



**Vina Groundwater
Sustainability Agency**
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Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Board Meeting Agenda

Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Time: 5:00 PM

Location: Chico City Council Chamber, 421 Main Street, Chico CA

Or [Join the Vina GSA Board Meeting via Zoom](#)

Meeting ID: 678 207 7386

Live streaming and recording of Vina GSA Board meetings are provided for viewing purposes only. Please note that in-person attendance is required for public participation. Streaming and recording services are subject to discontinuance if technical or other issues prevent effective meeting proceedings.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Jeff Rohwer, Chair
Tod Kimmelshue, Vice Chair
Derek Sohnrey
Katie Hawley
Jim Graydon

PUBLIC COMMENT INFORMATION:

Public comment will be accepted in-person at the meeting or may be submitted by email prior to the meeting to VINAGSAPUBLICCOMMENTS@CHICOCA.GOV. If you would like to address the Board at this meeting, you are requested to complete a speaker card and hand it to the Board Clerk prior to the conclusion of the staff presentation for that item. A time limit of three (3) minutes per speaker on all items and an overall time limit of thirty minutes for agenda items has been established. If more than 10 speaker cards are submitted for agenda items, the time limitation may be reduced to one and a half minutes per speaker.

When submitting public comments via email, please indicate the item number your comment corresponds to in the subject line. Comments submitted will be sent to the full GSA Board members electronically prior to the start of the meeting. Email comments will be acknowledged and read into the record by name only during the public comment period for each agenda item. Emailed comments received prior to the end of the meeting will be made part of the written record but not acknowledged at the meeting.

VINA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (GSA)

BOARD MEETING AGENDA

September 9, 2026

1. Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Board Meeting

1.1 Call To Order

1.2 Roll Call

2. Business from the Floor

Members of the public may address the Vina GSA Board at this time on any matter not already listed on the agenda; comments are limited to three minutes. The Boards cannot take any action at this meeting on requests made under this section of the agenda.

3. Consent Agenda:

3.1 *Approval of the 08-12-26 Vina GSA Board Meeting Minutes.

Requested Action: Approve the 08-12-26 Vina GSA Board meetings minutes.

4. Items Removed from Consent – If Any

5. Regular Agenda:

5.1 *Update on the Draft Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments

Staff will provide an update on the status and anticipated timeline for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments, including information regarding the comment period for the draft documents and key decision-making milestones through January 2027. **(Report – Becky Anderson - Fairbanks, SGM Grant Projects Manager)**

Requested Action: Accept as information.

5.2 *Consideration of Alternate Location for GSA Board Meetings

At the August 12, 2026 Board meeting, the Board directed staff to look into moving Board meetings from the Chico City Council Chambers to the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) Board Room, located at 326 Huss Dr, Suite 110, Chico, CA 95928. The room is available on the Board's meeting dates for the remainder of 2026 at a cost of \$165 per meeting. **(Report – Dillon McGregor, GSA Program Manager)**

Requested Action: Provide direction to staff on which location to reserve for future Board meetings.

6. Communications And Reports

6.1 Program Manager Report *(Information Only - Dillon McGregor, GSA Program Manager)*

6.2 *Butte County Public Health Department Quarterly Well Permit Summary. *(Information Only)*

6.3 *Correspondence *(Information Only)*

7. Board Member Requests for Future Items:

Board Members may propose topics, projects, or issues for inclusion on a future agenda. Proposals will be noted for consideration by the Chair and Program Manager, subject to feasibility and alignment with the Agency's priorities. No discussion or action will be taken on proposed items at this meeting.

8. Adjournment:

The Vina GSA Board meeting will adjourn to Closed Session after tonight's Vina GSA Board Meeting.

1. Closed Session Public Comments or Board Disqualifications:

Members of the public may address the Board at this time on the closed session item only; comments are limited to three (3) minutes, or time limit as determined by the Chair.

2. Adjourn to Closed Session:

3. Closed Session

3.1 Call to Order

4. Closed Session Agenda

- 4.1 PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.9(d)(1) - CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION – Butte County Superior Court #23CV02789 - Ronald R Titus, as Trustee of the 2005 Titus Trust et al vs Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency**
- 4.2 PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.9(d)(1) - CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION – Butte County Superior Court #22CV00321 - AquAlliance et al vs Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency et al.**
- 4.3 PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.9(d)(1) - CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION – Butte County Superior Court #24CV04275 - AquAlliance et al vs Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency et al.**
- 4.4 PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.9(D)(2) AND 54956.9(E)(5), CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXPOSURE TO LITIGATION AGAINST THE AGENCY.**

5. Closed Session Announcement:

Report on any action taken during the closed session.

6. Adjournment:

The Vina GSA Closed Session will adjourn to a Vina GSA Regular Board Meeting on October 14, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the Chico City Council Chamber Building at 421 Main Street, Chico, CA and online via Zoom for viewing only.

*Materials included in agenda packet



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VINA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (GSA) AND ROCK CREEK RECLAMATION DISTRICT (RCRD) GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (GSA) JOINT BOARD MEETING

Regular Board Meeting

MINUTES

August 12, 2026

1. VINA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (GSA) REGULAR BOARD MEETING

1.1. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Tod Kimmelshue at 3:33 PM.

1.2. Roll Call

Board Members Present

Jim Graydon
Katie Hawley
Steven Koehnen (alternate)
Derek Sohnrey
Tod Kimmelshue

Staff Present

Dillon McGregor, GSA Program Manager
Becky Fairbanks, SGM Grant Project Manager
David Kehn, City of Chico
Stina Cooley, City of Chico
Kamie Loeser, County of Butte
Christina Buck, County of Butte

2. ROCK CREEK RECLAMATION DISTRICT (RCRD) GSA BOARD MEETING

2.1. The meeting was called to order by Chair Rice at 3:33 PM

2.2. Roll Call

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Elvin Bentz
Hal Crain
Jon Lavy
James Strong
Bruce McGowan – Treasurer
Darren Rice – Chair

Board member Dan Paiva was absent

3. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Members of the public addressing the Board on this item were David Steindorf, Susan Schrader, and Blake Ellis.

4. JOINT VINA GSA/RCRD GSA BOARD MEETING AGENDA

4.1. Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments Timeline Update – Information Only

Staff provided an update on the status and anticipated timeline for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments, including key decision-making milestones through January 2027. The presentation highlighted newly available supporting documents and technical resources prepared as part of the Periodic Evaluation process, along with an update on the status of the remaining sustainable groundwater management (SGM) Grant projects.

