

**Local agencies to develop a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Carpinteria
Groundwater Basin**

Written by: Robert McDonald, General Manager

The Carpinteria Valley Water District is in the process of forming a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for Carpinteria Groundwater Basin (CGB) in partnership with the City of Carpinteria, Santa Barbara County, and Ventura County. The GSA is a requirement of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) which was passed in 2014 to ensure better regional management of groundwater use in California. The act aims to have sustainable groundwater management in California by 2042, which is defined as “management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results”. These undesirable results include chronic depletion of groundwater supply, reduction of storage, significant seawater intrusion, decreased water quality, and substantial land subsidence.

Although groundwater management in drought-ridden California has historically been very lenient, Carpinteria Valley Water District has collected a quarter-century worth of data on groundwater levels and quality. This has provided us with a better understanding of the conditions of our underlying aquifers. CVWD adopted a groundwater management plan in 1996 in response to AB 3030, developed a MODFLOW groundwater model of the CGB in 2012, and has analyzed ways to improve storage of groundwater to sustain this valuable resource. We also recently finished the construction of three “sentinel” wells along the coast to monitor for seawater intrusion into CGB. This data and valuable information we will obtain from these wells will help our GSA develop an effective Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to address the threat of seawater intrusion.

The Carpinteria Basin has been classified by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as a high-priority basin. This designation is based on the population, annual extraction from the basin, and the percentage of the local water supply that is composed of groundwater. The number of public and private wells, irrigated acres, and susceptibility to seawater intrusion are also important factors that were considered. The CGB is a critical part of CVWD's water supply portfolio and an important resource for all groundwater users in the Carpinteria Valley and should be locally managed. SGMA provides a framework to do that. The GSA formation is targeted for early 2020 with the implementation of a GSP required within the next five years. The SGMA requires annual reporting and GSP assessments must be completed every five years.

The City of Carpinteria, Counties & CVWD co-hosted an initial public meeting at Lion's Park at the end of July to get feedback on the GSA structure. Public workshops will continue to take place to involve local stakeholders that rely upon this resource for domestic and agricultural use. The SGMA process encourages public input and community involvement is a critical aspect of ensuring that the GSA and GSP will be successful. Public participation will help build creative solutions and highlight potential concerns early on. Another meeting is anticipated in September to discuss funding and further clarify the responsibilities of the interested local agencies.

Groundwater sustainability is important for everyone, especially in our arid region. Sustainable groundwater management is necessary to weather future periods of drought and to maintain a resilient basin for generations to come. Stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the SGMA process as these decisions may affect their interests. To sign up to receive updates about the SGMA process, please e-mail SGMA@cvwd.net. For other general District updates, follow us on Twitter [@CarpWater](https://twitter.com/CarpWater), or like Carpinteria Valley Water District on Facebook.