



Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities & Groundwater Markets in the San Joaquin Valley

Presentation by Amanda Monaco
for the California Water Commission
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Source: PolicyLink analysis of 2000 U.S. census and county parcel and boundary data.

Leadership Counsel & our community partners



The Human Right to Water

(AB 685, 2012)

SECTION 1. Section 106.3 is added to the Water Code, to read:

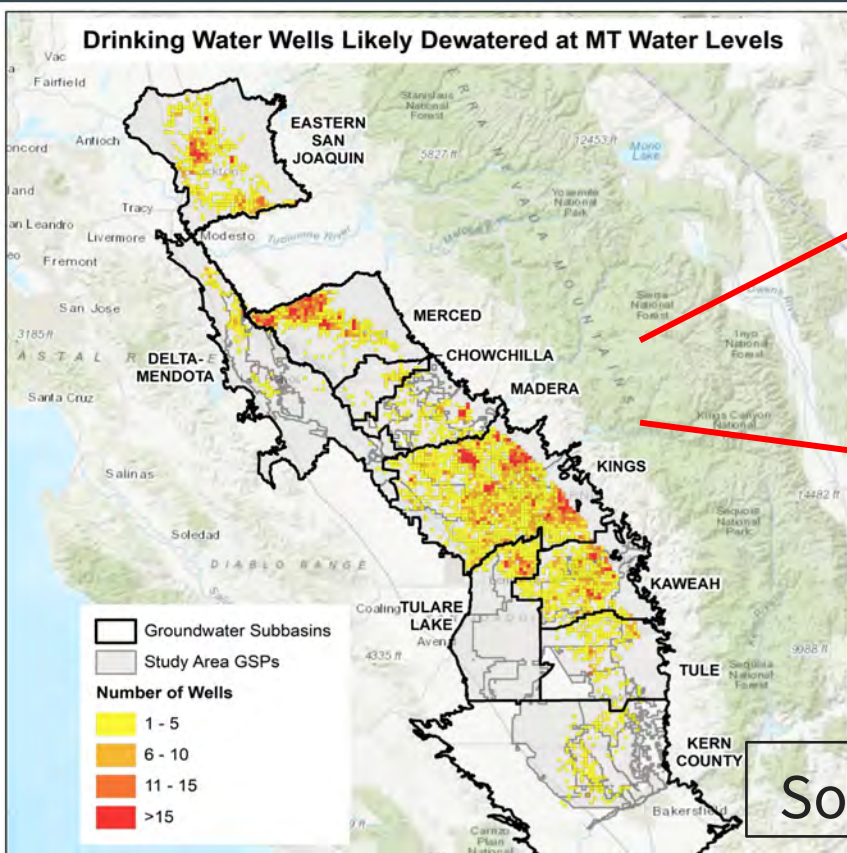
106.3. (a) It is hereby declared to be the established policy of the state that **every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.**

(b) **All relevant state agencies**, including the department, the state board, and the State Department of Public Health, **shall consider this state policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria** when those policies, regulations, and criteria are pertinent to the uses of water described in this section.

Falling groundwater levels continue to cause a Human Rights crisis in the San Joaquin Valley.

- During the 2012-2016 drought, the state received **more than 2,500** domestic well failure reports, the majority of which were in the Central Valley ([DWR 2018](#)).
- Falling groundwater levels are likely to leave **up to 12,000** more wells dry, impacting up to **127,000** people's primary source of water ([Water Foundation 2020](#)).
- Drinking water issues disproportionately impact **low income communities and communities of color** ([UC Davis](#))

Studies show severe future impacts to domestic wells in the SJV from declining water levels

