



# Alignment & Coordination

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## Water Shortage Planning for Rural Communities and Sustainable Groundwater Management

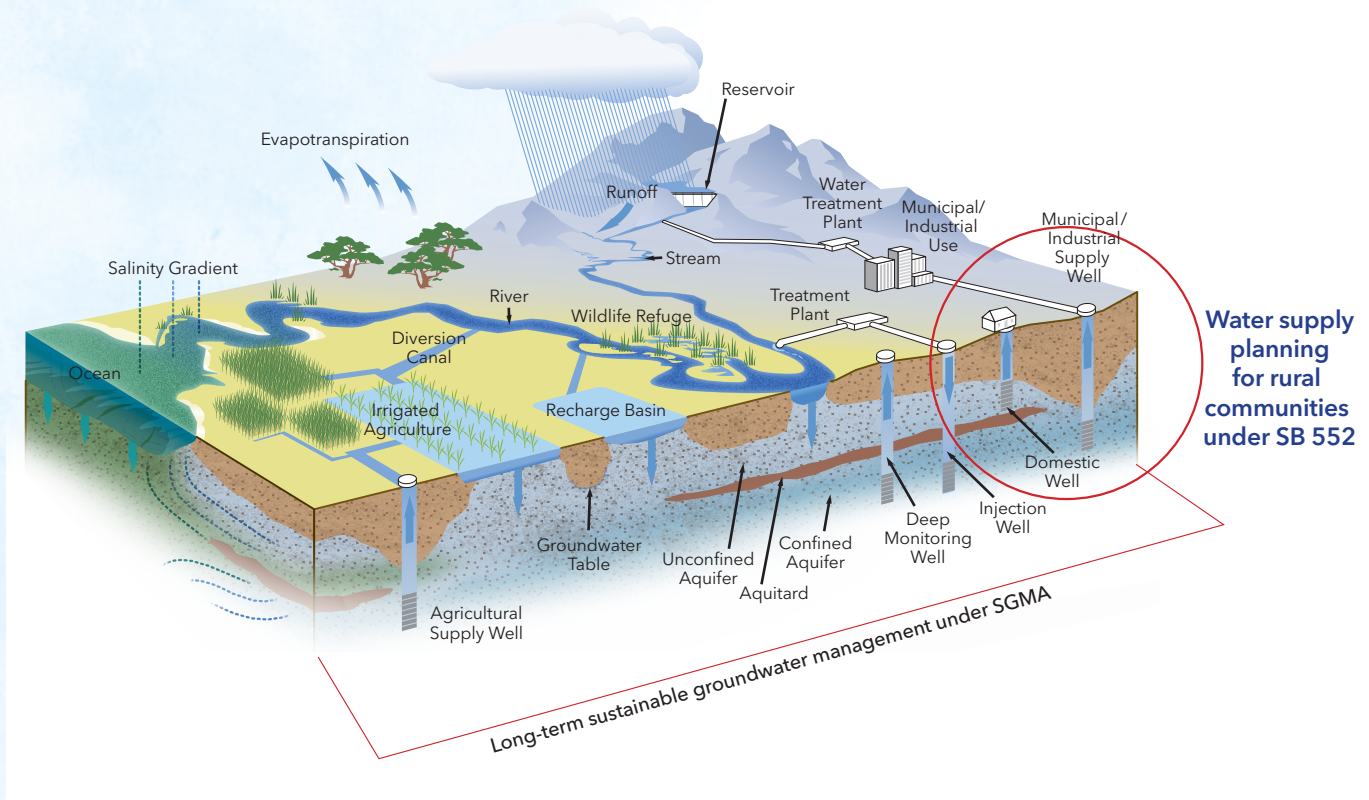


The purpose of this document is to identify opportunities and encourage counties and groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) to align and coordinate their respective responsibilities for drought and water shortage planning efforts for rural communities under Senate Bill (SB) 552 and the long-term sustainability goals of groundwater basins under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

**The California Department of Water Resources (DWR)** plays a role in supporting the local implementation of both SB 552 and SGMA<sup>1</sup>. In this position, DWR sees opportunities to better align and coordinate these two distinct programs. Counties and GSAs have an opportunity to facilitate the implementation of SB 552 and SGMA by exploring approaches to align goals and coordinate on decision-making, planning efforts, data collection, monitoring, information-sharing, and developing and implementing projects, actions, and solutions.

