



CRITICAL SGMA FUNDING ISSUES



AGENDA

1. Procedural Considerations for Adopting Fees
2. Substantive Considerations in Fee Design
3. Defining Budget Priorities and Cost Coverage
4. De Minimis Pumpers
5. Alternative Legal Authorities for Setting Rates
6. Which Entity will Levy the Fees/Assessments
7. Importance of Stakeholder Outreach and Communication

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INTRODUCTION

New and expanded efforts to manage groundwater require new and expanded financing. To date GSAs have received nearly \$1 billion in state investments made possible in large part by California's budget surplus. More than half of that money has been dedicated to local agencies' planning and implementation efforts and the remainder has enabled state agencies' oversight, support, and enforcement. However, long-term funding for SGMA implementation will likely need to be generated largely at the local level, where GSAs must navigate a complex, resource-constrained landscape. As GSAs shift from SGMA's planning stage to project implementation, resource constraints are likely to become more significant. Recognizing this need, SGMA gives GSAs the authority to generate revenue.

MORE STATE AND LOCAL ATTENTION TO FINANCING CAN ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT

APRIL 2025 POLICY BRIEF

UC BERKELEY LAW

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A landscape photograph of a field with a path leading to a distant horizon under a cloudy sky. The foreground is filled with tall, green grass. A path or road winds through the middle ground, leading towards a line of trees on the horizon. The sky is overcast with grey clouds, and there's a hint of a rainbow or light breaking through in the distance.

PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADOPTING FEES

SGMA FEE AUTHORITY

- ❖ SGMA provides alternative and supplemental fee authority.
- ❖ Water Code section 10730:
 - ☐ Permit fees, extraction fees, regulatory fees.
 - ☐ Fund costs of preparing, adopting, amending a groundwater sustainability program and other regulatory activity.
 - ☐ Adopted at a noticed public hearing; must be supported by evidence
- ❖ Water Code section 10730.2
 - ☐ Extraction fees to fund groundwater management activities.
 - ☐ SGMA subjects these fees to procedural and substantive requirements of Proposition 218.

WATER CODE SECTION 10730.2

❖ SGMA requires compliance with Proposition 218 notice, hearing, and protest requirements:

- ❑ Notice must be mailed at least 45 days prior to the public hearing.
 - Who should get the notices? Property owners?
Pumpers?
- ❑ Fees cannot be adopted if there is a majority protest
 - Who gets to submit a protest?

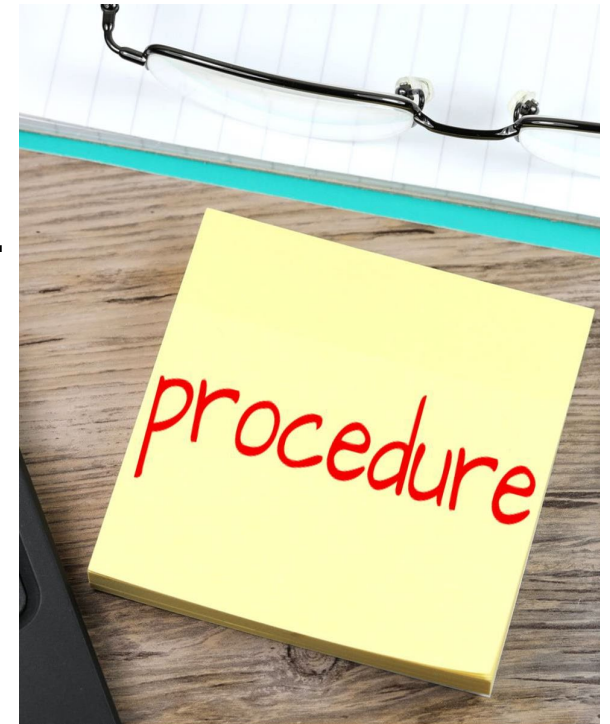


AB 2257: GOV. CODE. § 53759.1 THE EXHAUSTION OF REMEDIES REQUIREMENT

- ❖ ACWA-sponsored bill.
- ❖ Effective January 1, 2025.
- ❖ Available for property-related water and sewer service fees, as well as special benefit assessment
 - ☐ But, is it available for SGMA fees?
- ❖ Section 53759.1 creates an optional “Exhaustion of Remedies Requirement” that public agencies may implement.
 - ☐ Failure to exhaust bars legal recourse.

