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Water Commission meeting will highlight Central Valley agriculture, the State Water Project, SGMA and the future of groundwater trading

The California Water Commission's (CWC) September meeting will focus on important water issues affecting San Joaquin Valley agriculture and communities. Department of Water Resources (DWR) Director Karla Nemeth will deliver an introductory presentation spotlighting the intersection of agriculture, communities and water in the Central Valley; several state agencies will provide updates on the current state of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation; and a panel of water experts and stakeholders will discuss the future of groundwater trading. The Commission has invited representatives of San Joaquin Valley communities and agriculture to share their thoughts on the presentations.

"The San Joaquin Valley is an essential region with great economic import to the state of California," said CWC Vice-chair and San Joaquin Valley resident Matt Swanson. "I look forward to hearing from the San Joaquin Valley agricultural community about the problems they are facing and the potential solutions that they are working towards."

Director Nemeth will provide remarks about how SGMA, the State Water Project (SWP) and DWR's new Human Right to Water policy relate to agriculture and communities in the Central Valley. The presentation will be followed by updates on the 2022 SWP Drought Contingency Plan and the California Aqueduct Subsidence Program.

"We are facing the very real impacts of a changing climate and the limitations of our aging water system right now as we navigate a historic drought," said Karla Nemeth, Director of the Department of Water Resources. "DWR has a lot of work to do to ensure the system continues to deliver water supplies to our agricultural and urban partners for the next 50 years. It goes beyond surface water management and delivery. We need to focus on our groundwater sustainability especially in the San Joaquin Valley, and ensuring all communities have access to safe, clean drinking water in the years to come."

Representatives from DWR, California Natural Resources Agency, and the Department of Conservation will provide updates on the current state of SGMA, including the state of groundwater in California, the SGMA process, interagency efforts to support local implementation, and a discussion of land use issues.

As part of the Commission's consideration of well-managed groundwater trading programs to support Water Resilience Portfolio Action 3.6, the Commission will hear a synthesis of feedback received during small group discussions, then host a panel of academic experts and stakeholders who will represent community-based organizations, environmental groups, small farms, and groundwater sustainability agencies.

"These regional briefings are part of the CWC's 2021 workplan to serve as a primary public forum for the consideration of topics that are increasingly important for promoting regional water resilience, addressing the challenges of climate change and investing in aging infrastructure to provide multiple benefits for all Californians, including vulnerable users," said CWC Chair Teresa Alvarado.

The California Water Commission will conduct its September 14 meeting remotely. The Commission remains committed to conducting its business in an open and transparent manner. To learn how you can comment, and to view the full agenda, visit cwc.ca.gov/meetings.

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The nine-member California Water Commission uses its public forum to explore water management issues from multiple perspectives and to formulate recommendations to advise the director of the California Department of Water Resources, and as appropriate, the California Natural Resources Agency, the Governor and Legislature on ways to improve water planning and management in response to California's changing hydrology. For more information regarding the California Water Commission visit cwc.ca.gov.