responded to the posts. The Working Group will consider live-streaming future meetings held in the Amador council chambers.

Wilton: More than ninety members of the public attended the Galt public workshop. For many participants, this workshop provided the first occasion to learn about SGMA implementation. Numerous attendees reside in the city of Elk Grove, which is located in the South American Subbasin — not the Cosumnes Subbasin — and for which Sacramento Central Groundwater Authority (SCGA) serves as the local groundwater sustainability agency. Interested parties may visit the SCGA website at www.scgah2o.org for information about SGMA in the South American Subbasin.

Galt: Two members of the public as well as five Working Group members and others directly involved in SGMA implementation attended the Galt workshop.

The remaining sections of this document summarize the information presented and the input received at the three public workshops.

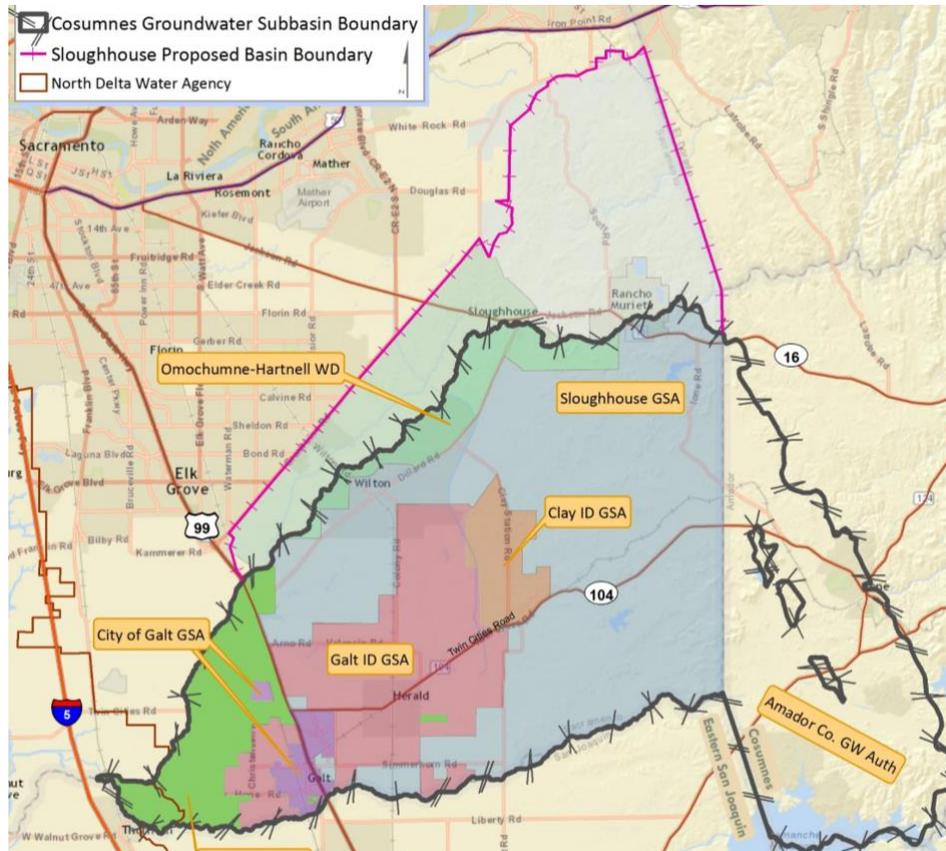
Presentation: SGMA Implementation in the Cosumnes Subbasin

Tom Gohring, Executive Director of the Water Forum, presented on SGMA requirements, why local residents should care about SGMA implementation, the Working Group’s plan for SGMA implementation in the Cosumnes Subbasin, near-term efforts and Proposition 1 grant scope. Julia Golomb, facilitator with the Consensus Building Institute, presented and received participant input on approaches to public outreach and engagement across the subbasin. Workshop slides are posted online ([view](#)).

Summary of Presentation

Why care about SGMA? Because the law could result in:

- Limits on groundwater pumping
- Groundwater fees / taxes
- State control of local groundwater resources



Why should members of the public care about SGMA implementation?

- Avoid state intervention
- Maintain local control
- Keep groundwater available (sustainable)

What does SGMA require?