AB 2257: GOV. CODE. § 53759.2 THE EXTRA RECORD EVIDENCE REQUIREMENT

- ❖ Section 53759.2 prescribes
 - ❑ what evidence a court may review and
 - ❑ the limited circumstances when extra-record evidence may be admitted.
- ❖ BUT ONLY IF YOU FOLLOW THE PROCEDURES IN 53759.1



HOW TO IMPLEMENT AB 2257

- ❖ Option to adopt ordinance or resolution establishing objection procedure, AND/OR specify Agency intends to implement AB 2257 in fee study or engineer's report and in Prop. 218 notice.
- ❖ Include specific language in Prop. 218 notice regarding written objection process and deadlines.
- ❖ Specify in Prop. 218 notice that written objections must be clearly labeled and sent separately from protests or ballots (otherwise, staff won't know to open, review, and prepare responses before protest hearing).
- ❖ Protests v. Objections – keep the terminology clear and distinct.
- ❖ Post “written basis” for proposed fee or assessment on Agency's website no less than 45 days before deadline to submit written objections.
- ❖ Objection procedure runs parallel to Prop. 218 protest hearing or special assessment ballot proceeding.
- ❖ Establishes a floor, not a ceiling. Agency can add more “process” if it would like to.

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ Do procedural considerations and defenses apply to SGMA fees?
 - ❑ SGMA fees are not property-related fees for water or sewer service (*See City of San Buenaventura v. United Water Conservation Dist.* (2017) 3 Cal.5th 1191)
 - ❑ AB 2257 has limited applicability, but does that matter?
- ❖ What about the statute of limitations?
 - ❑ SB 323 creates a 120-day statute of limitations, and procedural requirements for filing lawsuits.
 - ❑ Applies to water and sewer fees.
 - ❑ SGMA has a more specific 180-day statute of limitations and has other procedural requirements including payment under protest and claims requirements.

**SUBSTANTIVE
CONSIDERATIONS IN FEE
DESIGN**

WATER CODE SECTION 10730 AND PROPOSITION 26

- ❖ Fees imposed under Water Code section 10730 are subject to Proposition 26
 - ❑ All fees are taxes unless explicitly exempt.
 - ❑ Must not exceed proportional cost of service, benefit, or regulatory activity.
 - ❑ Local government bears burden of proof that the fee is not a tax, and that it does not exceed the benefits received from or burdens placed on local government.
- ❖ *Garst v. Tehama County Flood Control and Water Conservation District*
 - ❑ County-wide well registration fee imposed on each legal parcel in County to fund data collection necessary for SGMA compliance was a “tax”; currently on appeal at the California Court of Appeal.

WATER CODE SECTION 10730.2 AND PROPOSITION 218

- ❖ Water Code section 10730.2 subjects groundwater extraction fees to substantive requirements of Proposition 218.
 - ❑ Revenue cannot exceed proportional cost of service.
 - ❑ Revenues must only be used for purpose for which they are imposed All fees are taxes unless explicitly exempt.
 - ❑ Must not exceed proportional cost of service, benefit, or regulatory activity.
 - ❑ Local government bears the burden of proving compliance with substantial evidence that can withstand independent review.
 - Is this the correct standard?

WATER CODE SECTION 10730.2 AND PROPOSITION 218

- ❖ Fees may be imposed on a volumetric basis, on annual production, or using other appropriate methodologies, so long as costs are proportionately allocated.
 - ❑ Apportionment is not a determination that lends itself to precise calculation (*Griffith v. Pajaro Valley Water Mgmt. Agency*).
 - ❑ Agencies must be given reasonable degree of flexibility to apportion costs (*Moore v. City of Lemon Grove*).
 - ❑ Scrutiny on differential treatment (*Coziahr v. Otay Water Dist.*).
 - ❑ Tiered rates must be supported by substantial evidence; unclear what will be sufficient (*Patz v. City of San Diego*).



WATER CODE SECTION 10730.2 AND PROPOSITION 218

❖ How to establish cost-based fees:

- ❑ Each rate making decision must be based on a cost-based reason.
- ❑ Tiers and tier break-points must reflect costs of service.
- ❑ Retain a reputable consultant and give them plenty of time to gather and analyze best available data.
- ❑ Involve legal counsel early.
- ❑ Show your work and tell a clear story.
 - Remember: the target audience includes both your customers and a judge, who must independently conclude that the rates are supported by substantial evidence.
 - A court will not uphold rates they do not understand.
 - Consider outreach to get public informed and on board.



