



Media Release

State Water Board to hold probationary hearing for critically overdrafted Kaweah subbasin

State protection of groundwater proceeds with third subbasin hearing

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SACRAMENTO – To ensure the long-term viability of groundwater supplies in portions of Tulare and Kings counties, the State Water Resources Control Board today released a [public notice](#) for a Nov. 5, 2024, hearing to determine if the Kaweah Groundwater Subbasin should be placed on probationary status under the landmark [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) (SGMA).

This is the third probationary notice the State Water Board has issued to groundwater basins since last October as it continues to carry out its [state intervention](#) responsibilities under SGMA. The previous notices were issued to the [Tulare Lake](#) and [Tule](#) basins, respectively. At the Kaweah basin hearing, the board will decide if a probationary designation is warranted after a robust public input process.

Such a designation could, after at least one year, lead to temporary state oversight of the basin’s groundwater supplies until its sustainability plan is improved, as required under SGMA. Alternatively, groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) could update their groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) to address deficiencies, exit state intervention and be returned to oversight by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). This could occur before or after any probationary designation.

If the basin is designated as probationary, board staff collect groundwater extraction information and work with GSAs to improve GSPs so that intervention is no longer needed.

To help inform the hearing, the board also released a [draft staff report](#) that describes the basin’s conditions and makes recommendations for addressing key [deficiencies](#) in the Kaweah subbasin groundwater sustainability plan that continue to negatively impact infrastructure and communities.

“With this third notice, we are establishing a consistent pace for the intervention process while still ensuring space for thoughtful deliberation,” said Eric Oppenheimer, the board’s executive director. “We will continue to work closely with groundwater



sustainability agencies to improve their plans so they can exit state intervention, while also taking necessary steps to protect supplies.”

In 2023, DWR determined that the GSAs for six basins, including the Kaweah subbasin, had inadequate plans for meeting SGMA’s requirement of balanced levels of groundwater pumping and recharge by 2040. DWR deemed the GSP for the Kaweah subbasin inadequate in several crucial categories, including the potential for continued water level declines that could cause wells to go dry, along with the threat of continued land subsidence, a phenomenon in which chronic overpumping leaves underground aquifers and the land above them susceptible to collapse.

An analysis completed with DWR indicates that, based on past water level trends, approximately 872 domestic wells, nearly 1,545 domestic wells and 53 public supply wells could go dry during drought at thresholds proposed by the 2022 GSP.

Release of the draft report begins a 60-day comment period for the board to gather input from stakeholders and others and finalize the document prior to the November hearing at the CalEPA Building in downtown Sacramento. Public input at the hearing is also welcome before the board makes a decision.

The public can participate [in person](#) or remotely, or [watch online](#).

The State Water Board’s mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for present and future generations.