



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

For the meeting of: October 6, 2015

Date: September 25, 2015
To: Board of Supervisors
From: Thomas K. Mattson, Public Works Director
Subject: Feedback from April 2015 Groundwater Workshop and Proposed Formation of Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1. Receives a staff report regarding the April 2015 workshop on how the state groundwater legislation applies to the Eel River Valley; and
2. Approves the Public Works Department's formation of an Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: Water Management (1100251).

DISCUSSION:

On February 24, 2015, the Board directed Public Works to convene a workshop for stakeholders on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Groundwater Act) and return to the Board with a summary of stakeholder feedback. The intent of the Groundwater Act is to achieve sustainable management of groundwater resources for long-term reliability and multiple economic, social, and environmental benefits while avoiding undesirable results. Management responsibility is delegated to the local level with state oversight. Compliance with the Groundwater Act is mandatory for high- and medium-priority basins and optional for low- and

Prepared by Hank Seemann CAO Approval

REVIEW: Auditor County Counsel Human Resources Other

TYPE OF ITEM:
Consent
X Departmental
Public Hearing
Other

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
Upon motion of Supervisor Seconded by Supervisor
Ayes
Nays
Abstain
Absent

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. E-1

Meeting of: February 24, 2015

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated:
By:
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

very low-priority basins. Priority levels are designated by the state Department of Water Resources. In Humboldt County there are no high-priority basins and one medium-priority basin (Eel River Valley). For the Eel River Valley groundwater basin, a Groundwater Sustainability Agency must be established by June 30, 2017, and a Groundwater Sustainability Plan must be adopted by January 31, 2022.

Public Works coordinated with UC-Cooperative Extension to convene a workshop on April 27, 2015. A summary of the workshop and feedback received is provided in Attachment 1. Public Works also provided presentations on the groundwater legislation to the Eel River Forum (May 20, 2015) and Buckeye Conservancy (June 25, 2015).

Public Works proposes formation of a working group of stakeholders representing agricultural, municipal, and environmental interests to provide input on organizing the local response to the Groundwater Act for the Eel River Valley. Attachment 2 contains a draft announcement and description of the working group and Attachment 3 contains a general timeline for groundwater planning efforts. The Division of Environmental Health, Planning and Building Department, Agricultural Commissioner, UC-Cooperative Extension, and Humboldt County Resource Conservation District will also be invited to participate in the working group.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Costs for Public Works to implement the requested action will be funded through the Water Management budget unit (251). The Fiscal Year 2015-16 Water Management budget contains sufficient funds to organize the working group.

California Department of Water Resources is expected to solicit applications for the Proposition 1 Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant Program starting in October 2015. On February 24, 2015, the Board authorized staff to apply for funds from this program. The Fiscal Year 2015-16 Water Management budget contains sufficient funds to prepare a grant application.

The requested action will advance two of the County's core roles (enforcing laws and regulations to protect residents, and creating opportunities for improved safety and health). In addition, the Board's priorities for new initiatives include managing our resources to ensure sustainability of services; seeking outside funding sources to benefit Humboldt County needs; facilitating public/private partnerships to solve problems; and building interjurisdictional and regional cooperation.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

California Department of Water Resources, Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health, Planning and Building Department, Agricultural Commissioner, UC-Cooperative Extension, City of Fortuna, City of Rio Dell, Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, Hydesville Community Services District, Loleta Community Services District, Palmer Creek Community Services District, Riverside Community Services District, Scotia Community Services District.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Board could choose to form an advisory committee that reports directly to the Board, rather than an informal working group that provides input to Public Works. Public Works did not recommend this alternative because the working group is more flexible and has lower administrative costs.
2. The Board could direct the scope of the working group to be expanded to include other groundwater basins. Public Works did not recommend this alternative because the Eel River Valley groundwater basin is the only basin where compliance with the Groundwater Act is mandatory. Expansion to include other basins would increase the time burden on working group participants and potentially cause delays in responding to the legislation.
3. The Board could direct another department to take the lead on groundwater planning issues. Public Works is open to discussion on this alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 April 2015 Workshop Summary
- 2 Announcement for Formation of Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group
- 3 Preliminary Timeline for Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group: 2015-2017

