



Update on CASGEM and Other Groundwater Issues and Activities

About 30 percent of water deliveries in California come directly from groundwater with much more in drought years. Many smaller urban and rural areas depend entirely on groundwater, as do some larger cities including Fresno. In all, 85 percent of Californians depend on groundwater for at least part of their drinking water, and there are many groundwater dependent ecosystems throughout the state. Groundwater level decline in overdrafted basins is typically exacerbated by drought but data availability limitations make it difficult to assess drought impacts on groundwater at statewide or large regional scales in a near real-time manner, as can be done with surface water.

The comprehensive water package enacted by the legislature in 2009 mandated a statewide groundwater elevation monitoring program to track seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations in California's groundwater basins. In response, DWR developed the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) program. The intent of the CASGEM program is to establish a permanent, locally-managed program of regular and systematic monitoring in all of California's alluvial groundwater basins.

As part of the CASGEM Program, DWR has developed the Basin Prioritization process to prioritize California's groundwater basins and subbasins statewide. The findings indicate that 126 of California's 515 groundwater basins and subbasins are High and Medium priority. These basins account for 92% of California's annual groundwater pumping and supply 89% of the population which resides over groundwater basins. The remaining 388 basins are Low and Very Low priority and comprise 75% of the groundwater basins in the State.

On March 1, 2014, Governor Brown signed legislation to assist drought-affected communities and provide funding to better use local water supplies. This included \$14 million for groundwater management across the state, including assistance to disadvantaged communities with groundwater contamination exacerbated by the drought.

Mary Scruggs and Dan McManus with the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) Regional Planning Office will provide an update on how DWR's current groundwater efforts are in alignment with the Governor's Water Action Plan, and discuss the CASGEM regional prioritization process, drought impacts, and future activities to improve groundwater management.

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