

RECOMMENDATIONS

SONOMA VALLEY 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 Sonoma Valley basin, the following recommendation is taking shape. The GSA would cover the Sonoma Valley groundwater basin designated in California's Department of Water Resources Bulletin 118 (see map).

Other Sonoma County groundwater basins immediately affected by SGMA – Santa Rosa Plain 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, taking input through 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 six directors

Recommendation -- Board of six directors representing GSA-eligible agencies: City of Sonoma, Valley of the Moon Water District, Sonoma Resource Conservation District, North Bay Water District, County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Water Agency

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 for routine business
- Supermajority (two-thirds) for major decisions
e.g. the groundwater sustainability plan, annual budget, regulations, and fees
- Unanimous vote 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 12-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. Sonoma2. Valley of the Moon Water District3. North Bay Water District4. Sonoma County5. Sonoma County Water Agency6. Sonoma Resource Conservation District	Represent SGMA-defined stakeholders: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Environmental representative2. Rural residential well owner3. Business community representative4. Agricultural interest (surface water or GW user)5. At-large community representative6. At-large community representative
Total of 6	Total of 6
Appointed by Boards and Councils	Appointed by GSA Board
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 Sonoma Valley 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 Sonoma Valley GSA 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.