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Forming Groundwater Sustainability Agencies: Emerging Approaches and Challenges

California Water Commission - March 18, 2015

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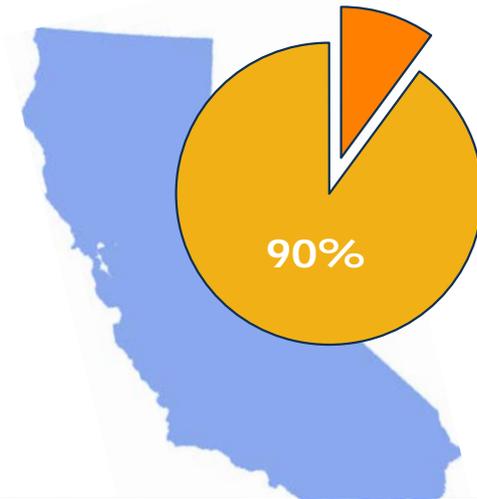
About ACWA

Who We Represent . . .

- + ACWA members responsible for 90% of the state's distributed water

Water Sources & Services

- + Federal, state and local projects
- + Surface and groundwater
- + Agricultural, urban, industrial customers
- + Wholesale, retail



Overview of GSA Formation Situation

- + Key SGMA deadlines for GSA formation :
 - June 30, 2017 Establishing GSAs
 - January 1, 2016 Basin Boundary Regulations
- + GSAs formed by one or more local public agencies with water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities
- + Counties are presumed GSA, if no other identified
- + Boundaries are *Very Important*: Basins and Jurisdictions
- + New Authorities and Tools, New Participants, Diverse Interests
- + Local Control means Locals Must Lead (even in currently “unmanaged areas”)
- + But Locals Can be Empowered for Success: outreach and education, policy clarity and flexibility, tools, facilitation, funding

Conceptual Steps to Forming a GSA*

- + Identify your basins
- + Identify and work with local agencies
- + Understand your basin and available resources
- + Identify and involve interested stakeholders
- + Evaluate SGMA authorities & who wants to do what
- + Evaluate and propose governance model



Establishing GSAs

June 30, 2017

- + GSA Conceptual Models:
 - Single GSA, Single GSP
 - Multiple GSAs, Single GSP
 - Multiple GSAs, Multiple GSPs with “Coordination Agreement”
- + Publication of Notice and Public Hearings
- + “Exclusive” local agencies
- + Notice of Intent to DWR with proposed boundaries
- + Consider all interests of beneficial uses and users of groundwater
- + Maintain Interested Persons List



Basin Boundary Regulations

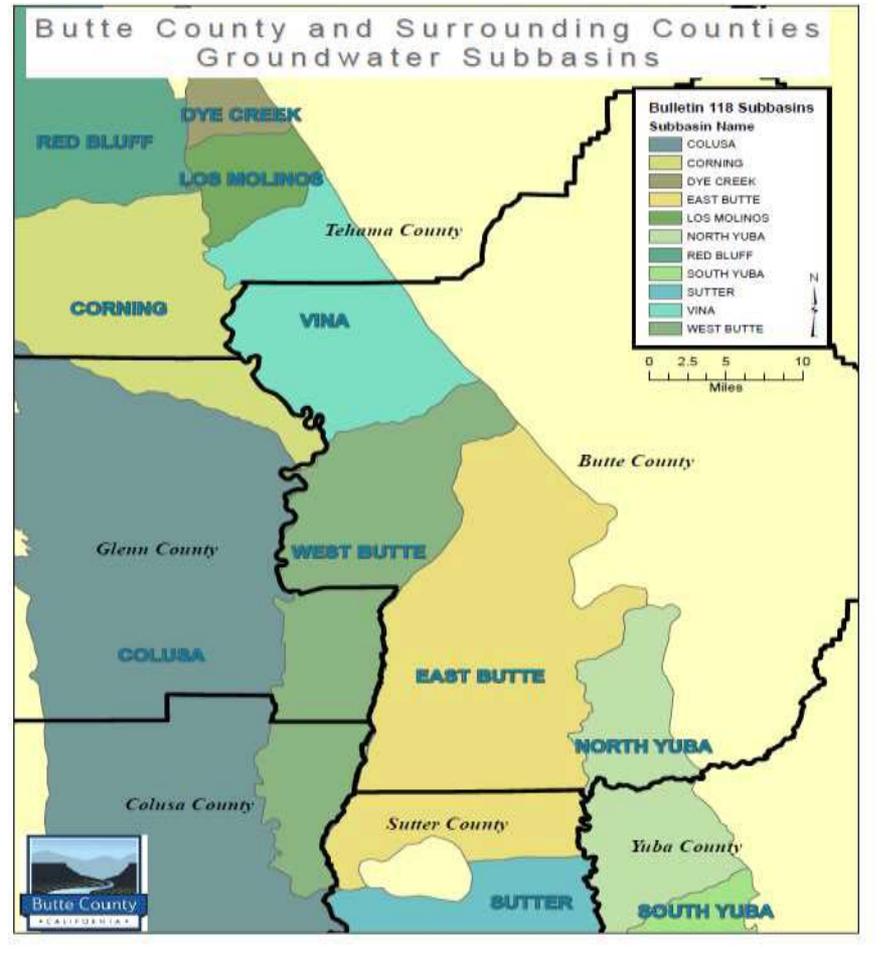
Jan. 1, 2016

- + Emergency Regulations to request basin boundary revisions to include instructions for:
 - Technical information on boundaries and conditions in the affected basins
 - Consultation with interested local agencies and public water systems in the affected basins
 - Other information DWR deems necessary to justify revision