Attachment 1

April 2015 Workshop Summary



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
C O U N T Y O F H U M B O L D T

MAILING ADDRESS: 1106 SECOND STREET, EUREKA, CA 95501-0579
AREA CODE 707

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FAX 839-3596

AVIATION 839-5401

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WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Groundwater in the Eel River Valley: Responding to the New State Groundwater Legislation

Monday, April 27, 2015 10:00 am - Noon
Humboldt County Agriculture Center (5630 S. Broadway, Eureka)

Overview

The workshop was convened by Humboldt County Public Works and UC-Cooperative Extension. 36 people signed the sign-in sheet. Supervisor Rex Bohn welcomed the workshop attendees on behalf of Humboldt County. Supervisor Bohn noted that the Rural County Representatives of California (www.rcrcnet.org) has provided assistance by distributing information and convening workshops in response to the new legislation.

Hank Seemann (Humboldt County Public Works) provided an overview of the new state groundwater legislation and how it applies to the Eel River Valley. The legislation requires designation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eel River Valley by 2017 and adoption of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan by 2022. The legislation authorizes the Groundwater Sustainability Agency to apply a variety of management tools (including requiring well meters and limiting extractions), however these tools are discretionary and not mandatory. Historical groundwater level data collected by the state Department of Water Resources (DWR) for wells located in Ferndale, Loleta, and Fortuna were presented. Historical groundwater levels in the wells monitored by DWR appear to be generally stable and do not indicate an overdraft condition. Key data and information gaps were identified: location of important recharge areas, details of groundwater and surface water interactions, groundwater levels along the Van Duzen River, aggregate pumping rates within the valley, and an overall water budget for the basin. The proposal for a stakeholder working group to help formulate a groundwater program in response to the legislation was presented.

Gary Simpson (SHN Consulting Engineers and Geologists, Inc.) provided an overview of the geologic setting for groundwater in the Eel River Valley. The valley contains three primary aquifers. The near-surface aquifer is alluvium (with thicknesses ranging from less than 100 feet to over 200 feet), underlain by units of the Carlotta or Hookton Formations. The aquifer system varies in configuration, size, and composition throughout the valley.

John Vevoda (Ferndale dairyman, California Farm Bureau) provided opening remarks from the agricultural producer perspective. Mr. Vevoda expressed a preference for local control and a concern about how the legislation addresses the concept of "beneficial use." Mr. Vevoda stated that future management decisions should account for the fact that not all extraction is pumping from the same source (different aquifers will have different yields and recharge rates).

Merritt Perry (City of Fortuna) expressed the City's interest in collaborating on regional groundwater issues. Fortuna depends on groundwater for its municipal water supply and is the largest municipal water user within the basin. The City has a network of five monitoring wells which have been monitored for over 15 years. Mr. Perry expressed preference for local control of groundwater management decisions.

Brad Job (Pacific Watershed Associates) discussed the role of groundwater within the hydrologic cycle and linkages between groundwater and surface water. Mr. Job emphasized the need for good data to support management decisions and encouraged proactive management to prevent irreversible impacts, which have occurred elsewhere.

David Spinosa (Humboldt County, Division of Environmental Health) provided an overview of the County's existing permitting program for the installation of groundwater wells. Construction standards are applied to prevent contamination from reaching the subsurface and impacting groundwater quality.