Members of the public speaking on this item were Richard Perrelli and Marin Hambley.

4.2. Consideration of topics related to the Vina Periodic Evaluation and Potential Amendments to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

Staff presented an overview of each topic based on the information provided in the transmittals.

4.2.1 Consideration of draft response to water quality related Recommended Corrective Action for inclusion in the Periodic Evaluation

Staff presented an overview of the topic, including feedback provided by the Vina Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SHAC) at their July 22, 2026, meeting.

Members of the public addressing the Board on this item were Patrizia Hironimus and Kenneth Scheer.

Action:

A motion to direct staff to respond to RCA 1 with the draft language presented was made by Board Member Koehnen. The motion was seconded by Board Member Sohnrey. Board Member Hawley proposed a friendly amendment to utilize updated maps to incorporate current plume data. The amendment was accepted.

The motion passed with the following vote:

Ayes: Graydon, Hawley, Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Noes: NONE
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE

4.2.2 Consideration of potential new Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) for inclusion in the Periodic Evaluation

Staff presented an overview of the topic, including feedback provided by the Vina Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SHAC) at their July 22, 2026, meeting. Staff presented potential new projects and responded to questions.

Feedback was requested on whether the concepts are best characterized as projects or management actions and, for the project concepts, whether they would be part of the GSAs' active implementation strategy or more appropriately categorized as Other Projects. Board feedback directs how the potential new projects are included in the public review draft of the Periodic Evaluation. The potential PMAs will be presented to the SHAC for formal recommendation before being presented to the Vina GSA and Rock Creek Reclamation District GSA Boards for formal consideration, as warranted.

Members of the public addressing the Board on this item were Kenneth Scheer, Patrizia Hironimus, and Aurelia Gonzalez.

Action:

A motion to direct staff to include all six of the newly proposed Projects and Management Actions as 'Other Projects' in the public review draft of the Vina Periodic Evaluation was made by Board Member Sohnrey. The motion was seconded by Board Member Hawley.

The motion passed with the following vote:

Ayes: Graydon, Hawley, Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Noes: NONE
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE

4.2.3 Consideration of plan amendments and Periodic Evaluation content for Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC), including removal of "non-dry year" language and the Groundwater Level SMC

The Board considered the following:

- a) Response to Recommended Corrective Actions (RCAs) 3 and 4 related to "non-dry year" language in the SMC. The Boards considered a potential Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) amendment to remove the "non-dry year" language from the SMC.
- b) Potential changes to the Groundwater Level SMC in the Periodic Evaluation or through plan amendments, including consideration of an expanded Representative Monitoring Site (RMS) network and Alternatives for the Minimum Threshold.

Staff presented an overview of the topic, including feedback and recommendations provided by the SHAC on these topics.

Action was requested on items a), b), and c) for this agenda item:

- a) How to respond to RCA 3 and 4 in the public review draft of the Periodic Evaluation and whether or not to amend the GSP to remove the non-dry year language in the SMC.

Alternative 1 - Amending the GSP to remove reference to non-dry year water year types would include changes to the SMC for Groundwater Levels, Groundwater Storage, Water Quality, and Interconnected Surface Water sustainability indicators (as shown in the staff memo).

Alternative 2 - Not removing the non-dry year language would require "discussing how extractions and recharge will be managed as necessary to ensure that reductions in groundwater levels or storage during dry years are offset by increases in groundwater levels or storage during other years within the sustainable management criteria for the chronic lowering of groundwater levels" in the Periodic Evaluation.

- b) Whether expansion of the RMS network to 29 wells should be included as an amendment to the GSP or simply described in the Periodic Evaluation
- c) What approach to use to assign Minimum Thresholds (MTs) to the RMS wells:

Alternative 1: Same or comparable 2022 GSP MTs, with addition of Local Management Levels on 14 out of 29 RMS wells

Alternative 2: Change MTs based on 20 feet below the historical low, or 5% of domestic wells at risk, whichever is deeper; no Local Management Levels

Other direction as specified by the Boards

Program Manager McGregor noted that 136 comment letters had been received on this agenda item and read the names of the citizens who submitted comments.

The Boards recessed for a 10-minute break at 5:33 pm. The Boards reconvened at 5:43 pm with all Board Members present.

Members of the public commenting on this item were Tovey Giezentanner, Pat Dobson, Anne Dawson, Patrizia Hironimus, Bridget Estrada, Lily, Wolfy Rogle, Cheetah Tchudi, Susan Schrader, Margo Lund, Blake Ellis, Michael Nalin, Alexandra Bern, Billy Musselman, Dave Steindorf, Rich McGowan, and Aurelia Gonzalez.

Action on a):

A motion to direct staff to amend the GSP to remove the reference to non-dry year water year types and include changes to the SMC for Groundwater Levels, Groundwater Storage, Water Quality, and Interconnected Surface Water sustainability indicators (as shown in the staff memo) was made by Board Member Hawley and seconded by Board Member Graydon.

The motion failed (2-3,) with the following vote:

**Ayes: Graydon & Hawley
Noes: Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE**

A Motion to direct staff to keep the non-dry year language, requiring “discussions on how extractions and recharge will be managed as necessary to ensure that reductions in groundwater levels or storage during dry years are offset by increases in groundwater levels or storage during other years within the sustainable management criteria for the chronic lowering of groundwater levels” in the Periodic Evaluation was made by Board Member Koehnen and seconded by Board Member Sohnrey.

The motion passed (3-2) with the following vote:

**Ayes: Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Noes: Graydon & Hawley
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE**

Action on b):

A motion to direct staff to include the expansion of the RMS network to 29 wells and 26 polygons as an amendment to the GSP was made by Board Member Graydon and seconded by Board Member Hawley.

The motion passed (5-0) with the following vote:

**Ayes: Graydon, Hawley, Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Noes: NONE
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE**

Action on c):

A motion to direct staff to assign minimum thresholds utilizing Alternative 1 methodology with LMLs 20 feet below the MOs instead of 15 feet was made by Board Member Koehnen and seconded by Board Member Sohnrey.

Vice Chair Kimmelshue proposed a friendly amendment to include direction to staff to provide more prescriptive language to the LMLs, meaning very strong language as to what

would happen if we hit the LMLs and what action would be taken if that happened. This language would be added to the draft.

The amendment was accepted.