- + Methodology and Criteria must address:
 - Likelihood proposed basin can be sustainably managed
 - Whether proposed basin would limit sustainable management in adjacent basin
 - Whether there is a history of sustainable management of groundwater levels in the proposed basins

Example: Basin Boundary and GSA Considerations

- + Possible types of boundary adjustments:
 - Between basins (adjustments and mergers)
 - Between basin and adjacent non-designated area
 - Within a basin to create new basins
- + Geological and hydrological conditions
- + Political boundaries and governance relationships



Local Agencies Already Working Together on GSA's and Governance

Regional Workshops in Willows, Tulare and Modesto:

- Water Districts, Counties, Cities
- Evaluating current conditions and management plans
- Identifying information gaps and capacity needs
- Considering governance structures and forming partnerships



Laying the Groundwork to Form GSAs

- + Local meetings at County and basin-level:
 - Potential GSA agencies
 - Private water companies
 - Private well owners: agricultural and residential landowners
 - Local stakeholders groups: County Farm Bureaus, growers associations, Resource Conservation Districts, environmental justice and conservation groups
- + Assessing groundwater technical information and plans
- + Possible governance mechanisms: Joint Powers Authority, MOU
- + Possible authorities: rules, regulations, ordinances , well permitting, monitoring and reporting , fees
- + Facilitation and conflict resolution needs

Action at the Local Level

Yolo County Basins

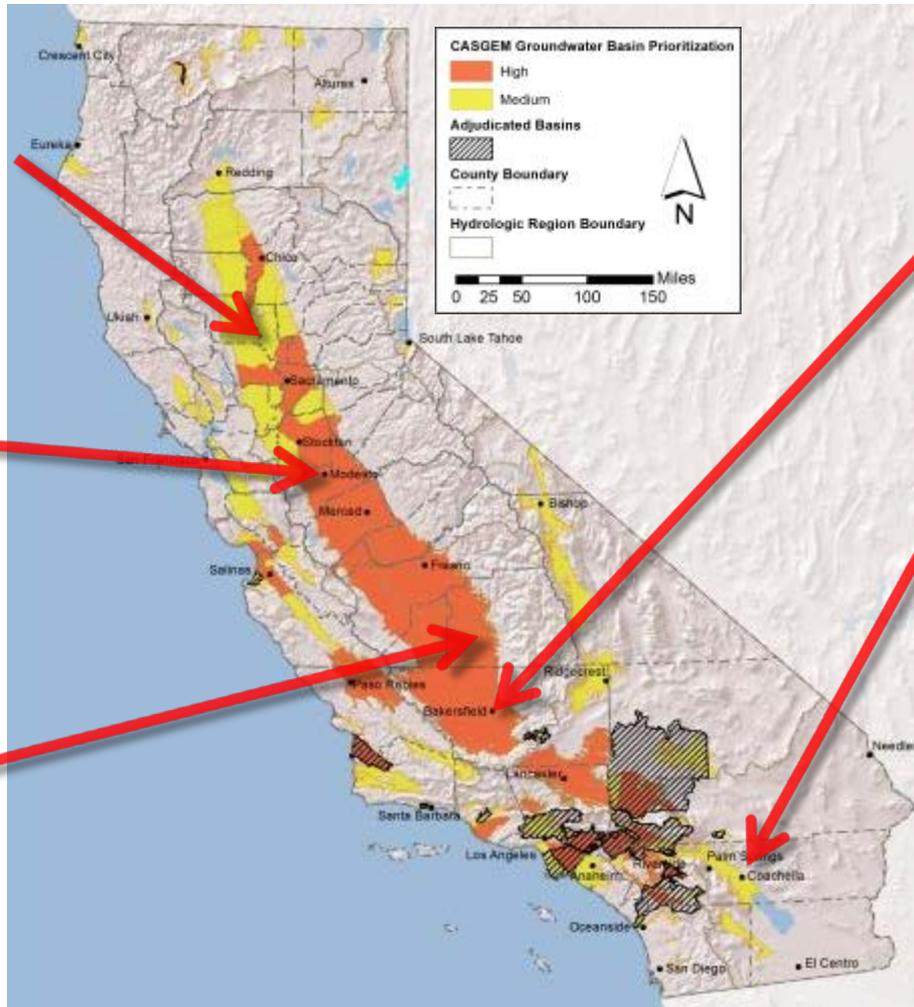
Planning forum with local farm bureau to determine GSA structure and basin needs

Modesto Basin

Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers Groundwater Basin Association considered as potential GSA

Kaweah Basin

Tulare County Water Commission working with Board of Supervisors



Kern County Basins

Kern County Groundwater Authority formed 2014 to act as "coordinating GSA"