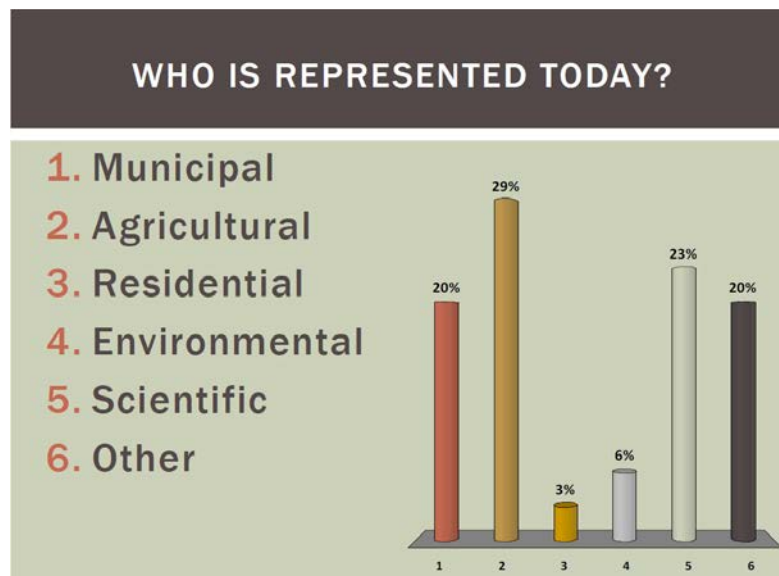
Comments

Comments raised by workshop attendees included the following:

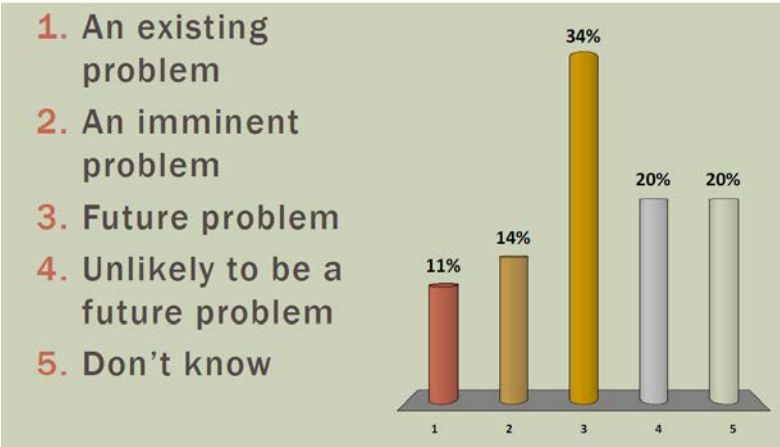
- There is a rapid increase in the number of groundwater wells and the amount of groundwater pumping throughout the County, while this process is only focusing on the Eel River Valley groundwater basin. The rest of the County should not be overlooked.
- Understanding the basic size and parameters of the aquifers within the basin is necessary for adequate management.
- The approach should aim to meet the minimum requirements while acknowledging that we are not reacting to a crisis.
- The basin boundaries are too small and should be expanded to include recharge areas and the effects of upstream users.
- The ranking criteria used by DWR to designate the Eel River Valley basin as medium priority is questionable and should be reviewed to verify that the ranking is warranted.
- More data will lead to better decisions.
- The City of Rio Dell's primary water supply source is the Eel River but the City will need to rely on groundwater resources during droughts and other emergencies.
- There is a need to quantify existing conditions and project future demands.
- More information is needed on groundwater and surface water connections.
- The approach should address the mandatory requirements with a minimum of regulation and fees.
- The approach should be based on equitable use and shared responsibility for management.
- Less governance and incentive-based approaches are desired.
- Agricultural producers have a need to continue to efficiently irrigate pastures.