- Form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) by 2017 (*already completed*)
- Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by 2022
- Achieve sustainability by 2042
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout (*note: the October workshops are part of an ongoing series of public outreach efforts*)
 - Maintain list of interested parties
 - Foster broad participation and input
 - Consider the interests of beneficial uses and users of groundwater in the basin, as well as land uses and property interests potentially affected by groundwater use basin

SGMA is the California legislature’s response to the ongoing problem that groundwater pumping is depleting the Central Valley’s groundwater reserves. SGMA directs DWR to prioritize each groundwater basin in the state using one of four terms: high, medium, low or very low priority. SGMA further directs DWR to determine which high and medium priority basins are “critically overdrafted.”

Key Agencies

Under SGMA, groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) are responsible for local groundwater planning and implementation. The CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) serves as the regulating and assisting agency, and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) serves as the enforcing agency.

GSAs have the authority to measure extractions, conduct studies, manage extractions, assess fees and achieve sustainability.

Timeline

Under SGMA, the Cosumnes Subbasin was required to form one or more GSAs that completely cover the subbasin by June 2017. GSAs in the subbasin are required to develop one or multiple coordinated groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) by January 31, 2022. A GSP contains sustainable groundwater management criteria and implementation thresholds and actions. The subbasin must achieve sustainability (prevent “undesirable results”) within twenty years of adoption of the GSP, by 2022.

Developing the GSP

GSAs have until January 2022 to complete one or more coordinated Groundwater Sustainability Plan(s). The seven GSAs in the subbasin are working to develop a single, integrated plan (or coordinated multiple plan) for the subbasin. The plan(s) will have specific components (e.g. in the form of chapters) unique to each GSA. As previously noted, GSAs must demonstrate sustainability by 2042.

Defining and Demonstrating Sustainability

SGMA defines sustainability as avoiding all of the following “undesirable results” over the long-term:



GSAs must demonstrate a trajectory towards sustainability. Tools to demonstrate sustainability include technical analysis (conceptual model and water budget), computer models to assess future conditions, and defining milestones and thresholds.

SGMA requires a *single* data set, methodology, coordination agreement and point of contact across the subbasin, and *coordinated* groundwater models, sustainable yields, and GSPs (if multiple plans are developed within the basin).

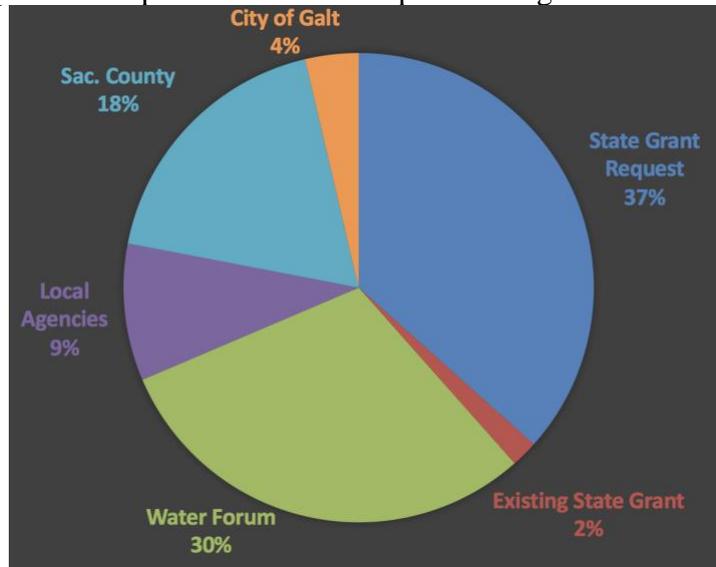
Funding GSP-development: Proposition 1 grant application

The Cosumnes Subbasin is applying for \$1 million in state Prop. 1 grant funding for GSP development. Proposition 1 funds are administered through DWR, with grants up to \$1 million or 50% of the total cost for GSP development (whichever is less), and only one application per basin. These funds are only for GSP preparation and related studies. Application requirements include demonstrated public engagement, a credible scope of work, and demonstration of basin collaboration.

The subbasin’s work plan for GSP development (a key component of the Prop. 1 grant application) utilizes an incremental, five-phase:



While GSAs are still in the early stages of establishing the cost-share for GSP development, they have established an early cost-share estimate. The estimated shares below are likely to change based on projected plan development costs and Prop. 1 funding allocations.