The alignment of these two programs can also further the State’s Human Right to Water policy by supporting near-term emergency drought relief, building local capacity, and ensuring a more sustainable water supply for communities now and in the future. Local GSAs and counties can benefit by building or strengthening relationships, filling gaps, advancing planning efforts, potentially increasing cost efficiencies, and addressing critical issues related to drinking water and groundwater management through action.

**Figure 1.** Diagram of watershed and groundwater basin, depicting the water supply wells and groundwater users that counties and groundwater sustainability agencies are engaging as part of SB 552 and SGMA implementation.



[1] SGMA was enacted in 2014 during the 2012 to 2016 drought. SB 552 was enacted in 2021, during the most recent drought conditions, based on developments from prior water conservation legislation (AB 1668) that directed DWR to develop recommendations for improving drought contingency planning in areas that experience water shortage vulnerability.



# Program Side-by-Side View for Local Coordination and Alignment

To help local agencies coordinate and align efforts on-the-ground with the implementation of long-term groundwater management under SGMA and drought planning efforts under SB 552, the following information presents a program side-by-side perspective on key areas where local GSAs and counties can work together as they carry out their respective statutory requirements<sup>2</sup>. The information below identifies opportunities for increasing voluntary local coordination, including prompting questions for GSAs and Counties to consider.

## Intent and Purpose

SGMA	SB 552
<b>Groundwater Sustainability Agencies</b>	<b>Counties</b>
SGMA is intended to achieve groundwater basin sustainability goals over 20 years and requires GSAs to manage groundwater sustainably by avoiding locally defined undesirable results and considering all beneficial uses and users including drinking water users.	SB 552 is intended to help state small water systems and rural communities, including private domestic wells, reduce their risk of inadequate water supply during water shortage events by preparing, mitigating, and responding.

### Prompting questions for local entities:

**GSAs:** Are you familiar with your local county contact(s) and the role they play in drought planning, well permitting, and local land use? How have you made efforts to communicate and coordinate with the counties responsible for implementing SB 552?

**Counties:** Are you familiar with the GSA(s) contact(s) in your county boundaries who are managing groundwater for long-term sustainability and what their general approach is for doing so? How have you made efforts to communicate and coordinate with the GSAs responsible for implementing SGMA?

[2] While this document focuses on the county-related requirements on drought planning, SB 552 does have additional water shortage requirements for small water suppliers that are not included in this Program Side-by-Side View.



## Governance and Decision Making

SGMA	SB 552
<b>Groundwater Sustainability Agencies</b>	<b>Counties</b>
As local public agencies, GSAs are required to have governing boards and typically have advisory committee(s) that hold public meetings. GSAs must also maintain an interested parties list.	Counties are required to develop standing local drought task force groups and need to invite interested parties to participate, including GSAs.

### Prompting questions for local entities:

**GSAs:** Are you aware of the local county drought planning efforts? Does your GSA help with water shortage emergency response for domestic wells, state small water systems, or other users? Do you participate or coordinate with the county and their standing drought task force groups?

**Counties:** Have you invited the local GSA(s) to the standing local drought task force meetings? Have they engaged with you on these efforts? Can you align Drought Task Force meeting topics with GSA outreach under SGMA?

## Applicable Geographic Areas

SGMA	SB 552
<b>Groundwater Sustainability Agencies</b>	<b>Counties</b>
GSAs are required to be formed in the medium and high priority alluvial groundwater basins as defined by DWR through the Basin Prioritization process and may cover one or more counties.	The 58 counties cover the entire State of California, including alluvial groundwater basins and non-basin areas (fractured rock) that may have wells that rely on groundwater. Counties may include one or multiple GSAs or may have areas not covered by a GSA.

