



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2023

CONTACT: Fritz Buchman
SJC Public Works Director
fbuchman@sjgov.org

**Department of Water Resources Recommends Approval of
Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan
*GSP to improve groundwater basin conditions over the next 20 years***

(STOCKTON) The San Joaquin County Public Works Department announced today that the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) recommended approval of the Eastern San Joaquin Water Authority Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) 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.

“DWR’s acceptance of our groundwater sustainability plan is a tribute to the hard work and historic collaboration among 16 diverse Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) that joined together to build consensus around realistic and common-sense solutions with the unified goal of sustainability,” said San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Chairman Robert Rickman, who also serves as the Chairman for the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority that produced the GSP. “We want to thank DWR for their contribution of grant monies and expertise which have helped us produce a viable GSP that will lead to sustainably using local surface and groundwater supplies while also sustaining our local economy.”

The basin has been designated by DWR as being in critical overdraft, where generally more water is taken out of the ground annually than is recharged on an annual basis. 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. In some parts of the San Joaquin Valley, groundwater levels are reaching record lows due to ongoing groundwater use and the drought—up to 100 feet lower than previous records. 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.

To address this statewide problem, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was enacted in 2014, which is the first-ever comprehensive groundwater management legislation in California. SGMA

requires GSAs to develop GSPs that result in sustainable groundwater use within 20 years for groundwater basins designated by the state as medium- or high-priority. Successful implementation of SGMA would protect water quality and supplies for agricultural, municipal, environmental, and other beneficial uses.

“The Eastern San Joaquin GSP contains project management actions that will help the regional groundwater basin achieve sustainability for all our GSAs. When these actions are implemented, we can solve our overdraft and use the groundwater storage space in the basin as a reservoir,” said Department of Public Works Director Fritz Buchman. “This will help us avoid restrictions on pumping, respond to drought and climate change, and take full advantage of the resources available from our rivers and streams while protecting and enhancing the environment. The GSP is an important part of preserving local control over our water and acceptance of the plan by the state will let us focus on implementing solutions.”

The ESJGWA 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.

“This is an important milestone that was the culmination of extraordinary efforts among past and current Board of Supervisors members and the East San Joaquin Groundwater Authority - all who were committed to improving groundwater conditions for County residents, businesses and our multi-billion-dollar economy. We look forward to future collaborations as well as implementing projects and long-term strategies to achieve groundwater sustainability in our region for generations to come,” Supervisor Rickman concluded.

DWR Director, Karla Nemeth, is expected to soon sign off on the approved Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin GSP. Basins with plans recommended for approval will continue to work with DWR and report on their progress in implementing their plans.

For more information, visit:

- DWR’s [SGMA Portal](#) for GSA and plan information and updates
- DWR information on SGMA: [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\) \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [DWR Fact Sheet on SGMA GSP Evaluation](#)

The [ESJGWA](#) consists of 16 Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs): Central Delta Water Agency (CDWA), Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District (CSJWCD), City of Lodi, City of Manteca, City of Stockton, Eastside San Joaquin GSA (Eastside GSA) (composed of Calaveras County Water District [CCWD], Stanislaus County, and Rock Creek Water District), Linden County Water District (LCWD), Lockeford Community Services District(LCSD), North San Joaquin Water Conservation District (NSJWCD), Oakdale Irrigation District (OID), San Joaquin County/No. 1, San Joaquin County/No. 2 (with participation from California Water Service Company Stockton District [Cal Water]), South Delta Water Agency (SDWA), South San Joaquin GSA (composed of South San Joaquin Irrigation District [SSJID] including Woodward Reservoir, City of Ripon, and City of Escalon), Stockton East Water District (SEWD), and Woodbridge Irrigation District (WID).

###