Consequences of Failure

Should the subbasin fail to comply with SGMA, the State Water Resources Control Board may intervene. State intervention is likely to be costly; it could include fees for water extraction and reporting, mandated water meters, water planning fees, and an interim GSP prepared by SWRCB at a cost to the subbasin. Yet ultimately, the subbasin would still need to prepare a SGMA-compliant GSP.

Conclusion: SGMA implementation is complex and high stakes

Required for GSP development:

- Coordination
- Negotiation
- Funding (\$2 million+)
- Lots of outreach
- Complex science
- Joint fact-finding
- Maintain autonomy

Other factors:

- Consequences are high
- Plan is due in 2022
- Autonomy + Single Submittal
- After 2022: annual reports and 5-year updates

SGMA compliance is technically, politically, and financially complex. Additionally, it is high stakes due to the long-term costs and the potential for state intervention and local pushback.

Next Steps

<u>Next 4 Years</u>	<u>2022 thru 2042</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prop. 1 grant application due on November 13, 2017 • Prepare the Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analyses ○ Undesirable Results ○ Sustainable yield ○ Management Actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Plan • Monitoring • Reporting • Possibly: management actions • Unknown: long-term costs

Getting Involved

The seven GSAs in the subbasin organized into a Cosumnes Subbasin Working Group and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in service of the Working Group. Each of these groups meets monthly (the Working Group on the third Wednesday of every month; the TAC, the fourth Monday). All Working Group and TAC meetings are open to the public. The meeting schedule, agendas, summaries and other materials are posted to cosumnes.waterforum.org. Additionally, the Working Group will hold periodic public workshops throughout the planning effort and draft documents will be available for public review and comment.

Engaging Water Users and the Public

Question for workshop attendees: *How does the Cosumnes Subbasin Working Group ensure that interested water users are well informed and their perspectives are meaningfully informing plan development?*

- What frequency of involvement?
- Where and when?
- What topics are of greatest interest to you?

- How to get the word out?

Participant Input

Participants at the three October workshops asked questions and shared input on SGMA implementation in the Cosumnes Subbasin. Below is a summary of key input received.

Key Input: Overarching Themes and Questions

- Numerous participants expressed a strong desire to **avoid well metering**, to **maintain local control** and to **avoid state intervention**.
- Several people stated their concern that this process would lead to costs that they will ultimately bear.
- Are mining and miners considered beneficial use and users of groundwater? *Response: Mining and miners are not included on the list of beneficial uses and users as outlined in Water Code Sections 10723.8(a)(4) and 10723.2 ([link](#)).*
- How does the Cosumnes Working Group plan to engage the four tribes within the subbasin? *Response: Some tribal representatives have already been attending Working Group and TAC monthly meetings. As well, GSAs and Water Forum staff have previously initiated contacts with tribal representatives. Moving forward, the Working Group will be refining the subbasin's Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan, which will include an approach for fostering in-depth understanding and consideration of tribal interests.*
- Several attendees expressed their views that there is not a local groundwater problem and shared their frustration that SGMA would apply to this region.
- How will an increase in the local population affect groundwater demand? *Response: Groundwater planning models will factor in possible land use changes and take into account scenarios of increased housing density as well as scenarios of increased recharge.*
- What local efforts are underway to enhance groundwater storage and recharge? *Response: Omochumne-Hartnell Water District has two projects to support increased groundwater storage ([link](#) to learn more).*
- What state-wide efforts are underway to enhance surface and groundwater storage?
- Suggestion to develop a map that shows where the Cosumnes Subbasin is situated in the context of neighboring basins.
- Request to publish a list of GSA board members on the Cosumnes Subbasin website.

Key Input: Considerations for Public Outreach and Engagement

- Many participants expressed a desire for ongoing information about and involvement with SGMA implementation in the Cosumnes Subbasin.
- The Cosumnes groundwater website, interested parties email list, and periodic public workshops are seen as useful resources for engagement.
- Consider hosting a future Amador County workshop in the same location (Council Chambers), with more thorough advertising and livestreaming of the event.
- The Working Group is at the very beginning of the GSP-development process and needs stakeholder ideas, input and local knowledge. As such, Working Group members (local GSAs) seek ongoing stakeholder involvement.

- Several participants expressed a desire for data transparency throughout the GSP-development process. The Working Group's intent is to maximize transparency by publicly sharing preliminary data and assumptions before these assumptions are finalized.