

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA): Understanding the Law

The California Farm Bureau Federation developed this resource for farmers and landowners to help you understand why SGMA is important and how you can be involved.

SGMA requires formation of local agencies to develop new plans, called Groundwater Sustainability Plans or GSPs, to address and prevent problems in groundwater basins in most areas of the state. Signed into law in September 2014, SGMA focuses on protecting California's groundwater for generations to come.



How can I get involved?
 How will it affect me?
 Why do we have SGMA?
 Where does it apply?

The Road to Sustainability

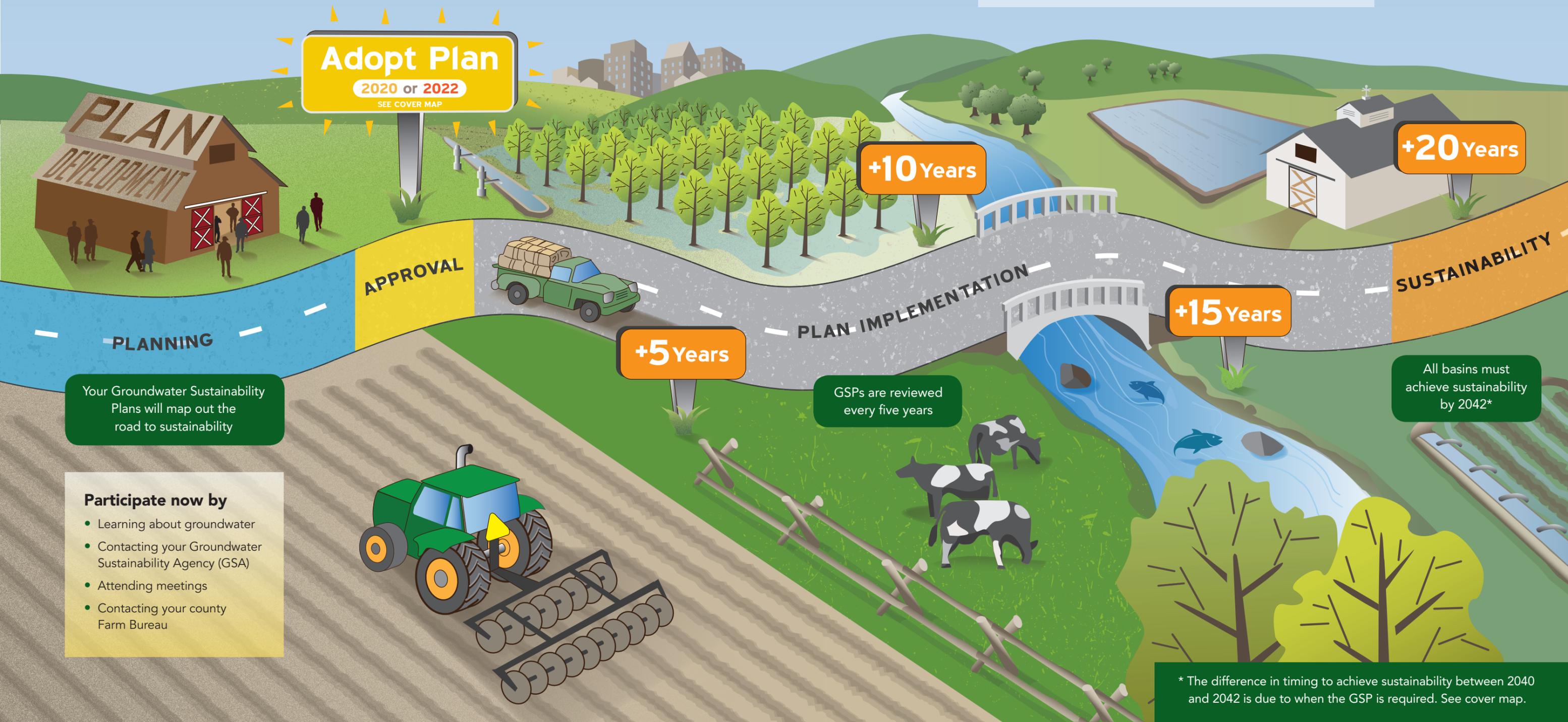
Learn and Engage!

Participate now to represent your interest. SGMA stresses local group formation, local plans and local management.

SGMA plans will reflect local conditions and can include local solutions. Once approved by the state, your local plan represents a commitment to future actions.