Coachella Valley Basins

Regional Water Management Group with 5 water agencies cooperating

Local Examples: Yolo County Basins

Water Resources Association of Yolo County (WRA):

- + Ongoing regional monitoring and real-time sensors
- + Countywide groundwater model and subsidence monitoring network
- + Current AB 3030 Plan
- + Planning forum with local farm bureau to determine GSA structure and basin needs



Local Examples: Modesto Basin

Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers Groundwater Basin Association (STRGBA):

- + Includes majority of local agencies in Modesto Sub-basin; reaching out to 2 additional local agencies within the sub-basin
- + Promotes coordinated groundwater management; serves as CASGEM monitoring entity
- + STRGBA has formally confirmed intent to pursue governance at sub-basin level
- + 2015 Work Plan: finish USGS model, update/extend MOU, develop STRGBA outreach material, continue governance discussions



Local Examples: Kaweah Basin

Tulare County Water Commission
working with Board of Supervisors:

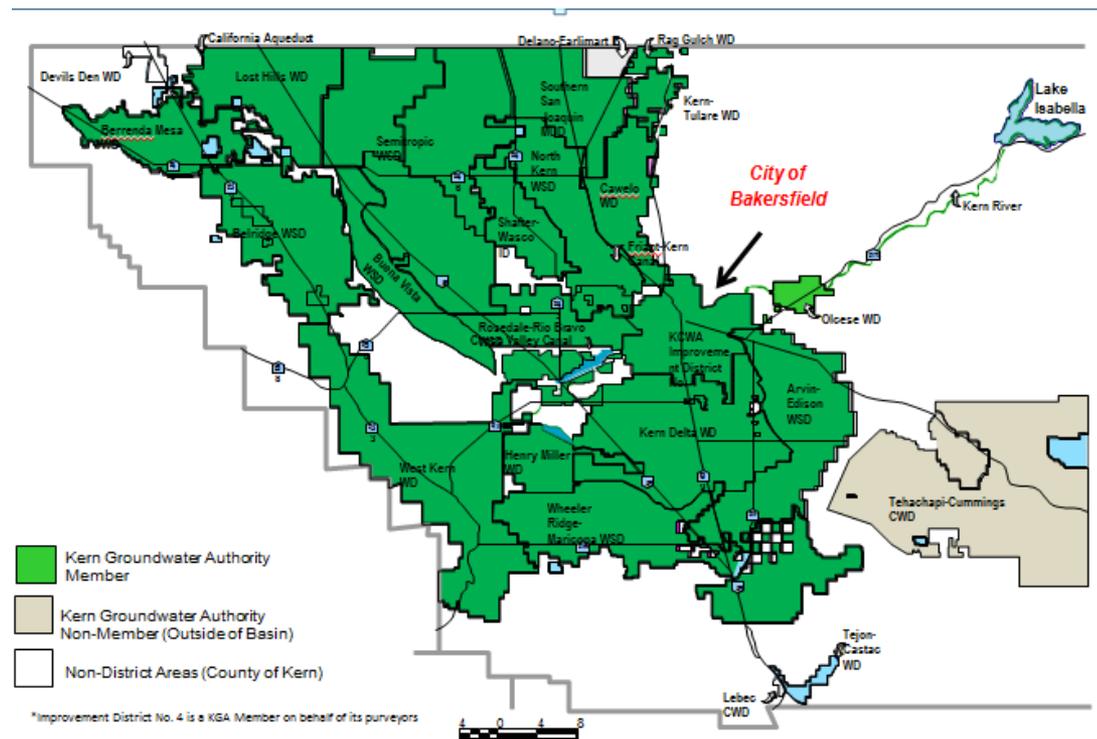
- + 9 local entities are part of the Kaweah River Basin IRWM
- + 17 local ID's, cities & counties in AB 3030 Plan
- + 31 public/private water suppliers are members of water rights association
- + Current efforts serving as model for GSA governance options



Local Examples: Kern County Basins

Kern County Groundwater Authority formed in 2014:

- + Covers 100% of land; 95% of GW pumping in Kern
- + Ongoing technical studies to inform GSPs
- + Workshops in January-March 2015
- + Currently acting as “coordinating GSA”
- + May act as GSA- subject to membership approval



Kern Groundwater Authority
Membership Map

Local Examples: Coachella Valley Basins

Regional Water Management Group with 5 water agencies formed in 2008:

- + Cooperating groundwater management agencies perform groundwater replenishment, metered water production, Water Resources investigations, land surface elevation studies
- + Implementing elements of local Water Management Plans
- + Agencies cooperatively fill CASGEM monitoring role



Summary: Immediate Challenges

- + Continue outreach and education targeted to all Medium and High priority basins (but support efforts in Low and Very Low basins too)
- + Adopt flexible basin boundary amendment regulations and provide responsive and consistent administration
- + Address GSA formation conflicts proactively
- + Provide incentives: facilitation services and funding for technical services (before 2016)
- + Rapidly identify and remove administrative barriers
- + Highlight successful approaches

Contact & More Information

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