Feedback

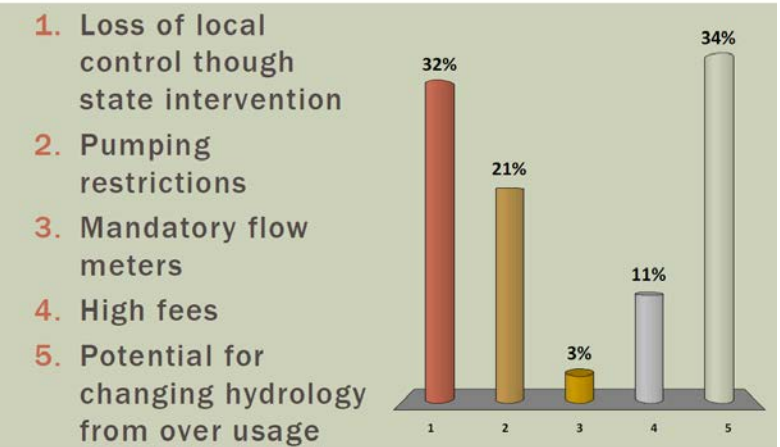
At the end of the workshop, a series of seven questions was presented to the audience for feedback. The questions and responses are summarized below:



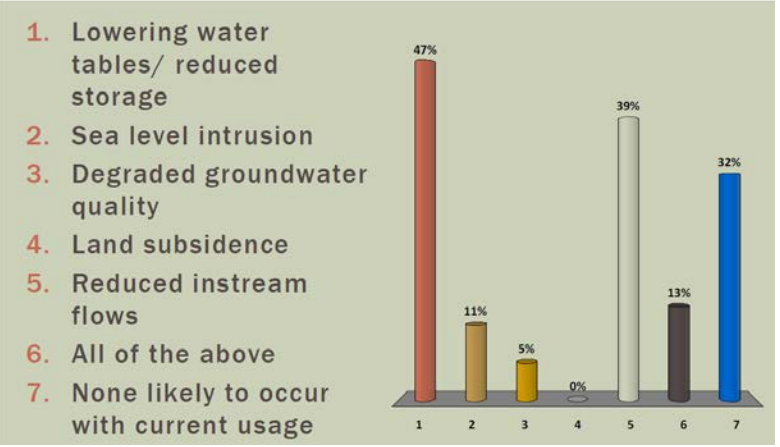
IN YOUR OPINION, THE STATE OF GROUND WATER FOR THE EEL RIVER BASIN IS?



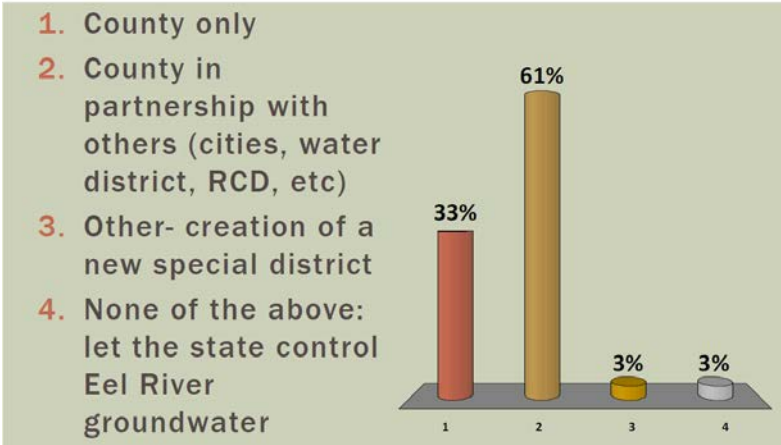
WHICH ISSUES ARE MOST IMPORTANT?



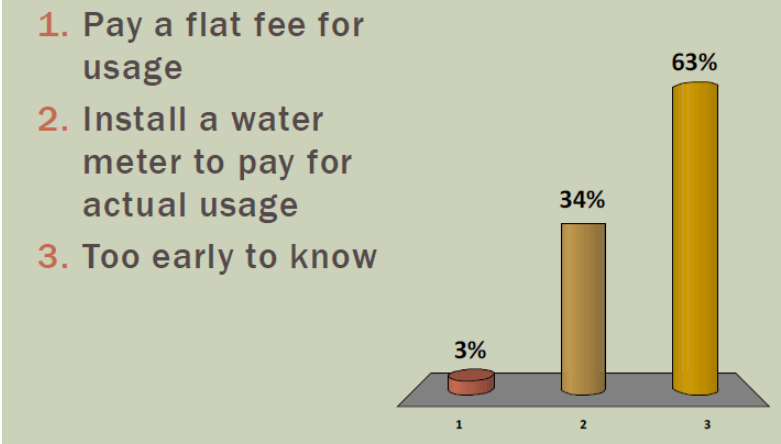
ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT? (PICK TOP TWO ITEMS)