Funding Mechanism	Regulatory Mechanism	Ballot Required	Approval	Collection	Public Outreach Requirements
Regulatory Fee	Proposition 26	No	Board Approval	Direct or County Tax Roll	Public Meeting Notice
Property Related Fee	Proposition 218	No	No Majority Protest and Board Approval	Direct or County Tax Roll	Mailed Notice to impacted customers, Public Hearing
Benefit Assessment	Proposition 218	Yes	No Majority Protest and Board Approval	Direct or County Tax Roll	Mailed Notice to impacted customers, Public Hearing
Special Tax	California Government Code	Yes	Two-thirds approval from electorate	County Tax Roll	Mailed Notice to impacted customers, Public Hearing

Reference: DWR's Funding SGMA Implementation Guide, March 2024



DEFINING COST COVERAGE AND BUDGET PRIORITIES

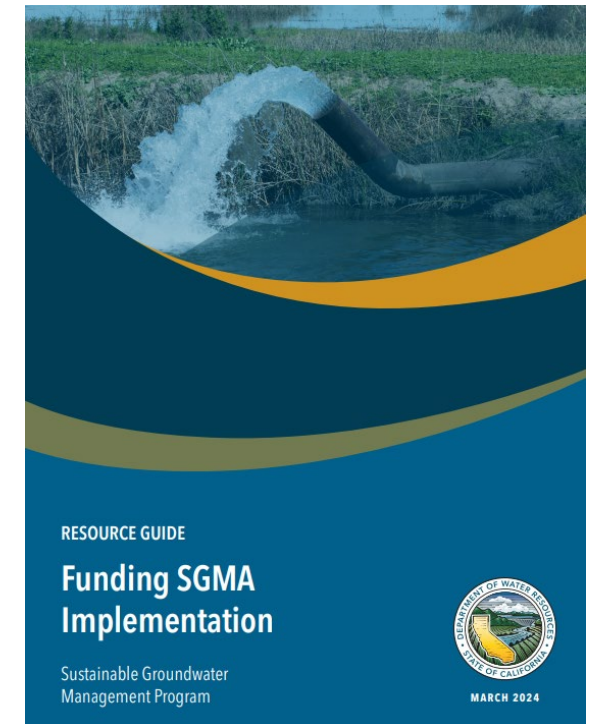
THE UNFUNDED MANDATE: COMMON GSA CHALLENGES

- ❖ GSP Updates.
- ❖ P/MAs.
- ❖ Data issues.
- ❖ Accounting programs.
- ❖ Multi-benefit Land Repurposing Program.
- ❖ Groundwater Allocations.
- ❖ Other: Investigations, inspections, compliance assistance, enforcement, program administration, etc.



GSA FUNDING

- ❖ Initially, DWR awarded more than \$500 million for the development and implementation of GSPs.
- ❖ No resources to fund costs of SGMA implementation over the 20-year horizon
- ❖ Now, GSAs must self-fund.
- ❖ See DWR's March 2024 Resource Guide.
- ❖ DWR is planning to release final guidance for interconnected surface water and subsidence.
- ❖ 2025/2027 5-year updates.
- ❖ Possible water bond in the works, but still in very early stages of discussion.



WHAT WILL THE REVENUE FUND?

❖ ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

- ❑ “Administrations, operations, and maintenance, including a prudent reserve.” (See Wat. Code § 10730.2(a)(1)).

❖ DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GSPS

- ❑ “Other activities necessary or convenient to implement the plan.” (See Wat. Code § 10730.2(a)(4)).

❖ MITIGATION

- ❑ “Acquisition of lands or other property, facilities, and services.” (See Wat. Code § 10730.2(a)(2)).
- ❑ “Supply, production, treatment, or distribution of water.” (See Wat. Code § 10730.2(a)(3)).

DOMESTIC WELL MITIGATION FEES

- ❖ SGMA: Consideration of all beneficial uses and users
 - ❑ Municipal entities, small communities, and individual domestic wells.
 - ❑ Human Right to Water (AB 685).
- ❖ DWR March 2023 Guidance on Water Well Impacts:

"While SGMA does not require that all impacts to individual drinking water well users be avoided or mitigated, SGMA and other state laws and policies do require deliberate and careful consideration and a well-supported management approach regarding potential impacts to these users."
- ❖ Domestic Well Mitigation Fee Programs.
 - ❑ No funding provided.

