



# Media Release

## **State Water Board returns Chowchilla Subbasin to Department of Water Resources' jurisdiction**

### ***Revised groundwater plan addresses subsidence, well mitigation concerns***

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**SACRAMENTO** – The State Water Resources Control Board approved today a resolution to return the Chowchilla Subbasin to Department of Water Resources' (DWR) jurisdiction under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This decision ends the prospect of direct state intervention in the subbasin's groundwater management.

The subbasin is one of six critically overdrafted subbasins [DWR referred to the State Water Board in 2023](#) for possible state intervention, and it is the first to be returned to DWR after local agencies addressed deficiencies in their groundwater sustainability plan for the subbasin. With these concerns addressed, the subbasin should be on track to sustainable groundwater management by 2040 if local agencies implement the plan.

As a result of today's action, the subbasin's sustainability agencies will continue managing its groundwater under DWR's jurisdiction.

"Today is a milestone for the Chowchilla Subbasin, but it is also a milestone in the state's implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act," said E. Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the board. "Probation is avoidable if there is strong leadership and coordination among groundwater sustainability agencies, close collaboration with board staff and a commitment to manage groundwater sustainably. This is an example of how to navigate this process successfully."

DWR referred the subbasin to the board due to concerns about the sustainability plan's groundwater level minimum thresholds, land subsidence and well mitigation deficiencies in its sustainability plan.

Since then, the subbasin's four local sustainability agencies closely consulted with board staff and made significant progress on revising its plan. The subbasin's 2025 plan establishes new sustainability criteria, management actions and mitigation efforts to address overdraft conditions. The plan also increases groundwater minimum thresholds to Fall 2015 levels to address groundwater declines and better protect drinking water wells within the subbasin.



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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To guard against damage to infrastructure from subsidence, the 2025 plan limits allowable cumulative subsidence to two feet until 2040 and includes more protective management criteria that reduces subsidence to zero feet after 2040. The plan also commits to a more comprehensive well mitigation program by including public water supply wells and water quality protections. Importantly, the plan establishes more robust demand management actions to help local agencies reach sustainability goals and protect beneficial users of groundwater within the subbasin.

Board staff [assessed the 2025 groundwater sustainability plan](#) this spring, and found that prior concerns had been sufficiently addressed to recommend that the subbasin be returned to DWR's oversight.

Enacted in 2014, SGMA established a new framework for local groundwater management to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. Under SGMA, sustainability agencies in subbasins are required to achieve long-term sustainable management of their groundwater within 20 years of implementing their sustainability plans.

More information about [SGMA](#) and the [Chowchilla Subbasin](#) can be found on the board's website.

*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.*