The motion passed (3-2) with the following vote:

Ayes: Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Noes: Graydon & Hawley,
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE

4.3 Drought Resilience Plan Update - Information Only

Staff provided an update on the Drought Resilience Plan.

The Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation released a Draft Drought Resilience Plan for public review and comment through August 28, 2026.

5.0 ADJOURNMENT

The Vina GSA/Rock Creek Reclamation District GSA Joint Board meeting adjourned at 7:26 PM to the Vina GSA Meeting.

*****RECONVENE TO VINA GSA BOARD MEETING*****

1.0 VINA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (GSA) BOARD MEETING

1.1. **Call To Order** - The Meeting was called to order at 7:31 PM.

1.2. **Roll Call** – All Members were present

2.0 BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR - None

3.0 CONSENT AGENDA

3.1. **Approval of the 07-08-26 Vina GSA Board Meeting Minutes.**

3.2 **Approval of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Financial Services Between the Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency and the Butte County Auditor-Controller**

Action:

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Board Member Hawley and seconded by Board Member Sohnrey.

The motion passed (5-0) with the following vote:

Ayes: Graydon, Hawley, Koehnen, Sohnrey, & Kimmelshue
Noes: NONE
Abstain: NONE
Absent: NONE

4.0 ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA – None

5.0 REGULAR AGENDA

5.1 Ongoing SGMA Implementation Support Services Request for Proposal (RFP) Update

Staff provided an update on the RFP process for Ongoing SGMA Implementation Support Services.

Board Member Graydon recused himself from item 5.1 due to a conflict.

Vice Chair Kimmelshue was designated to participate in the interview process.

5.2 Board Meeting Start Time

At the July board meeting, the Board asked staff to bring back an item to reconsider the current meeting time of 3:30 PM.

Action:

A motion to change the meeting start time to 5:00 PM until the end of the year was made by Board Member Hawley and seconded by Board member Graydon.

Additional direction to staff to investigate moving the meetings permanently to the Butte County Association of Governments building was provided.

The motion passed (4-1) with the following vote:

Ayes:	Graydon, Hawley, Koehnen, & Kimmelshue
Noes:	Sohnrey
Abstain:	NONE
Absent:	NONE

6.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS – *Information only*

6.1 Program Manager Report (Information Only - Dillon McGregor, GSA Program Manager)

7. BOARD MEMBER REQUESTS FOR FUTURE ITEMS

Board Member Graydon requested to agendaize a discussion to have staff provide periodic updates on the California Water Plan.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The Vina GSA Board meeting adjourned to Closed Session at 7:46 PM.



Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency Agenda Transmittal

Subject: Update on the Draft Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments

Contact: Becky Fairbanks

Phone: (530) 552-3587

Meeting Date: September 9, 2026

Agenda Item: 5.1

Summary:

Staff will provide an update on the status and anticipated timeline for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments, including information regarding the comment period for the draft documents and key decision-making milestones through January 2027.

Attachments:

1. Staff Memo



Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency
308 Nelson Avenue, Oroville, CA 95965
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MEMORANDUM

To: Vina GSA Board

From: Becky Anderson-Fairbanks, Vina GSA Project Manager, Christina Buck, Asst. Director Butte County Dept. of Water and Resource Conservation (providing technical staff support to the GSA)

Date: September 3, 2026

Subject: Status Update: Draft 2027 Periodic Evaluation and Draft GSP Plan Amendments – Public Review Timeline

Overview

The Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) and Rock Creek Reclamation District (RCRD) GSA are completing the required Periodic Evaluation of the Vina Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), due to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) by January 28, 2027, five years after the GSP was submitted. As part of this process, the GSAs have also prepared draft amendments to the GSP. This memo provides the Board and public with an updated status and timeline for release of the Draft 2027 Periodic Evaluation and Draft GSP Plan Amendments for public review.

Status of the Draft Documents

Release of draft documents. The Draft Periodic Evaluation and Draft Plan Amendments are in final preparation and anticipated to be released for public review by **September 14, 2026**. Release on that date would provide a six-week public review period. Staff emphasizes that these are draft documents, released to solicit public and stakeholder input before being finalized. Public comment is welcome and encouraged and nothing in the drafts is final until the Boards act in December.

Shaping of the Documents' Content

The content of these draft documents is the result of a series of public discussions, workshops, Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SHAC), and GSA Board meetings that have occurred in earnest since March 2026. Community outreach on these topics began in the fall of 2025. Staff has used a “strawman proposal” approach to encourage community input and shaping of the approach and content brought to the SHAC and Boards related to Groundwater Level, Interconnected Surface Water, Land Subsidence, and Water Quality topics. The content of the draft documents are the result of GSA Board direction on each of these topics as they considered different options and alternatives. The content has come to the SHAC and Boards as individual but related pieces over the past several months. Release of the draft documents provides the opportunity for the public to consider and comment on the entire package at once, rather than piece by piece. The Board will then consider the draft documents, public input, SHAC recommendations, and make final decisions by the end of the year.

Staff acknowledges the countless hours community members have spent reviewing, digesting,

engaging, and providing input on the content to date. These topics are complex, interconnected, overwhelming at times, and of great importance. County and GSA staff and the Board appreciate the engagement of the community over the past months.

Public Review Period

The draft documents will be available for public review from September 14 through October 26, 2026, at [GSP Periodic Evaluation & Plan Amendments](http://www.vinagsa.org/gsp-periodic-evaluation-plan-amendments) (www.vinagsa.org/gsp-periodic-evaluation-plan-amendments). Comments may be submitted through the online comment form on the webpage, or directly by email to vinagsa@gmail.com, throughout the review period.

Anticipated Process for Incorporating Public Input

All comments received by October 26 will be compiled and provided to the SHAC at their November 18, 2026 meeting. Staff will identify and summarize comments that could lead to changes to the draft documents. This could include comments that lead to clarifications or corrections to the narrative or comments that provide input on the substance and approach. Commenters are encouraged to provide specific input on what changes to the documents they would like the Board to consider. The SHAC will review the draft documents and public comments and make recommendations to the Board. The Board will consider public input and SHAC recommendations when adopting the final amendments to the GSP and finalizing the PE. Comments received after October 26 will still be forwarded to the SHAC and Boards, but staff may not be able to summarize them in the meeting packets.

Upcoming Public Workshop

Staff will host a public workshop on **September 16, 2026, from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM at the Chico Masonic Family Center** (1110 W East Ave, Chico, CA 95926) to walk through the draft documents and answer questions from the public.