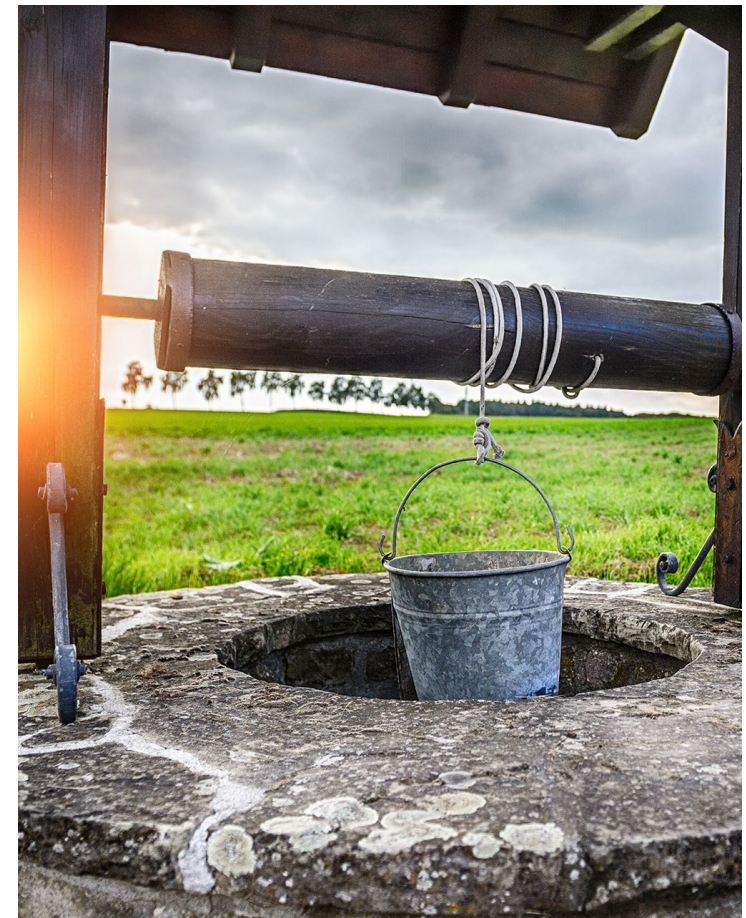


An aerial view of a pump system installed on a sandy bank next to a body of water. The pump, which is dark-colored and mounted on a metal frame, is connected to a long horizontal pipe that extends into the water. A large, turbulent plume of white water is being discharged from the end of the pipe into the water, creating a significant splash and foam. The surrounding area is dry and sandy with some sparse green grass. A yellow rectangular border is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the title text.

TREATMENT OF DE MINIMIS PUMPERS

DE MINIMIS PUMPERS

- ❖ Groundwater extractors using ≤ 2 acre-feet (AF) per year for domestic purposes (Wat. Code § 10721(e)).
- ❖ Represents a significant portion of users. Often thousands in basins, but low individual impact on overdraft.



LEGAL TREATMENT

Exempt from GSA fees?

- ❖ Likely depends on fee authority used and structure of fee.
 - ❑ Regulatory Fees/Prop. 26/Water Code section 10730.
 - According to DWR's SGMA Funding Guide: Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) cannot impose extraction or regulatory fees on de minimis users to implement sustainability plans, *UNLESS* the agency has determined to regulate de minimis extractors. (Wat. Code § 10730)
 - ❑ Prop. 218/Water Code section 10730.2 – property related fees or assessments.
 - Proportionality, subsidy concerns.
 - "General benefit"?

CURRENT SWRCB GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION FEES

Fee Category	Fee Amount	Applicable Parties
Annual Base Filing Fee	\$300 per well	All extractors required to report (excludes de minimis extractors).
Unmanaged Area Rate	\$10 per acre-foot (AF) (metered)	Extractors in unmanaged areas (excludes de minimis extractors).
	\$25 per AF (unmetered)	
Volumetric Rate	\$20 per AF	Extractors in probationary basins (excludes de minimis extractors).
Interim Plan Rate	\$35 per AF	Extractors in probationary basins where the State Water Board determines an interim plan is required (excludes de minimis extractors).
De minimis Fee	\$100 per well	De minimis extractors in probationary basins (only required if the State Water Board determines at a public hearing that de minimis pumpers must report extractions and pay fees).
Automatic Late Fee	25% per month	Extractors that do not file reports by the due date.

SHOULD WE CHARGE DE MINIMIS PUMPERS?

❖ Pros of Exemption:

- ❑ Reduces administrative burden (e.g., staff time tracking low-volume users and generating bills).
- ❑ Reduces burden on a group of pumpers who may be low-income households/small operations.

❖ Cons & Risks:

- ❑ Shifts costs to other pumpers (e.g., ag users pay full tiered fees), risking opposition and legal challenges.

CASE STUDY: FEE PROPOSAL

- ❖ Consumption-Based Fees: Volumetric charges on consumptive use (acre-feet, AF) to fund SGMA implementation (e.g., monitoring, annual reports, demand reduction programs).
 - ❑ Agricultural users: \$58.71–\$73.12/AF (95.5% of basin use; projected 20% reduction by 2030).
 - ❑ Commercial/public water systems: \$28.65–\$35.55/AF.
- ❖ De Minimis Treatment: Exempt from fees (≤ 2 AF/year; $\sim 1.8\%$ of total use or 997 AF/year, mostly domestic with high return flows via septic).
 - ❑ Costs ($\sim \$27\text{k}/\text{year}$ for primary services) covered by member GSAs via contributions/in-kind.
 - ❑ Optional \$100/well fee pending State Water Board approval.
 - ❑ Rural domestic parcels not noticed or protested under Prop 218.
 - ❑ Small farmers (e.g., dry farmers of vineyards) contested de minimis classification.

