

RECOMMENDATIONS

SANTA ROSA PLAIN Groundwater Sustainability Agency Formation

Spring 2017



California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requires certain groundwater basins to form a public agency to manage groundwater, develop a groundwater management plan, and meet groundwater sustainability requirements.

The first major requirement is to form a groundwater sustainability agency, known as a GSA, by June 30, 2017. Local agencies have been meeting over the last two years to develop consensus on the best way to form a GSA to meet the state's deadline.

In the Santa Rosa Plain basin, the following recommendation is taking shape. The GSA would cover the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin designated in California's Department of Water Resources Bulletin 118 (see map). Other Sonoma County groundwater basins immediately affected by SGMA – Sonoma Valley and Petaluma Valley – would be covered by separate GSAs, although all three basins are committed to coordinating activities and management to maximize efficiency and reduce costs.

Groundwater Sustainability Agency Proposal

A collaborative work group has developed the GSA formation recommendation, briefings at local organizations, and at several public workshops. GSA-eligible agencies will receive the recommendations and make the ultimate decision on GSA-formation.

Governing board with 10 directors

Recommendation -- Board of 10 directors representing GSA-eligible agencies: Cities of Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa and Sebastopol; Town of Windsor; County of Sonoma; Sonoma County Water Agency; Gold Ridge and Sonoma Resource Conservation Districts; appointee from Mutual-PUC-regulated water companies

Adding new members

Agencies that are GSA-eligible (have water management, water supply or land use responsibilities) and that want to serve on the governing board can join the GSA. New agencies that are in the process of formation will be given a non-voting seat, upon meeting certain requirements.

Voting

- One director = one vote
- Simple majority (5 of 9 votes) for routine business
- Supermajority (75%) for major decisions
e.g. the groundwater sustainability plan, annual budget, regulations, and fees
- Unanimous vote required for financial assessments on member agencies

The supermajority voting requirements are intended to **build consensus** within the governing board and among groundwater users, creating **incentives** to come together to solve problems to meet sustainability targets. These voting provisions recognize that basin interests are varied and must build unanimity to advance measures and achieve sustainability.

Advisory board

The governing board will receive input and recommendations from a 18-member advisory board that represents diverse stakeholder interests. The purpose of the advisory board is to provide input and recommendations to the governing body on groundwater sustainability plan development and implementation and GSA policies. The intent of the body is to provide community perspective and participation in the GSA.

GSA-ELIGIBLE ENTITY APPOINTMENTS	AT-LARGE APPOINTMENTS
One from each entity participating in GSA: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cotati 2. Rohnert Park 3. Santa Rosa 4. Sebastopol 5. Windsor 6. Sonoma County 7. Sonoma County Water Agency 8. Sonoma Resource Conservation District 9. Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District 10. Mutual/PUC 	Represent SGMA-defined stakeholders: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental representative 2. Environmental representative 3. Rural residential well owner 4. Rural residential well owner 5. Business community representative 6. Agricultural interest (surface water or GW user) 7. Agricultural interest (surface water or GW user) 8. Graton Rancheria
Total of 10	Total of 8
Appointed by Boards and Councils	Appointed by GSA Board (except Graton Rancheria)
Each entity determines process	Formal application process

Funding and legal structure

- **The GSA will be a self-funded agency and need to develop a funding structure.** The GSA will pursue grants and other funding opportunities to help offset the local costs associated with implementing SGMA. The GSA governing board will be able to assess **fees** consistent with existing laws for public agencies.
- The Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency’s legal structure will be a **joint powers authority**. All the GSA-eligible public agencies will sign the agreement and contribute initial funding for GSA operations until the GSA develops its funding structure.

State Backstop

- If the Santa Rosa Plain fails to meet the requirements of the law, including forming a GSA by 2017, developing a groundwater sustainability plan by 2022, or achieving sustainability within 20 years, the State of California will intervene to manage the groundwater basin.