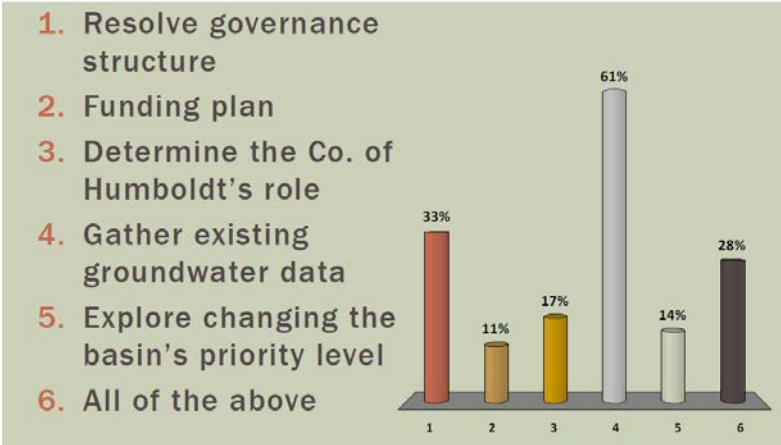
WHAT SHOULD GROUND WATER AGENCY GOVERNANCE BE?



IF FEES ARE NECESSARY, WOULD YOU PREFER TO?



WHAT SHOULD BE THE PRIORITIES FOR THE WORKING GROUP? (PICK TOP TWO)



List of Attendees

Name	Affiliation	Interested in Participating in Working Group
Ben Dolf	Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	Yes
Brad Job	Pacific Watershed Associates	Yes
Carolyn Hawkins	Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	
Cheryl Laffranchi	Northcoast Pumphouse	Maybe
Chris Howard	Alexandre EcoDairy Farms	
Clif Clendenen	Clendenen's Cider Works, Humboldt County Farm Bureau	Yes
David Manthorne	Cal. Department of Fish & Wildlife	
David Spinosa	Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	
Denver Nelson	Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Committee, dairy owner	Yes
Doreen Hansen	Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	
Estelle Fennel	Humboldt County Board of Supervisors	
Frances Tjarnstrom	Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	Yes
Gary Markegard	Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	
Gary Simpson	SHN Consulting Engineers and Geologists	
Hank Seemann	Humboldt County Public Works Department	
Jay Russ	Humboldt County Farm Bureau, cattle rancher	Yes
Jeffrey Stackhouse	University of California Cooperative Extension	
Johanna Rodoni	Buckeye Conservancy, Humboldt County Farm Bureau	
John Vevoda	California Farm Bureau, Humboldt County Farm Bureau, dairyman	Yes
Jon Shultz	USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service	Yes
Julie Houtby	American AgCredit	
Justin Ebrahemi	HSU graduate student	
Katherine Zeimer	Humboldt County Farm Bureau	
Kyle Knopp	City of Rio Dell	Yes
Lee Mora	Humboldt Grassfed Beef	Yes
Marcus Drumm	Loleta Community Services District	Yes
Mark Smelser	California Department of Fish & Wildlife	
Melissa Lema	Western United Dairymen	Yes
Merritt Perry	City of Fortuna	
Nancy Trujillo	Riverside Community Services District	Yes
Nick Angeloff	Rio Dell Planning Commission, Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce	
Pat Higgins	Eel River Recovery Project	
Patrick Sullivan	GHD, Inc.	Yes
Randy Hooper	Del Norte County	
Rex Bohn	Humboldt County Board of Supervisors	
Robert Vogt	Humboldt County Public Works Department	
Russ Forsburg	American AgCredit	
Scott Greacon	Friends of the Eel River	Yes
Tom Gast	Fisheries consultant	Yes
Troy Hubner	Del Oro Water Company	
Vivian Helliwell	Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations	Yes
Yana Valachovic	University of California Cooperative Extension	