Let's be clear:

- SGMA will affect your groundwater pumping
- SGMA establishes new responsibilities to share groundwater
- SGMA will change how we use land and water
- SGMA does not change water rights



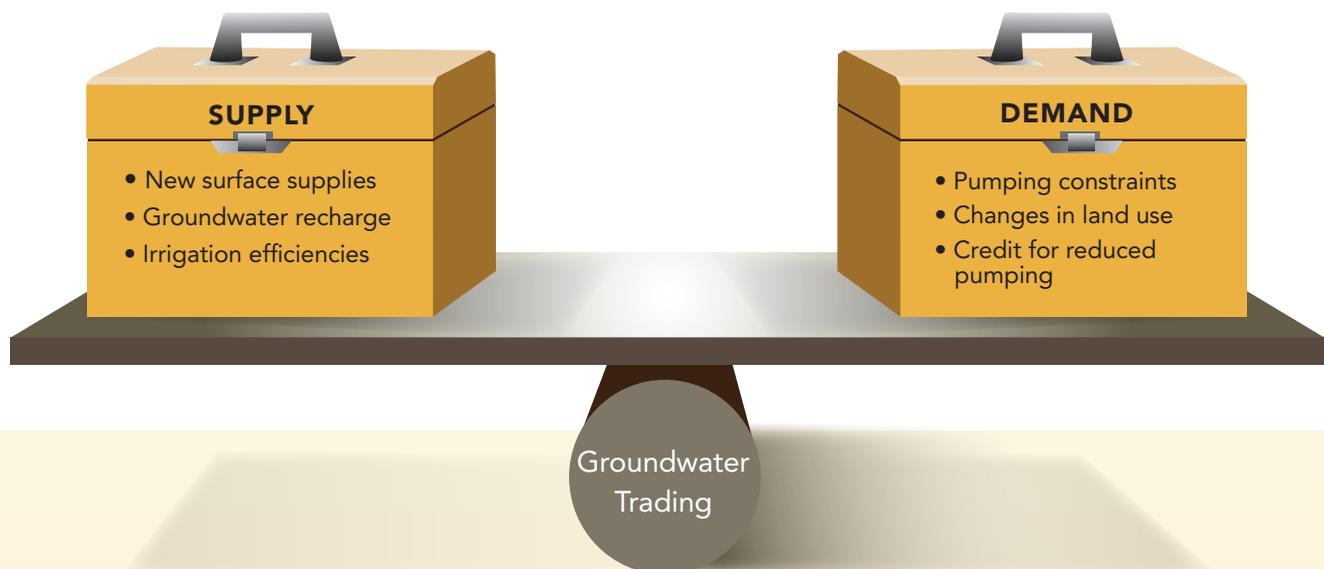
* The difference in timing to achieve sustainability between 2040 and 2042 is due to when the GSP is required. See cover map.

Opportunities and Challenges on the Road to Sustainability

GSP development and implementation will be a balancing act — among different interests, between water supply and water demand, and among beneficial uses. This is your opportunity to be involved, to ensure your interests are considered.

The primary tools your Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) have in the development of your GSP will be measures to either manage demand or manage supply.

Some tools to balance groundwater supply and demand



Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) will:

- Describe the basin
- Develop a water budget
- Set groundwater management standards and objectives
- Identify actions and projects to meet those standards and objectives
- Establish a monitoring program to measure success

GSPs will be geared to improvements over 20 years; plans will be reviewed every five years.

Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) authorities:

