

Questions for 1st Meeting on Sustainable Groundwater Management

1. Definition of Sustainable Groundwater Management

As opposed to creating a definition of sustainable groundwater management, which a groundwater management plan must accomplish, what about establishing as a policy of the state, a statement of sustainable groundwater management?

This policy could affirmatively state what we hope to attain, and not what should be avoided. Given those parameters, how should we state the policy?

2. Single Plan, Multiple Implementers

The argument has been made that for each subbasin or basin (when there is no subbasin) there should be a single comprehensive sustainable groundwater management plan, that would be implemented by one or more agencies.

The rationale for a single plan for each subbasin is that the entire subbasin is hydraulically connected, meaning that actions in one part of the subbasin could affect the rest of the entire subbasin. In subbasins where there are two or more AB 3030 plans, that means that at a minimum those two plans would need to be harmonized.

The rationale for allowing multiple agencies implement the single plan is that different agencies have different missions and expertise in different areas. Flood agencies, as an example, might be best suited for developing stormwater capture and recharge projects; cities and counties have land use authorities that might be helpful for implementing a plan; and so on.

Questions:

- Is there a fatal flaw in this construct, and if so, what is it.
- What changes should be made to improve the ability to management groundwater within this construct?

3. Sustainable Groundwater Management Plans

If the implementation of the local groundwater management plan (GMP) objectives is tied to the state intervention and enforcement, what elements should be included in a GMP to demonstrate improvement and progress in reaching the GMP targets or requirements?

- What elements should be required to be included in all GMPs? For example: Should all GMPS include development of a water budget, sustainable yield/safe yield, assessment of future water demands, and a characterization of the subbasin and interactions with across neighboring subbasins?

- How should the progress of a subbasin be measured or monitored and reported to the state? For example:
Should there be measurable objectives and final targets for achieving the objectives, and progress reports to the state agency? SB 1938 plans required basin management objectives but they were not required to establish an end goal or target to reach, and the objectives did not have to be measurable
- What should be the final targets and requirements for a sustainable or effective groundwater management plan? For example:
Should a subbasin be required to be managed to a sustainable yield/safe yield?
Where it applies, should a subbasin be required to be managed to eliminate overdraft, and avoid significant degradation to surface water flows, groundwater dependent ecosystems, water quality, and land subsidence?