Draft Local Management Levels

The Draft Plan Amendments and Periodic Evaluation include newly drafted language regarding Local Management Levels (LMLs), a non-regulatory, early-warning tool. LMLs are groundwater elevations set well above the minimum thresholds at a subset of representative monitoring wells. Reaching one would be an early indicator that prompts the Boards to look at what is happening in that area and to consider whether a management response is warranted. LMLs do not change the minimum thresholds or measurable objectives adopted in the GSP. GSA Board direction on August 12, 2026 was to set the LMLs at 20 feet below the measurable objective for 14 (of the 29) representative monitoring wells and to include more prescriptive language as to what would happen if LMLs were reached. This direction set the language reflected in the current draft, but it is not final. Public comment, SHAC input, and further Board discussion in the coming months may still result in changes to the specific LML descriptions in these documents.

Staff anticipates that the SHAC will discuss the LML language and may make a recommendation at its October 28, 2026 meeting, and that the Joint GSA Boards will give staff direction on November 4, 2026. Staff therefore requests that any comments specific to the draft LML language be submitted by October 14, 2026. This earlier deadline allows staff time to compile comments for the SHAC's October meeting packet and gives the SHAC adequate time to review comments ahead of that discussion. This earlier deadline reflects the SHAC's meeting schedule, not a narrower opportunity for input. The LML language is not being finalized ahead of the rest of the draft documents; It will go through the same Board decision in December as every other element of the Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments. The general public review period for the Draft Periodic Evaluation and Draft Plan Amendments remains open through October 26, 2026, and all comments received during the entire public review period will be included in the meeting packets at the November SHAC and December Board meetings.

Next Steps and Anticipated Timeline

- **September 14, 2026:** Draft documents released for public review
- **September 16, 2026:** Public workshop, Chico Masonic Family Center, 5:30–7:00 PM – walk through of the draft documents and process for public input and address questions
- **October 14, 2026:** Comments on the draft Local Management Level language are requested by this date so that staff can include them in the materials for the October 28, 2026 SHAC meeting.
- **October 26, 2026:** General public review and comment period closes (not anticipated to change regardless of when draft documents are released)
- **October 28, 2026:** SHAC meeting – consideration and possible recommendation regarding description of Local Management Levels in the draft PE and plan amendments
- **November 4, 2026:** Joint Board meeting – direction on the description of Local Management Levels in the draft PE and plan amendments.
- **November 18, 2026:** Final review and recommendation by the SHAC on the Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendments
- **December 9, 2026:** Joint GSA Boards' final approval of the Periodic Evaluation and adoption of Plan Amendments
- **January 28, 2027:** Final Periodic Evaluation and Plan Amendment documents submitted to DWR through the [SGM Portal](#)
- **After submittal:** DWR reviews the submitted documents as part of its periodic review of the GSP. In the meantime, the GSAs continue to implement the GSP and to submit annual reports to DWR each April 1.

Requested Action

Information only. Staff requests the Board receive this update on the status and timeline for the Draft Periodic Evaluation and Draft Plan Amendments. No formal action is requested at this time.

Attachment A. Highlights regarding the process and what's required by SGMA

Excerpts from Department of Water Resources' Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation: [A Guide to Annual Reports, Periodic Evaluations, and Plan Amendments](#) (October 2023) - Attachment 1: Frequently Asked Questions for Annual Reports, Periodic Evaluation, and Plan Amendments

18. Is a GSA required to review and respond to public comments received on or prior to developing Periodic Evaluations?

While the GSP Regulations do not have specific requirements with respect to public comments on Periodic Evaluations, a GSA may want to respond to public comments to address and resolve public questions or concerns pertaining to GSP implementation activities. In general, the Department interprets SGMA to foster and, in specific instances, require GSAs to consider all interested parties including the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater in the establishment and operation of the GSA and the development and implementation of the agency's GSP (see e.g., Water Code § 10723.2, 10723.8(a)(4)). If a GSA elects to respond to public comments, the Department suggests that copies of those responses be provided to the Department so that they may be available for consideration by the Department, along with the comments themselves, during review of the Periodic Evaluation.

19. Will the Department hold a public comment period after GSAs submit a Periodic Evaluation or Amendment?

The GSP Regulations do not have specific requirements with respect to public comments on a Periodic Evaluation. However, the GSP Amendment process is subject to the same requirements as the initially submitted GSP (under Water Code 10733.4 and 23 CCR § 353.8). Therefore, the Department will provide a public comment period for a GSP Amendment.
public drinking water systems.

8. Will the Department evaluate and assess the Periodic Evaluation? Will the Department issue a determination and recommended corrective actions on submitted GSP Periodic Evaluations?

The Department is required to periodically review an approved GSP and issue an assessment at least every five years. During this process, the Department relies on information and data provided in Annual Reports and Periodic Evaluations prepared and submitted by a GSA, and other available information. As part of its Periodic Review, the Department will issue a written assessment that includes a determination of the status of the GSP (i.e., Approved, Incomplete, or Inadequate). The Department's Periodic Reviews may also issue recommended corrective actions to ensure that GSP implementation remains likely to achieve basin sustainability goals on SGMA timelines. Also see [SECTION 3.5](#) of the Guide to Annual Reports, Periodic Evaluations, and Plan Amendments (including Water Code §§ 10733(a), 10733.8; and 23 CCR § 355.6).

9. Will the Department evaluate and assess the amendments made to a GSP? Will the Department issue a determination and recommended corrective actions on an amended GSP?

Yes, the Department will evaluate the amended portions of an Approved GSP, the accompanying Periodic Evaluation prepared by the GSA, and any new information that is relevant to the amendments or other Plan elements. The Department will issue a written assessment that includes a determination of the status of the amended GSP as Approved, Incomplete, or Inadequate (see 23 CCR 23 § 355.10). For GSPs that the Department has previously found inadequate and have therefore been referred to the State Water Resources Control Board, the Department will conduct assessments of subsequent GSP amendments only when requested by the State Water Resources Control Board under Water Code § 10735.2(b).



Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency Agenda Transmittal

Subject: Consideration of Alternate Location for GSA Board Meetings

Contact: Dillon McGregor

Phone: (530) 552-3589

Meeting Date: September 9, 2026

Agenda Item: 5.2

Summary:

At the August 12, 2026 Board meeting, the Board directed staff to look into moving Board meetings from the Chico City Council Chambers to the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) Board Room, located at 326 Huss Dr, Suite 110, Chico, CA 95928. The room is available on the Board's meeting dates for the remainder of 2026 at a cost of \$165 per meeting.