OUTCOME OF PROP 218 PROTEST

❖ Fees Abandoned:

- ❑ Majority protest (689/1,283 parcels; 53.7%) blocked implementation on Aug 1, 2025.
- ❑ Only non-de minimis parcels (farmers/commercial) eligible to protest.
- ❑ Domestic users excluded, sparking petitions for inclusion (536 signatures).

❖ Immediate Shortfall:

- ❑ ~\$286k gap for FY 2025, covering consultants, reports, and well verification.
- ❑ Risk of state intervention if unfunded.

❖ De Minimis Role:

- ❑ Remains exempt; focus shifts to targeting high-volume users while protecting smallholders to avoid legal challenges.

The background image shows a vast agricultural landscape. In the foreground and middle ground, a series of long, straight rows of young green plants are visible in a field. A complex network of irrigation pipes and nozzles is active, creating a dense mist of water droplets that catch the light. In the background, a steep, densely forested hill rises under a sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene conveys a sense of large-scale agricultural production and water management.

ALTERNATIVE LEGAL AUTHORITIES FOR SETTING RATES

SGMA FUNDING OPTIONS

- ❖ While not exhaustive, five common self-funding mechanisms available to GSAs for SGMA implementation are listed below.
 - ❑ Existing Funding Source(s).
 - ❑ Regulatory Fee.
 - ❑ Property Related Fee.
 - ❑ Benefit Assessment.
 - ❑ Special Taxes.



SGMA SPECIFIC FEE AUTHORITY WATER CODE SECTION 10730 AND 10730.2

WATER CODE SECTION 10730: FEES ALLOWED PRIOR TO ADOPTING A GSP

- ❖ Authority to impose fees to fund the cost of implementing a GSP and its projects. (“**Pre-GSP fees**”).
- ❖ TYPE OF FEES: Permit Fees, Per-Acre Fees and Extraction Fees.
- ❖ PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS: Public hearing and other set forth in SGMA.
- ❖ PROPOSITION 218: SGMA is silent on whether Pre-GSP fees must comply with Proposition 218. Consensus is that these are regulatory fees for SGMA implementation and are exempt from Prop 218.
- ❖ PROPOSITION 26: All pre-GSP fees imposed pursuant to SGMA without Proposition 218 compliance must be imposed in a manner to fall within Proposition 26’s exceptions.

SGMA SPECIFIC FEE AUTHORITY WATER CODE SECTION 10730 AND 10730.2

WATER CODE SECTION 10730.2: FEES ALLOWED AFTER ADOPTING A GSP

- ❖ Authority to impose fees to fund the cost of implementing the GSP, including enforcement, admin, operation, and project implementation. ("**Post-GSP fees**").
- ❖ TYPE OF FEES: Per-acre fees and groundwater extraction fees.
- ❖ PROPOSITION 218: Unlike fees imposed pursuant to Section 10730, discussed, above, SGMA requires that groundwater extraction fees imposed pursuant to section 10730.2 to fund costs of groundwater management after the adoption of a GSP must be adopted in accordance with Proposition 218.

FUNDING SGMA ACTIVITIES USING NON-SGMA AUTHORITY

- ❖ In addition to authority granted by SGMA, GSAs retain their underlying powers to generate revenue, and this may be a better option.
 - ❑ For example, we just discussed the fact that under Water Code Section 10730.2 to impose a post-SGMA groundwater extraction or per acre charge, the GSA must comply with Proposition 218. This is not a Prop 218 requirement but is required by SGMA.
 - ❑ In 2017 the California Supreme Court, in *City of Buenaventura v. United Water Conservation Dist.* confirmed groundwater pumping charges are not property-related fees subject to Proposition 218. Therefore, if a GSA imposes such a fee under its independent powers and does not rely on SGMA, it is not constrained by Prop 218.
 - ❑ However, the Supreme Court provided no opinion as to whether groundwater pumping charges imposed under SGMA were subject to Proposition 218. In fact, the court went so far as to indicate it is “unclear” that by enacting SGMA provision § 10730.2(c) the legislature intended to express any judgment on the interpretative question if such charges were subject to proposition 218. Further, the court held such constitutional interpretation must ultimately be determined by the courts.

TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY

- ❖ If you are using the regulatory pathway to avoid Proposition 218 under Section 10730 you cannot impose fees on *de minimis* users unless you have previously regulated the user.
- ❖ Once you adopt a GSP you can no longer use the regulatory fees imposed under Section 10730 to cover costs. You may still, however, impose penalties, late fees, and other fines through the regulatory process.
- ❖ If your GSA is a joint powers agency – remember that you can only exercise powers that are shared by all JPA members.
 - ❑ All members may not have the legal authority to impose groundwater charges, in which case the JPA would have to default to the SGMA authorized charge, which requires Prop 218 compliance.
 - ❑ Regulatory fees are imposed under the police power, which may not be shared by all members of a JPA.
- ❖ Remember that Proposition 218 has both procedural and substantive requirements.

A modern conference room with a large white table, ergonomic chairs, and a large screen displaying a world map and meeting agenda. The room has large windows on the left side, providing a view of a city skyline. The ceiling features circular pendant lights. The text "WHICH ENTITY WILL LEVY THE FEES/ASSESSMENTS" is overlaid in the center of the image.

WHICH ENTITY WILL LEVY THE FEES/ASSESSMENTS

COMMON GSA GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

❖ Single GSA.

- ❑ Formed by one or more local agencies acting jointly as a single GSA - may be a joint powers authority (JPA).
- ❑ GSP implementation conducted by a single governing entity.

❖ GSA Collective (via a JPA).

- ❑ Formed by two or more GSAs under a joint powers agreement.
- ❑ GSP implementation carried out collectively by the JPA and its member GSAs.

❖ Multiple GSAs Within a Basin.

- ❑ No formal combined entity; each GSA operates independently.
- ❑ GSP implementation carried out by multiple GSAs (possibly under an MOU).

POTENTIAL LEVYING ENTITIES & FEE AUTHORITY

GSA

Made up of one or more member agencies

Fee authority granted directly under SGMA

Joint Powers Authority

Made up of one or more GSAs

Fee authority granted directly under SGMA ("common powers")

Non-GSA Entities

May be a part of a GSA

Fee authority not granted by SGMA; relies on other authority.

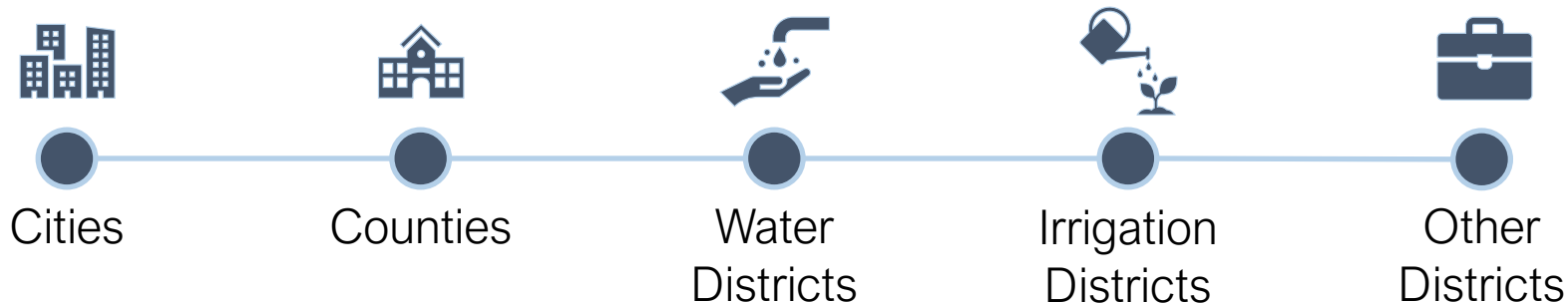
GSA FEE IMPLEMENTATION

- ❖ Single-Agency GSA.
 - ❑ Streamlined and consistent approach to fee implementation.
- ❖ GSA Collective (via a JPA).
 - ❑ Potential for either broad or localized approach to fee implementation.
- ❖ Multiple GSAs under an MOU.
 - ❑ Separate fee implementation necessary; no collective levying entity.



NON-GSA FEE IMPLEMENTATION

- ❖ Non-GSA entities must rely on other statutory authority to fund groundwater management activities.
- ❖ SGMA Fee provisions (Water Code § 10730 / § 10730.2) apply only to GSAs.
- ❖ Fee authority varies by agency type and may derive from:
 - ❑ District-specific enabling acts.
 - ❑ General statutes authorizing certain district types (e.g., water districts, irrigation districts) to impose rates.
- ❖ Coordination and legal review are essential to ensure fees align with each agency's statutory authority.



