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March 9, 2023

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San Joaquin County Residents Urged to Learn More About Groundwater Significance During Groundwater Awareness Week

(Stockton, CA) – San Joaquin County is pleased to join the National Groundwater Association (NGWA), and The Groundwater Foundation and California Groundwater Association in celebrating [Groundwater Awareness Week](#) (GWA) **March 5-11, 2023**. GWA was established in 1999 to highlight the need for responsible development, management, and use of groundwater and to celebrate local groundwater management efforts across the country.

“Groundwater Awareness Week is an annual observance that focuses attention on one of the state’s most precious resources as well as ways to preserve and protect it,” said San Joaquin County Public Works Director Fritz Buchman. “Whether it’s educating yourself or your children on the importance of groundwater, advocating for sustainable long-term groundwater supplies, or having your own groundwater monitored, please remember to take time this week to help protect groundwater resources in San Joaquin County now and into the future.”

Groundwater serves as a resource for many different industries and uses, including farms, urban and rural communities, and ecosystems across California. Groundwater basins serve as the state’s water savings account and are intended to provide a reliable water source during drought conditions when the state has less rain and snowpack. In fact, statewide groundwater basins have the capability of storing 850 million acre-feet to 1.3 billion acre-feet of water, or 8 to 12 times the combined storage capacity of all major above-ground reservoirs in California.

Groundwater is vital to San Joaquin County and supplied roughly 60 percent of the water used in the Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin in 2022, a drought year when there was a relatively small amount of surface water available. This translated to a decrease in groundwater storage of 122,000 acre-feet, contributing to the long-term decline in water levels in parts of the basin. Chronic lowering of groundwater levels may cause land subsidence, seawater intrusion, groundwater quality issues, and other undesirable effects in many parts of the state. Continued groundwater over-pumping could also put nearby infrastructure such as structures, roads and pipelines at greater risk of costly damage.

“As California continues to experience climate-driven weather extremes, including longer and more intense drought periods and flashy storm cycles, understanding groundwater conditions and managing groundwater so it is available for future generations is crucial,” said San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Chairman Robert Rickman, who also serves as the Chairman for the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority. “Local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) here in San Joaquin County and throughout California are working hard to fill data gaps with improved monitoring, planning, implementing projects, and working with their local communities towards groundwater sustainability.”

To help ensure long-term sustainable groundwater conditions, the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) (SGMA) of 2014 set forth a statewide groundwater management and regulatory framework for meeting sustainability goals. SGMA required the formation of local GSAs that are now in place throughout the state to develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) to manage groundwater pumping and recharge.

The [Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Agency](#), which consists of 16 Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), was formed in 2017 by local GSAs, including cities, counties, and water districts, to develop a GSP for the Eastern San Joaquin groundwater basin, which consists of about 1,200 square miles including the portion of San Joaquin County east of the San Joaquin River and smaller portions of Calaveras and Stanislaus Counties. The GSP defines projects intended to bring the basin into balance by delivering more surface water in lieu of groundwater pumping, recharging groundwater in wet years for use in dry years, intra-basin water transfers, conservation, water recycling, and stormwater reuse.

Just last week, the Department of Water Resources recommended approval of the Eastern San Joaquin Water Authority ([ESJGWA](#)) [Groundwater Sustainability Plan](#) for the Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin. This recommendation is a significant step toward ensuring regional groundwater sustainability by the year 2040 and includes measurable objectives and milestones in five-year increments to achieve long-term sustainability. Visit this [link](#) for an Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Plan list of projects and management actions to help address groundwater sustainability in the San Joaquin County region.

For more information, visit www.esjgroundwater.org.

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