Requested Action: Provide direction to staff on which location to reserve for future Board meetings.

Butte County Public Health Department
Environmental Health Division

Well Permit Summary

Quarter 3 (April 1 – June 30) of Water Year 2026

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Definitions

Permits Issued – Number of new water well permits issued as new construction. This excludes repairs, destructions, abandonments.

Permits Finaled – Number of water well permits that have been finaled (i.e. final construction completed and well is operational). This excludes repairs, destructions, abandonments.

Small Diameter Wells - A well with an eight-inch or smaller diameter well casing.

Large Diameter Wells - A well with larger than eight-inch diameter well casing.

Repair – Well repair; this includes but is not limited to casing replacement, re-lining or perforation.

Deepening – Well deepening; increasing the depth of an existing well.

Well Destruction – Well is destroyed (sealed off) by an approved method.

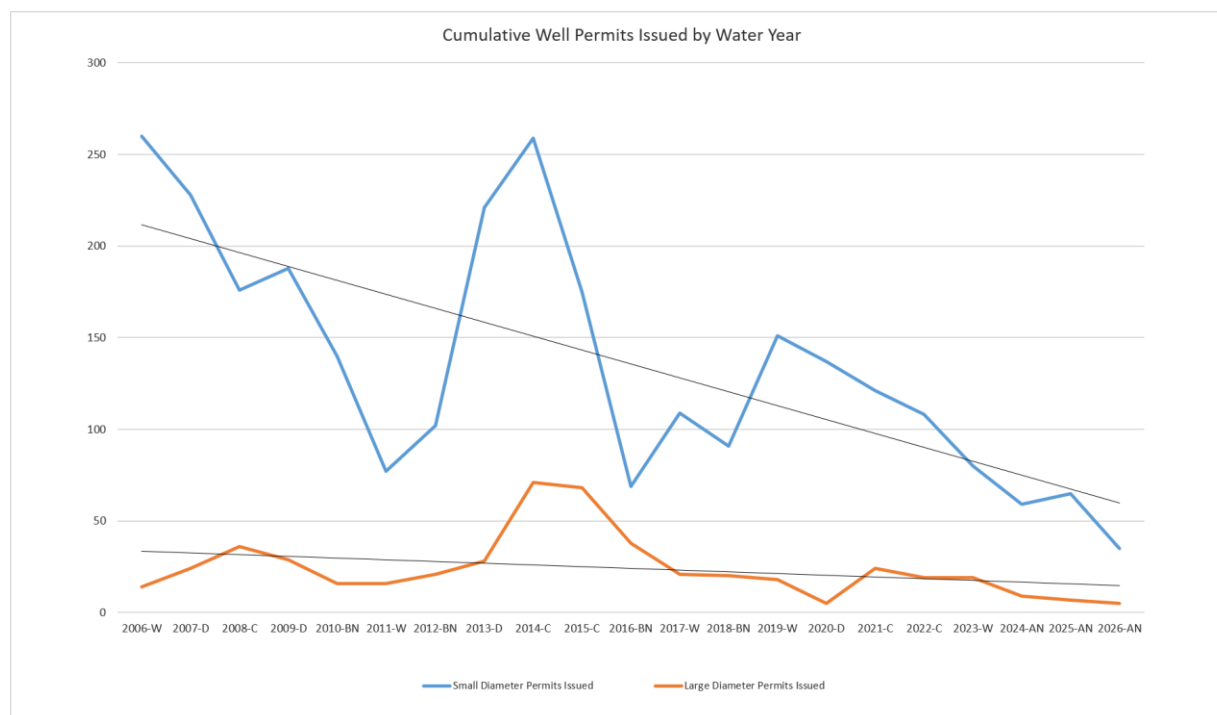
Dry Well – Well that is no longer producing water or has reduced production to a point where it can no longer sustain a residence (< 1 gpm).

Water Year - A water year is a 12-month period that extends from October 1st to September 30th. Water year can be classified into Wet (W), Above Normal (AN), Below Normal (BN), Dry (D) or Critical (C).

Executive Order N-7-22 – Effective March 28, 2022 and impacting permits that have not been issued to date. Implements increased drought response and established requirements for water well permit reviews to include Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and ground water impact considerations prior to permit issuance.

