



Groundwater Extraction Fee Waiver Guidance

Some groundwater pumpers in certain parts of the state¹ may temporarily need to report their groundwater extractions to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and pay associated fees. Some of these pumpers may be able to request that the State Water Board waive their fees if they report on time and meet certain criteria. Pumpers currently eligible for fee waivers include certain low-income residents, certain drinking water systems, and public schools.

This document provides guidance on **who may request a fee waiver** for State Water Board groundwater extraction reporting fees and **how to request a fee waiver** from the State Water Board. Please note that the State Water Board does not have a direct role regarding fees imposed by local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and cannot waive those fees for pumpers.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is a California law that was designed to ensure groundwater resources are managed sustainably for the long-term benefit of communities, farms and other businesses, and the environment. SGMA emphasizes local groundwater management, but, if local management is insufficient, SGMA allows the State Water Board to take a range of actions through a process called state intervention.

In state intervention, most groundwater pumpers will be required to track their monthly groundwater extractions, submit reports, and pay fees to the State Water Board, separate from any actions required by the local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies. “De minimis” pumpers - those who extract two acre-feet or less of groundwater per year within a subbasin for domestic purposes only - are usually (but not always) exempt from reporting and paying fees to the State Water Board. The State Water Board may also

¹ The [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\) Status Map](#) shows groundwater subbasins that were designated probationary. Groundwater pumpers in these subbasins are required to report their groundwater extractions to the State Water Board unless they were granted an exclusion.

waive fees for certain pumpers if the waiver is determined by the Board to advance implementation of SGMA pursuant to [California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 1044](#).

This document describes who is eligible to request a fee waiver and how those pumpers may request fee waivers. For more information on groundwater reporting requirements and fee schedules, please visit the [State Water Board's SGMA reporting page](#).

WHO CAN REQUEST A FEE WAIVER

To be eligible for a fee waiver, groundwater pumpers must submit their annual groundwater extraction reports to the State Water Board on time,² **and** be one of the following:

1. A low-income resident, meaning:
 - Their household income is 200 percent or less of the federal poverty level, or
 - They are enrolled in an income-based qualified public assistance program (examples are listed below).
2. A public water system or state small water system serving a disadvantaged community, where the primary purpose of providing water is for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.
3. A public school.

Household Income

Low-income residents may be eligible for a fee waiver. The [SGMA Reporting and Fees webpage](#) lists incomes representing 200 percent of the federal poverty level based on the [Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Poverty Guidelines](#). These values will be updated as new federal poverty levels are assessed. Groundwater pumpers whose annual household income is at or below the applicable threshold are eligible for a fee waiver. The attachment to this guidance document includes an optional worksheet to estimate your household income.

Public Assistance Programs

Those enrolled in income-based public assistance programs may be eligible for a fee waiver. Qualified income-based public assistance programs are public assistance programs available only to low-income residents. Some public assistance programs for

² Reporting deadlines may vary by subbasin. See the [State Water Board's subbasin webpages](#) for more information.

low-income residents include:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- State Supplemental Payment (SSP)
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) or Cal Fresh (Food Stamps)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- CalWORKS
- General Assistance or General Relief program
- Medi-Cal (Medicaid)
- Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

This is not a comprehensive list of all public assistance programs for low-income residents. You may be eligible to request a fee waiver if you are enrolled in an income-based program not listed here.

Public Water Systems or State Small Water Systems Serving Disadvantaged Communities

Public water systems and state small water systems serving disadvantaged communities may be eligible for a fee waiver. Disadvantaged communities are communities where the median annual household income is less than eighty percent of the statewide median annual household income ([California Code of Regulations, title 22, section 64300](#)). Public water systems can rely on the same methodology used to report their disadvantaged community status in their latest [Electronic Annual Report \(eAR\)](#).

Public Schools

Public Schools are eligible for a fee waiver. Public schools include those that meet the [California Department of Education's definition of a public school](#), California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California.

Examples of public schools include:

- Traditional public school
- Charter school
- Magnet school
- Community school

This is not a comprehensive list of public school types. Schools may be eligible to request a fee waiver even if they are a public school type that is not listed above.

HOW TO SUBMIT A FEE WAIVER REQUEST

The following sections cover groundwater pumper options for submitting a fee waiver request. When preparing to submit a fee waiver request form please note:

- To expedite the fee waiver request, submit requests through the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form no later than May 8, 2026.
- Fee waiver requests must be submitted to the State Water Board no more than 30 days after the fee is due. If a fee waiver request is submitted **more** than 30 days after the fee is due, the Board cannot waive fees for that reporting period. However, the Board may use the information to grant a fee waiver for future extraction reports.

Submitting a Fee Waiver Request using the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form

If a groundwater pumper submits a groundwater extraction report in GEARS on time, they will have an option to follow a link to the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form where they may request a fee waiver and provide required information by answering questions in the system. Groundwater pumpers preparing to submit a fee waiver request through the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form should be prepared with the following information beforehand:

- **Low-income residents** – latest tax return for yourself and each member of your household.
- **Residents enrolled in a public assistance program for low-income households** – the name of the program you are enrolled in.
- **Public water systems** – the name of the water system, the point of contact for the water system, the name of the disadvantaged community or communities served, and the primary purpose of the water provided by the system.
- **Public schools** – the name of the public school and the point of contact for the school.

A link to the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form can also be found on the [SGMA Reporting and Fees webpage](#).

Submitting a Fee Waiver Request by email or mail

Although submitting the fee waiver request through the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form is the simplest option, groundwater pumpers may also request a fee waiver by:

Email: SGMA@waterboards.ca.gov

Mail: State Water Resources Control Board
Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management
Re: Fee Waivers
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812

Fee Waiver requests should include the groundwater pumper's Correspondence ID and evidence that the groundwater pumper qualifies for a fee waiver. Please contact staff of the State Water Board using the contact information below if you need further guidance to determine what evidence is needed for your fee waiver request.

Fee Waiver Request Processing

After a fee waiver request is submitted:

1. State Water Board staff will evaluate the request and may ask for more information to support the request.
2. The State Water Board will approve or deny each request based on the pumper's evidence of eligibility. Once a decision is made, State Water Board staff will notify the groundwater pumper.

State Water Board staff strongly recommends filing fee waiver requests through the SGMA Fee Waiver Request Form. Processing times may be longer for fee waiver requests submitted by email or mail.

CONTACT US

For more information or if you have questions, please contact the State Water Board's Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management.

Phone: 916-322-6508

Email: SGMA@waterboards.ca.gov

Website: <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sgma/>

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ATTACHMENT

Optional Worksheet to Estimate Household Income

Step 1: Fill out the table below with **your** annual income. In most cases this should be based on your most recent tax return. Income includes money, property (e.g., real estate), goods, or services.

Income Source	Annual Amount

Total:

Step 2: List each additional person who generates income in your household in the table below and their annual income. In most cases this should be based on their most recent tax return. Income includes money, property (e.g., real estate), goods, or services.

Name of Person in your Household	Annual Income

Total:

Step 3: Add your total annual income (**Step 1**) with the total annual income from each person in your household (**Step 2**).

Step 1 total

Step 2 total

Annual Household Income

Step 4: Compare your annual household income to the amounts listed on the [SGMA Reporting and Fees website](#). If your annual household income is at or below the number listed on the website for your household size, you are considered a low-income resident and are eligible for a fee waiver.