Attachment 2

Announcement for Formation of
Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group



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ANNOUNCEMENT [DRAFT]

Formation of Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group

October 6, 2015

Humboldt County Public Works is convening the Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group to guide the local response to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Groundwater Act) of 2014. The Groundwater Act requires formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eel River Valley groundwater basin by June 30, 2017, and preparation of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan by 2022. Humboldt County seeks input from stakeholders including agricultural, municipal, and environmental interests.

The purpose of the Working Group is to:

1. Provide information and viewpoints regarding groundwater issues in the Eel River Valley.
2. Support the collection and analysis of groundwater data to understand conditions and trends.
3. Provide input on an application for funds from a California Department of Water Resources Proposition 1 grant program to support local groundwater planning efforts.
4. Discuss the selection and formation of the Groundwater Sustainable Agency.
5. Discuss the framework and management objectives of the future Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

The Working Group will meet once every two months for approximately two years. The Working Group is an informal working group providing input to Humboldt County Public Works, and not a formal advisory committee to the Board of Supervisors. The scope and organization of the Working Group will be re-evaluated after the Groundwater Sustainability Agency is established.

An important goal of the Working Group is broad community representation and participation. Membership on the Working Group will be discussed at the first meeting (see date and location below). People interested in serving as members of the Working Group are encouraged to attend the first meeting. All meetings will be open to the public. The scope of the Working Group is limited to the Eel River Valley.

The decision on which public agency (or agencies) will serve as the Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eel River Valley will be made by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors with input from the Working Group and in consultation with other local agencies (cities, tribes, special districts) situated within the groundwater basin boundary.

First meeting: Wednesday, October 21, 2015 1:00 - 3:00 pm
Humboldt County Agriculture Center (5630 S. Broadway, Eureka)

Website: www.humboldt.gov/1428/water-management ("Groundwater" tab)

Contacts for Further Information:

- Hank Seemann, Humboldt County Public Works, 445-7741 / hseemann@co.humboldt.ca.us
- Robert Vogt, Humboldt County Public Works, 267-9545 / rvogt@co.humboldt.ca.us

Attachment 3

Preliminary Timeline for Eel River Valley
Groundwater Working Group: 2015-2017



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**Preliminary Timeline for
 Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group:
 2015-2017**

	2014	2015		2016	2017	Future (ongoing)
	July-Dec	Jan-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-June	
Phase	Pre-planning		Planning with Working Group (meetings once every two months)			Governance by GSA
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze state legislation - Initial stakeholder engagement - Compile readily available data 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to compile and evaluate data - Public input on key questions - Apply for Proposition 1 funds to support planning efforts and technical studies - Develop structure of GSA - Discuss elements of GSP 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare and implement GSP
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where does legislation apply? - What data exists? - What are the primary issues and concerns? - What are the key data gaps and technical questions? - Who are stakeholders? - How to engage with stakeholders? - How to organize response to legislation? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will serve as GSA? - How will GSA function? - What information is needed to make informed decisions? - How will GSA be funded? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined
Decisions	No decisions made		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency (or agencies) to serve as GSA - GSA governance structure - Role of Working Group (or other mechanism for stakeholder input) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation slides with maps and summary information 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolution establishing GSA - GSA policies and procedures - Technical reports 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined

Milestones

- September 2014: Sustainable Groundwater Management Act signed by Governor Brown
- October 21, 2015: First Working Group Meeting
- October 2015: DWR to release final guidelines for Proposition 1 Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant Program
- December 2015 (estimated): Due date for Proposition 1 grant applications
- June 30, 2017: Deadline for establishment of GSA
- January 31, 2022: Deadline for adoption of GSP

Acronyms GSA = Groundwater Sustainability Agency
 GSP = Groundwater Sustainability Plan

Date updated: September 25, 2015