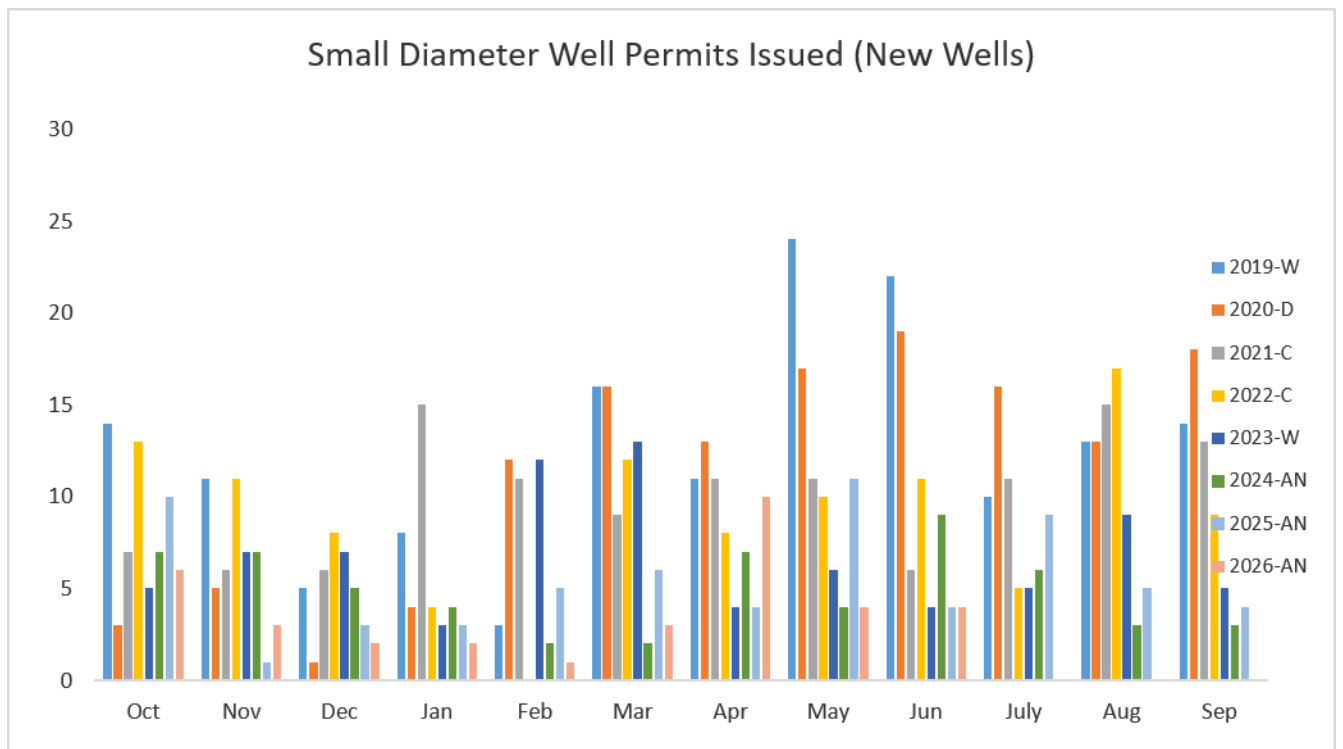
Cumulative Well Permit Data

Cumulative (WY) Well Permits Issued		
Water Year	Small Diameter Permits Issued	Large Diameter Permits Issued
2006-W	260	14
2007-D	228	24
2008-C	176	36
2009-D	188	29
2010-BN	140	16
2011-W	77	16
2012-BN	102	21
2013-D	221	28
2014-C	259	71
2015-C	175	68
2016-BN	69	38
2017-W	109	21
2018-BN	91	20
2019-W	151	18
2020-D	137	5
2021-C	121	24
2022-C	108	19
2023-W	80	19
2024-AN	59	9
2025-AN	65	7
2026-AN	35	5



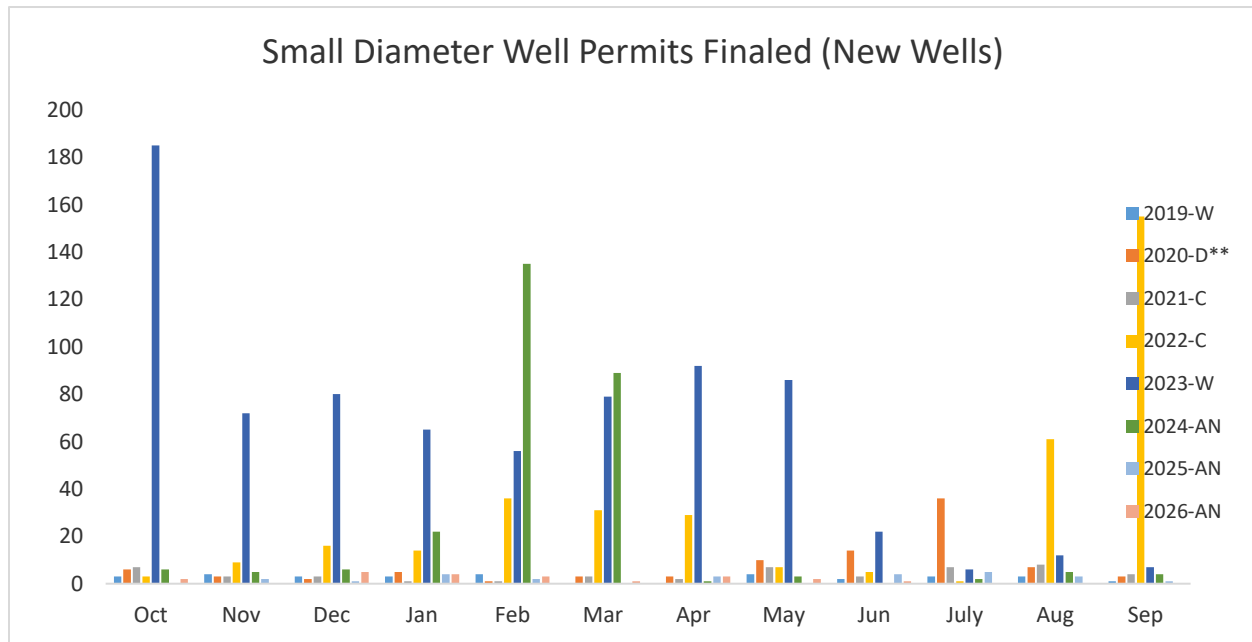
Small Diameter Well Permit Data - Issued

Water Year	Small Diameter Well Permits Issued (New Wells)												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2015-C	18	7	6	15	11	22	27	15	13	18	17	6	175
2016-BN	4	5	7	6	8	17	9	12	16	14	12	3	113
2017-W	7	7	5	2	8	19	19	17	17	5	2	1	109
2018-BN	6	3	2	3	6	4	10	13	12	10	13	9	91
2019-W	14	11	5	8	3	16	11	24	22	10	13	14	151
2020-D	3	5	1	4	12	16	13	17	19	16	13	18	137
2021-C	7	6	6	15	11	9	11	11	6	11	15	13	121
2022-C	13	11	8	4	0	12	8	10	11	5	17	9	108
2023-W	5	7	7	3	12	13	4	6	4	5	9	5	80
2024-AN	7	7	5	4	2	2	7	4	9	6	3	3	59
2025-AN	10	1	3	3	5	6	4	11	4	9	5	4	65
2026-AN	6	3	2	2	1	3	10	4	4				35