### Prompting questions for local entities:

**GSAs:** Are you working with the counties to cover any areas that are not managed by a GSA in your groundwater basin?

**Counties:** Is there GSA coverage in your county boundaries? Are there areas that do not have a GSA managing the groundwater? Is there another designated monitoring entity<sup>3</sup> that you can coordinate with on monitoring and analysis of groundwater levels?

[3] Such as water districts and/or those monitoring for the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) program.





## Local Plans

SGMA	SB 552
Groundwater Sustainability Agencies	Counties
GSA's are required to develop and implement Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs), which must contain sustainable management criteria (SMC) including minimum thresholds (limits) and measurable objectives (goals), and projects and management actions to avoid undesirable results.	Counties are required to develop County Drought Resilience Plans that address how to plan for and respond to drought impacts on state small water systems (less than 15 connections) and individual domestic wells.

### Prompting questions for local entities:

**GSA's:** How are you analyzing year-to-year drought risks or impacts in your GSP(s) and annual reports, with regard to how SMC are being set? Have you discussed the SMC (minimum thresholds) and potential impact to groundwater users with the counties to inform their water shortage risk planning? How are GSA's taking into consideration the water level conditions in areas vulnerable for dewatering of wells?

**Counties:** Are you familiar with the SMC that are being set by the GSA(s)? Have you discussed your County Drought Resilience Plan, or impacts you are preparing for and responding to with the GSA(s)?

## Data and Monitoring

SGMA	SB 552
Groundwater Sustainability Agencies	Counties
GSA's are measuring groundwater conditions through a monitoring network of various data types and include representative monitoring sites that are subject to SMC thresholds. Monitoring data must be maintained in a local data management system, presented in annual reports, and submitted to DWR.	Counties are required to conduct a drought risk assessment of domestic wells and state small water systems as part of the County Drought Resilience Plan.

### Prompting questions for local entities:

**GSA's:** How can you share your local monitoring data and management systems with the counties to support their efforts in assessing groundwater conditions for water shortage risk?

**Counties:** Can the risk assessments be shared with the GSA's to help understand vulnerabilities of domestic wells and state small water systems?



## Projects, Actions & Solutions

SGMA	SB 552
Groundwater Sustainability Agencies	Counties
<p>GSAAs are required to develop and implement projects and management actions to achieve sustainability within the 20-year timeline of the initial GSP submittal. These may include supply augmentation and demand reduction and the GSP must describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A time-table for initiation and completion</li> <li>• An estimate of costs and how those costs will be met</li> <li>• How the GSA will mitigate overdraft if it exists</li> </ul>	<p>Counties are required to develop interim and long-term solutions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidations</li> <li>• Domestic well drinking water mitigation programs</li> <li>• Emergency and interim drinking water solutions</li> <li>• Analysis of the steps necessary to implement the plan</li> <li>• An analysis of local, state, and federal funding sources available to implement the plan</li> </ul>

### Prompting questions for local entities:

**GSAs:** Are there projects and actions in your GSP that may benefit state small water systems or domestic wells? Have those been communicated to your local county? Are you developing drinking water mitigation programs as part of your GSP efforts? Can you share those efforts with the county to ensure a coordinated approach to help address the necessary near-term impacts versus long-term solutions to support state small water systems or domestic well users? Have you secured funding for the projects and management actions in your GSPs and are you coordinating implementation with the county?

**Counties:** Are GSAs able to participate in identifying interim and long-term solutions? Can the long-term management of groundwater by the GSAs help counties develop the steps necessary to carry out projects, actions, and solutions? Have you shared your domestic well drinking water mitigation or consolidation efforts with the GSAs? Have you secured funding for the interim and long-term solutions proposed in your County Drought Resilience Plans and are you coordinating implementation with the GSAs?

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For more information on DWR’s role in overseeing SGMA and the groundwater management statewide, please visit: [water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management](https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management) or email: [SGMPS@water.ca.gov](mailto:SGMPS@water.ca.gov)

For more information on DWR’s role in overseeing drought planning and water use efficiency efforts, please visit: [water.ca.gov/Programs/Water-Use-And-Efficiency/SB-552](https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Water-Use-And-Efficiency/SB-552) or email: [WUE@water.ca.gov](mailto:WUE@water.ca.gov)