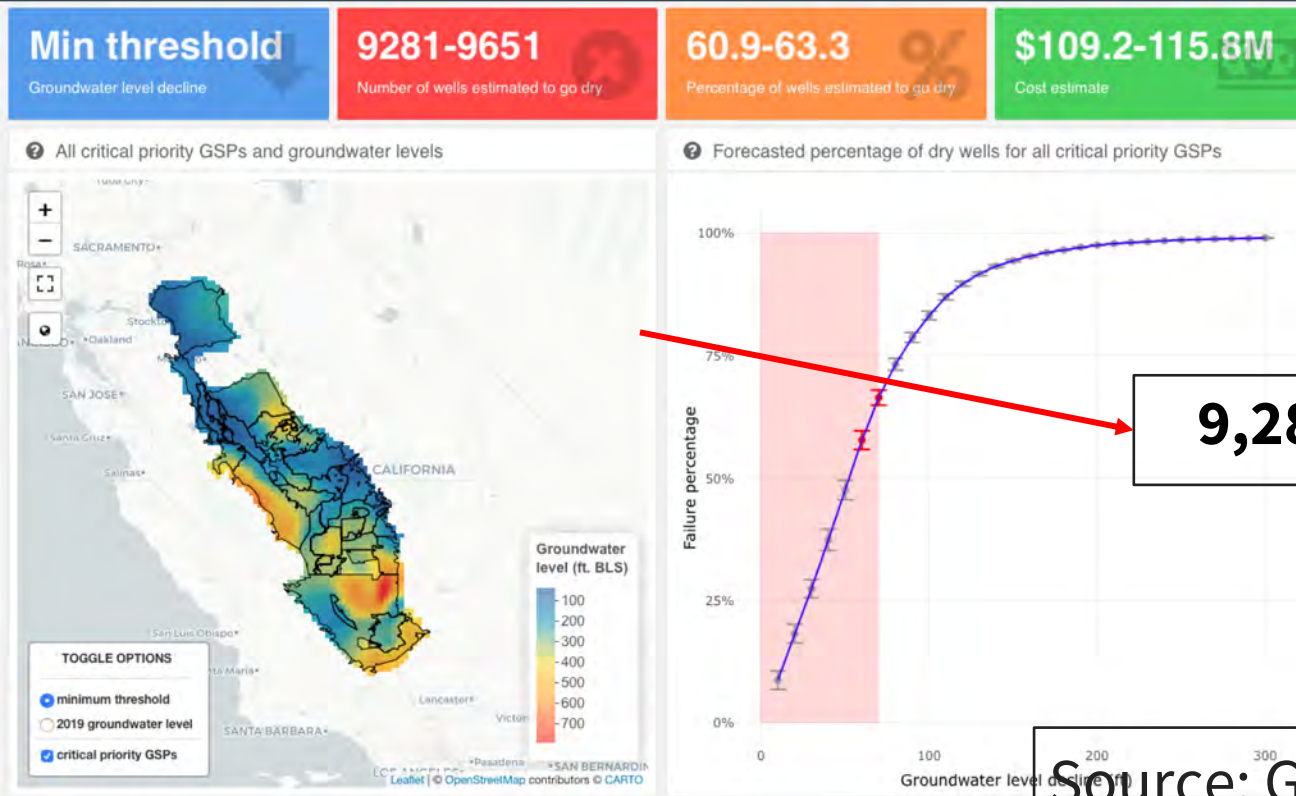


9,800 - 12,000 dry wells

106,000-127,000 people affected

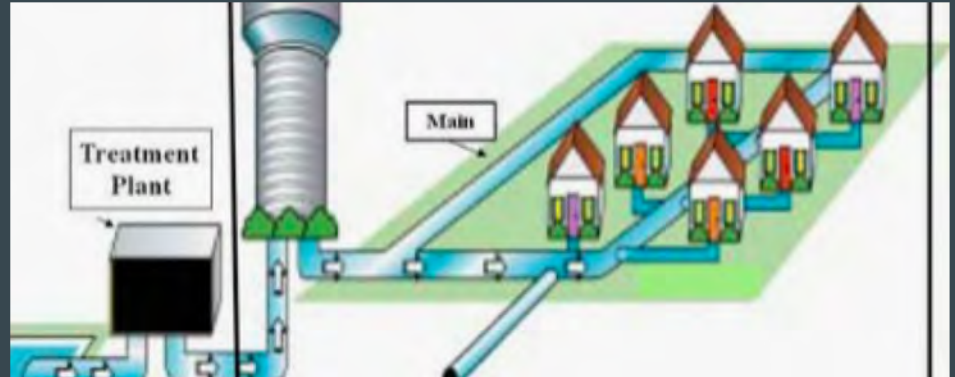
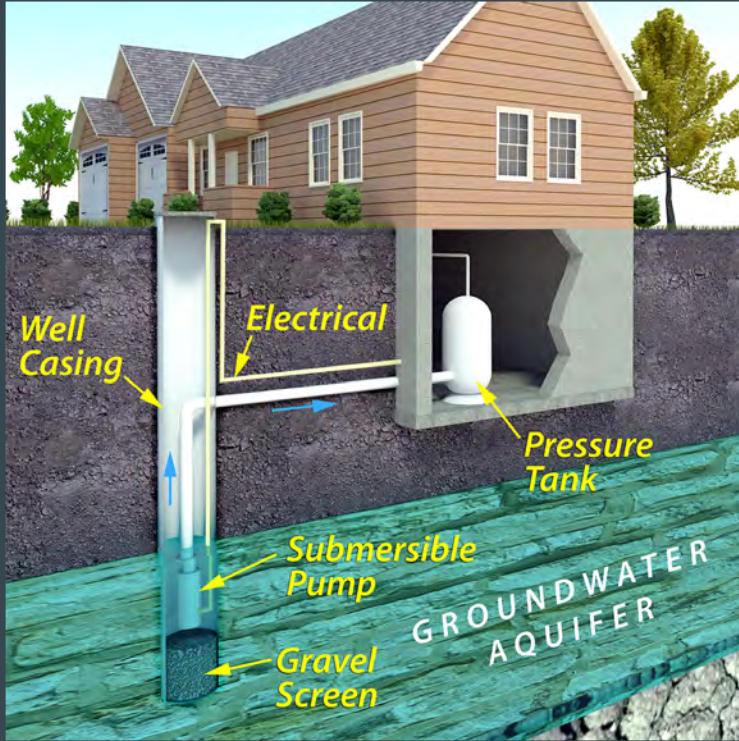
Source: Water Foundation

Studies show severe future impacts to domestic wells in the SJV from declining water levels



Source: GSPdrywells.com

Disadvantaged communities in the San Joaquin Valley are the most vulnerable to falling groundwater levels, since they depend on shallow domestic wells and small community water systems.





Carolina Tombstone Territory

Carolina's family lost water in their home in 2016. Their neighbor let them use his hose, and they used a large portion of their income on bottled water. After 4 months, they were finally able to get funding to deepen their well.



“I felt sad that my children couldn’t bathe, couldn’t flush the toilet. They were ashamed to go to school because they couldn’t shower regularly and they smelled. I came here to give them a better life...but even in Mexico we had running water.”

“One day my son was using a bucket to shower, and he saved some of the water for me to use. I cried.”

“Every day I live in fear that it’s going to happen again.”

Resident's concerns with groundwater markets:



1. Exacerbating existing inequities in water management and water use

- a. Water likely to go to biggest buyer, not most critical use.
- b. Theoretical “set-asides” would not stop large pumpers from pumping water out from under a community.

2. Concerns about governance: Many GSAs will continue to allow wells to go dry without mitigation, not protecting drinking water.

3. Water is essential to life. We should manage it as a public trust, not a commodity. #HR2W

To protect the #HR2W, residents ask that GSAs prioritize:

1. **Complete information** about vulnerable drinking water users
2. Tight **monitoring** around vulnerable communities
3. Projects and demand reduction that **prevent dry wells and contamination**
4. Establish **drinking water mitigation programs** and support long-term drinking water solutions.



To protect the #HR2W, residents ask that DWR and the SWRCB:

1. Require the aforementioned elements in all GSPs.

- a. Complete information
- b. Monitoring
- c. Prevent dry wells & contamination
- d. Drinking water mitigation



2. Provide resources/guidance to help GSAs develop these elements before more wells go dry.



Thank you!

Amanda Monaco

Water Policy Coordinator

Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability

amonaco@leadershipcounsel.org