Small Diameter Well Permit Data - Finaled

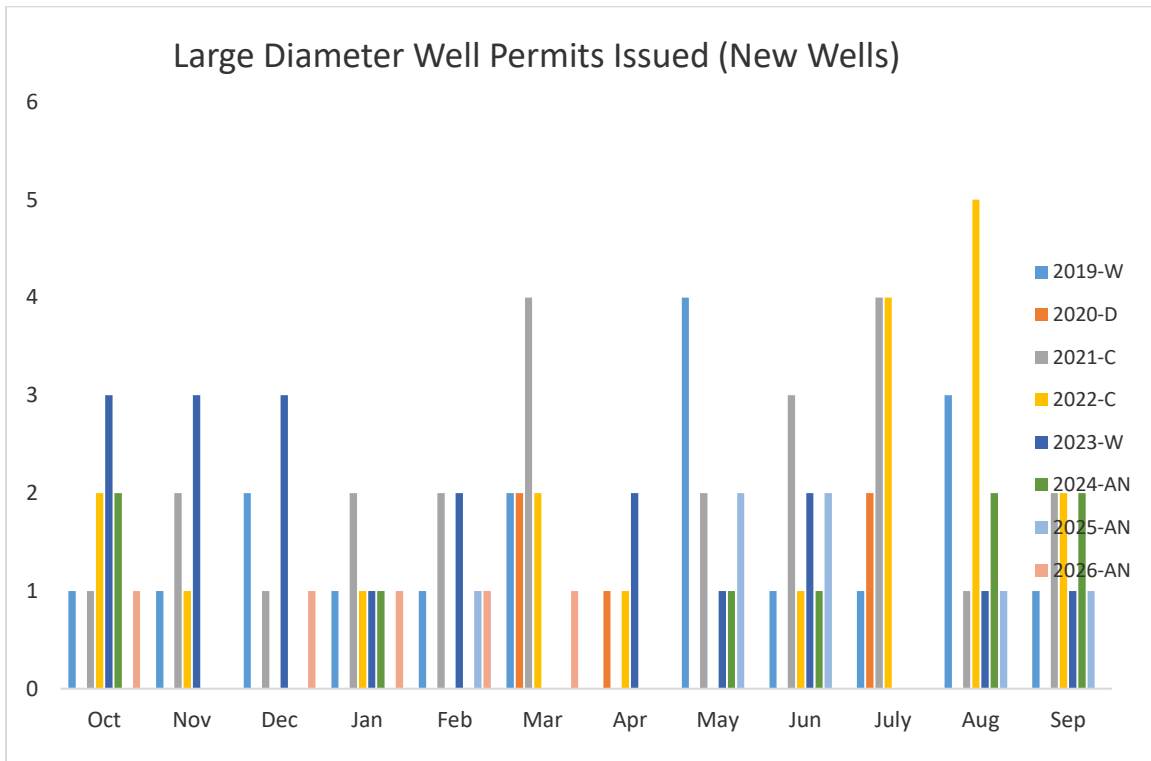
Water Year	Small Diameter Well Permits Finaled (New Wells)												Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	
2016-BN	7	4	3	4	3	1	1	4	5	1	3	0	36
2017-W	3	2	2	3	3	3	1	1	1	0	5	0	24
2018-BN	1	4	3	1	1	4	2	4	6	1	5	3	35
2019-W	3	4	3	3	4	0	0	4	2	3	3	1	30
2020-D**	6	3	2	5	1	3	3	10	14	36	7	3	93
2021-C	7	3	3	1	1	3	2	7	3	7	8	4	49
2022-C	3	9	16	14	36	31	29	7	5	1	61	155	367
2023-W	185	72	80	65	56	79	92	86	22	6	12	7	762
2024-AN	6	5	6	22	135	89	1	3	0	2	5	4	278
2025-AN	0	2	1	4	2	0	3	0	4	5	3	1	25
2026-AN	2	0	5	4	3	1	3	2	1				21



**Water Year 2020 and forward - Implemented improvements to the well permit process and working on backlog status updates. Backlog project completed in 2024.

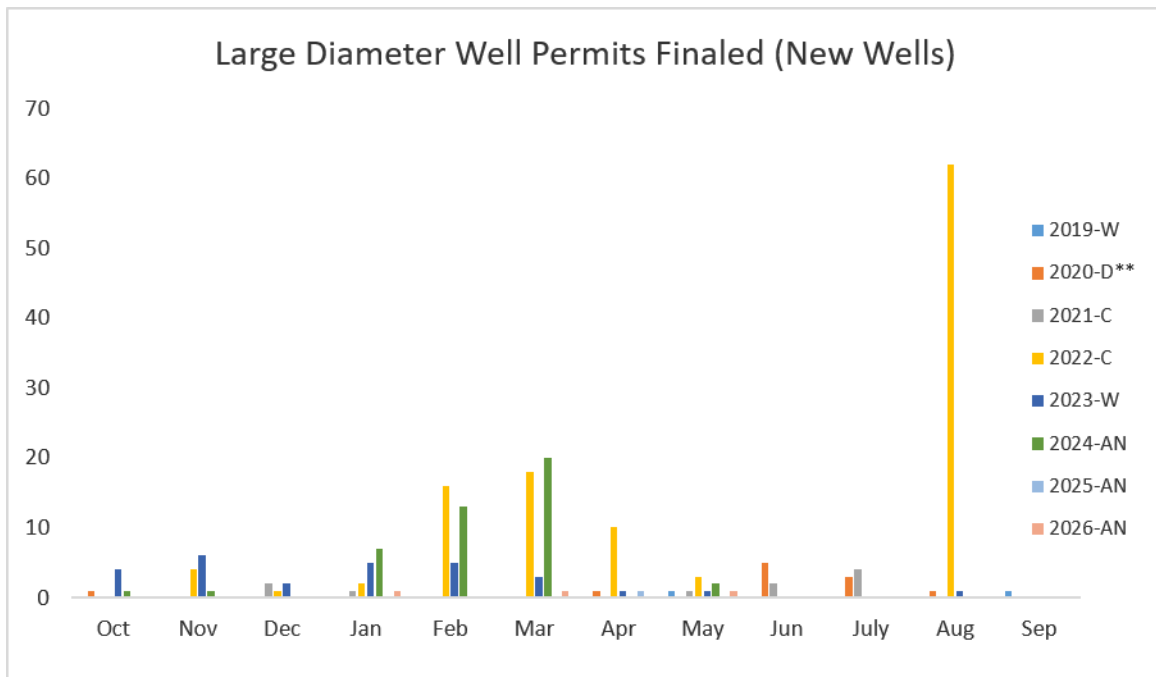
Large Diameter Well Permit Data - Issued

Water Year	Large Diameter Well Permits Issued (New Wells)												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2015-C	5	7	4	1	4	7	6	1	5	14	11	3	68
2016-BN	5	5	5	5	4	2	2	3	1	1	2	3	38
2017-W	1	0	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	0	5	0	21
2018-BN	1	3	0	0	0	3	1	2	1	4	2	3	20
2019-W	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	4	1	1	3	1	18
2020-D	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	5
2021-C	1	2	1	2	2	4	0	2	3	4	1	2	24
2022-C	2	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	4	5	2	19
2023-W	3	3	3	1	2	0	2	1	2	0	1	1	19
2024-AN	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	9
2025-AN	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	7
2026-AN	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0				5