CONSIDERATIONS: OUTREACH & POLITICAL VIABILITY

- ❖ Familiarity With the Levying Agency.
 - ❑ Consider agency strengths and weaknesses in terms of community perspective.
- ❖ Prioritizing Consistency vs. Localized Approach.
 - ❑ Consider pros and cons of a consistent approach across a basin.
- ❖ Alignment Across Agencies and Stakeholders
 - ❑ Consistent messaging among GSAs, member agencies, and partners prevents confusion.



CASE STUDY: COSUMNES GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

❖ Cosumnes Groundwater Authority (CGA):

- ❑ Joint powers authority consisting of seven member agencies (all separate GSAs).
- ❑ Single GSP covering the Cosumnes Subbasin (Amador and Sacramento Counties).

❖ CGA Fee Program:

- ❑ Uniform methodology across all GSAs (hybrid methodology with three charge types).
- ❑ Fees levied by individual GSAs.
- ❑ Methodology informs annual GSA contributions to the Authority – GSAs can lower rates if alternative revenue is available to supplement contributions.

❖ Key Takeaways:

- ❑ Determining a uniform methodology across seven agencies presents challenges.
- ❑ GSAs levying fees individually provides a compromise between consistency and localized approach.

A wide river flows through a landscape with grassy banks and hills in the background. The river is the central focus, with its surface reflecting the sky. The banks are covered in green grass and some shrubs. In the distance, there are hills and some power lines. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

IMPORTANCE OF STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

IMPORTANCE OF SGMA OUTREACH

❖ Building trust.

- ❑ Establishing credibility and transparency with groundwater users is essential to long-term success.
- ❑ Early engagement builds understanding and reduces skepticism toward agency decisions (like fees!).

❖ Developing a partnership.

- ❑ True local control depends on collaboration with stakeholders who are directly affected by management actions - shared ownership of solutions fosters sustained support for basin programs.

❖ Supporting Funding Efforts.

- ❑ Effective outreach is critical to successful fee or assessment adoption.
- ❑ Stakeholders are more likely to support costs when they understand the need, use, and benefits.

CHALLENGES IN SGMA OUTREACH

❖ Limited Awareness.

- ❑ Many groundwater users are unfamiliar with their GSA, SGMA requirements, or sustainability goals.
- ❑ Limited understanding of the benefits of groundwater management reduces engagement and support.

❖ Distrust in Government.

- ❑ General skepticism toward new agencies, fees, and taxation.
- ❑ SGMA may be perceived as top-down or politically driven (“What am I getting for my money?”).

❖ Essential Nature of Water.

- ❑ Water directly affects livelihoods, health, and quality of life.
- ❑ Users may resist additional costs for access to a resource viewed as a basic necessity.

SOLUTIONS IN SGMA OUTREACH

- ❖ Engage Early and Often.
 - ❑ Begin outreach well before fee development.
 - ❑ Balance listening and educating, tailoring engagement to community needs and preferences.
- ❖ Tell the GSA's Story.
 - ❑ Explain how the basin reached its current conditions and the path toward sustainability.
 - ❑ Emphasize maintaining local control and protecting the local way of life.
- ❖ Communicate Clearly and Ground Messaging in Data.
 - ❑ Use basin-specific data and real examples to connect technical findings to practical outcomes that resonate with stakeholders.
 - ❑ Clearly explain how fees are calculated, what they fund, and how they support sustainability goals.

SGMA OUTREACH IN PRACTICE

❖ Community Meetings.

- ❑ Pair fee or revenue discussions with project-focused topics to establish relevance.
- ❑ Use meetings to develop familiarity and reinforce the GSA's story.

❖ Stakeholder Groups.