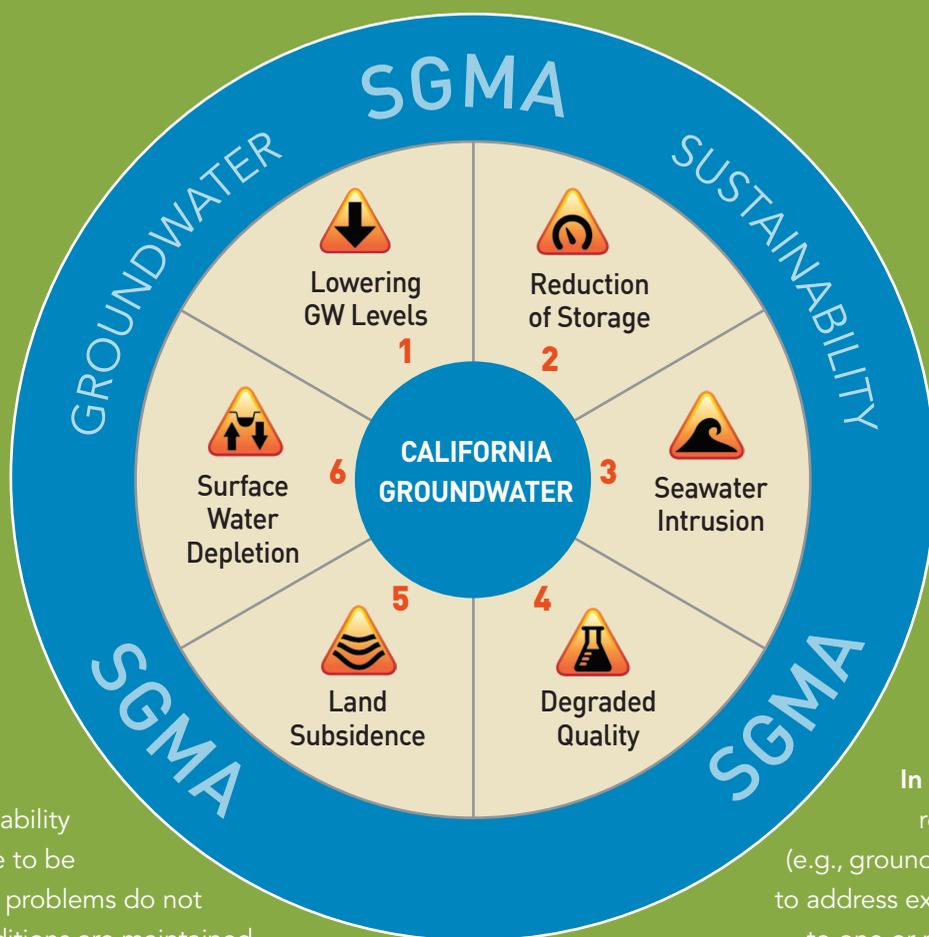
- Regulate pumping
- Require measurement and reporting of groundwater use
- Charge fees
- Enforce the GSP

GSA's will have the power to manage both supply and demand to meet objectives developed in the GSP.

Why SGMA?

California groundwater is an essential resource — we need it for farms, cities and other uses, today and tomorrow. SGMA seeks to ensure reliable groundwater supplies in the future through long-term groundwater management across California. The law creates a statewide process intended to protect future groundwater availability.

SGMA focuses on managing these six undesirable results



In some regions, Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) will have to be developed to ensure problems do not occur and good conditions are maintained over the next 20 years.

In other regions, GSPs will require significant actions (e.g., groundwater recharge projects) to address existing challenges related to one or more of the "undesirable results," shown above.

SGMA encourages local communities to work together to develop effective GSPs, and encourages neighboring basins to find common, acceptable solutions. Basins not managed locally will have plans written and implemented by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Terms to know

- **Adjudicated Areas:** Where disputes over legal rights to groundwater have resulted in a court-issued ruling (known as an adjudication). Adjudications can cover an entire basin, a portion of a basin, or a group of basins.
- **Basin Prioritization:** Classification of California's 517 groundwater basins and subbasins into priorities based primarily on the importance of groundwater to the area. The priority of basins and subbasins determines the schedule for completing GSPs and whether SGMA provisions apply in a given basin. High- and medium-priority basins must comply with SGMA.
- **Best Management Practices (BMPs):** Practices designed to help achieve sustainable groundwater management. BMPs are intended to be effective, practical, and based on best available science.
- **Bulletin 118:** A California Department of Water Resources (DWR) document outlining the locations and characteristics of groundwater basins in California.
- **Critically Overdrafted:** Basins and subbasins identified by DWR to be subject to conditions of critical overdraft. GSPs are due in 2020.
- **Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA):** One or more local agencies that implement the provisions of SGMA.
- **Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP):** A local plan proposed by a GSA and approved by the state.
- **Measurable Objectives:** Conditions linked to the sustainability goals of the GSP, to be achieved in the basin within 20 years.
- **Sustainability Goals:** Metrics established in the GSP planning process to ensure that a basin is operated within its sustainable yield.
- **Sustainable Yield:** The amount of water that can be extracted from a basin without causing problems to the groundwater basin. See undesirable results on "Why SGMA?" page.
- **Undesirable Results:** The problems that SGMA strives to solve or prevent. See undesirable results on "Why SGMA?" page.
- **Water Budget:** An estimated accounting of all the water (surface and groundwater) that flows into and out of a basin.

To learn more

Department of Water Resources
SGMA portal at:
sgma.water.ca.gov/portal

Groundwater Exchange
groundwaterexchange.org

California Farm
Bureau Federation
www.cfbf.com