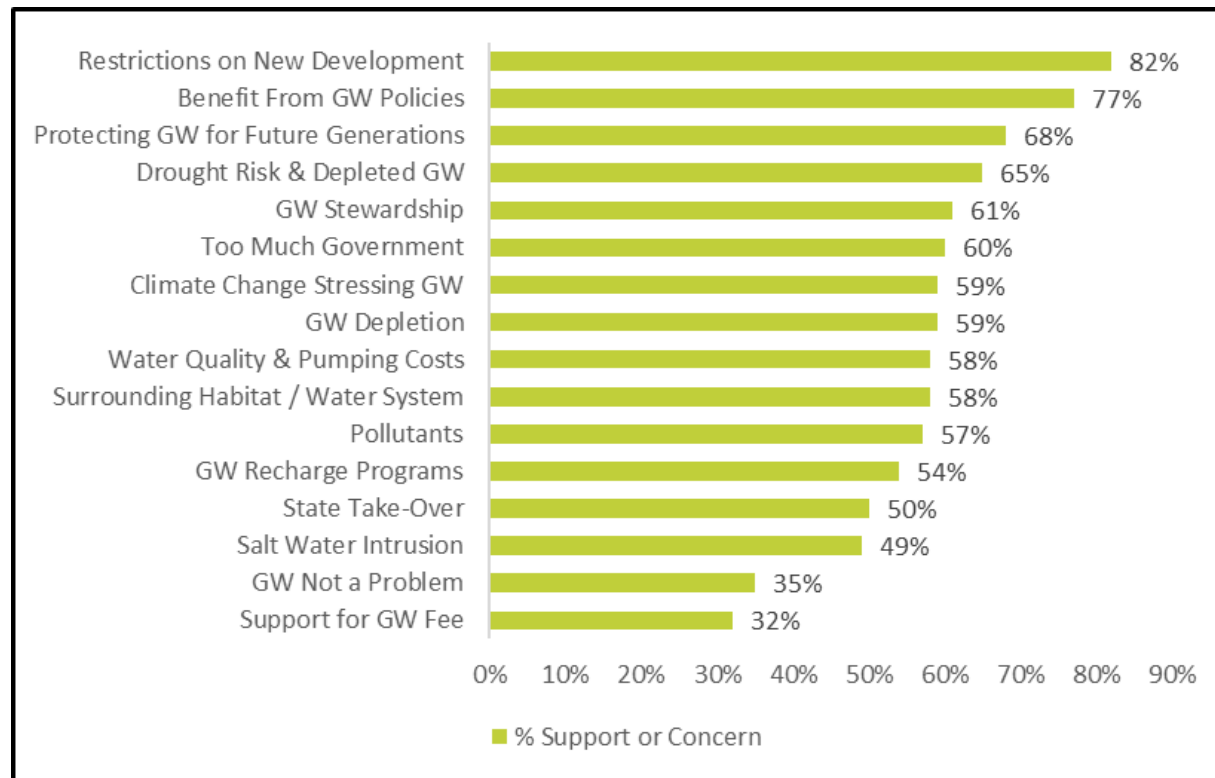
- ❑ Small, informal groups can generate authentic feedback from groundwater users.
- ❑ Encourage collaboration and two-way communication throughout the process.

❖ Surveys.

- ❑ Gather input on community priorities and perceptions.
- ❑ Use results to shape messaging, sustainability strategies, and viable fee structures.

SONOMA COUNTY GROUNDWATER USER SURVEY - 2020

2020 Survey Of Well Owners, Petaluma Valley GSA



PETALUMA VALLEY Groundwater Sustainability Plan

Information Fact Sheet

Why Am I Receiving This Survey?

You own a parcel of land, located within the Petaluma Valley Groundwater Subbasin, that uses or likely uses groundwater. Groundwater provides about half of our overall local water supply. Groundwater is water stored beneath the Earth's surface in aquifers filling the pore spaces between soil particles, sands and gravels, and fractures of rock formations. Groundwater can appear on the surface in seeps and wetlands, and provides water to creeks and ponds. Groundwater can be extracted through a well drilled into the aquifer.

During the recent drought, California recognized the importance of managing groundwater basins, resulting in statewide legislation in 2014. As a result of the legislation, three new agencies were formed in Sonoma County, including here in the Petaluma Valley, with the single purpose of managing threatened groundwater supplies. A primary goal of the Petaluma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency ("Agency") is to inform local well owners and groundwater users of the challenges and benefits of managing the groundwater basins and the actions being planned to protect this valuable resource. By participating in this survey, you will be providing important information that will help guide the efforts of the Agency. Furthermore, your input will help the Agency with implementing and achieving our groundwater sustainability goals.

The three groundwater basins in Sonoma County that must comply with the new state law are:

- Petaluma Valley
- Santa Rosa Plain
- Sonoma Valley

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to Address Groundwater Challenges

For the first time in its history, California has a framework for sustainable groundwater management, which is "management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results." In 2014, the State of California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA, called "Sigma" for short), which substantially improves how groundwater is managed in California. SGMA requires that groundwater basins in California designated as "medium priority," "high priority" or "critically overdrafted" be managed sustainably.

Petaluma Valley GSA Basin Boundary Map

GSAs in Sonoma County

Groundwater Sustainability Plan ("GSP") Goals and Requirements

The primary goals of the GSP are to...

- Integrate the perspectives and interests of the many diverse users and uses of groundwater resources within the basin through a process providing opportunity for significant public and community engagement.
- Locally develop measurable, science-based goals for the amount and quality of groundwater in our basin for the next 50 years.

Additional Information

We invite you to learn more about the Petaluma Valley Groundwater Basin online at:

<http://www.petalumavalleygroundwater.org/>

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QUESTIONS?