Large Diameter Well Permit Data – Finaled

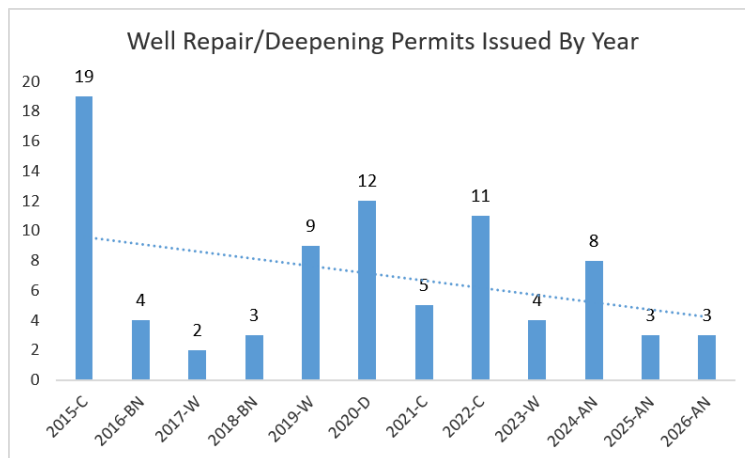
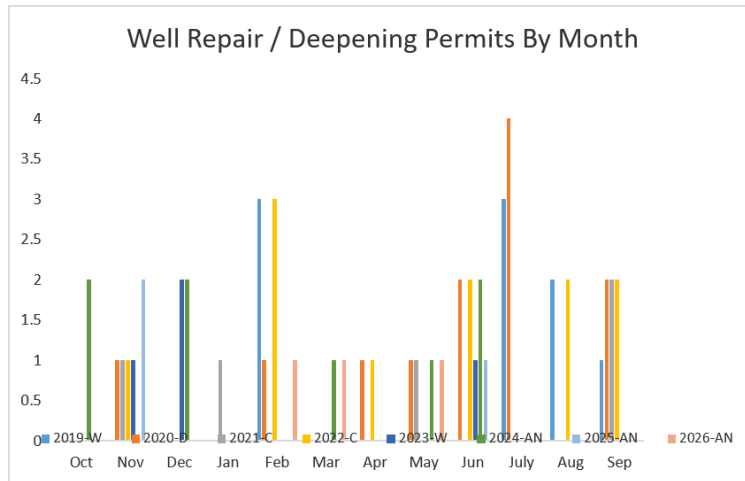
Water Year	Large Diameter Well Permits Finaled (New Wells)												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2016-BN	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
2017-W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
2018-BN	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	7
2019-W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
2020-D**	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	3	1	0	11
2021-C	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	10
2022-C	0	4	1	2	16	18	10	3	0	0	62	0	116
2023-W	4	6	2	5	5	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	28
2024-AN	1	1	0	7	13	20	0	2	0	0	0	0	44
2025-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2026-AN	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0				3



**Water Year 2020 and forward - Implemented improvements to the well permit process and working on backlog status updates. Backlog project completed in 2024.

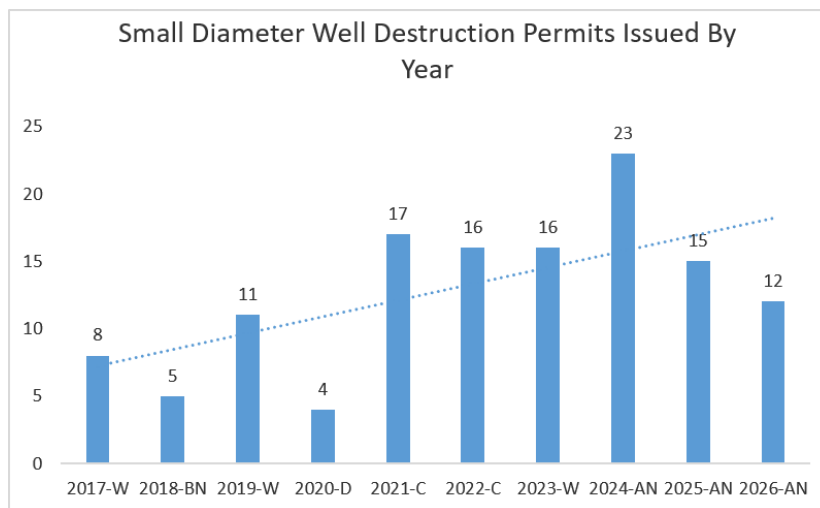
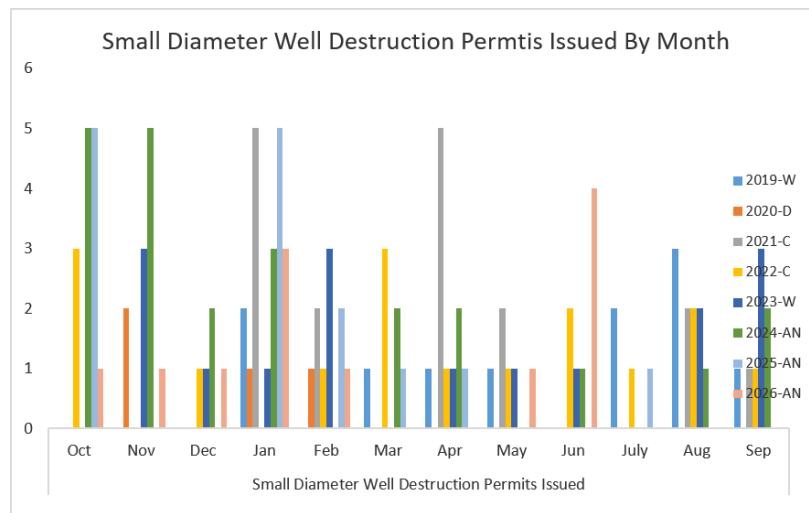
Well Repair and Deepening Data

Water Year	Well Repair/Deepening Permits Issued												Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	
2015-C	1	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	1	3	4	2	19
2016-BN	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	4
2017-W	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
2018-BN	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
2019-W	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	9
2020-D	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	4	0	2	12
2021-C	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	5
2022-C	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	2	2	11
2023-W	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
2024-AN	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	8
2025-AN	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
2026-AN	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0				3



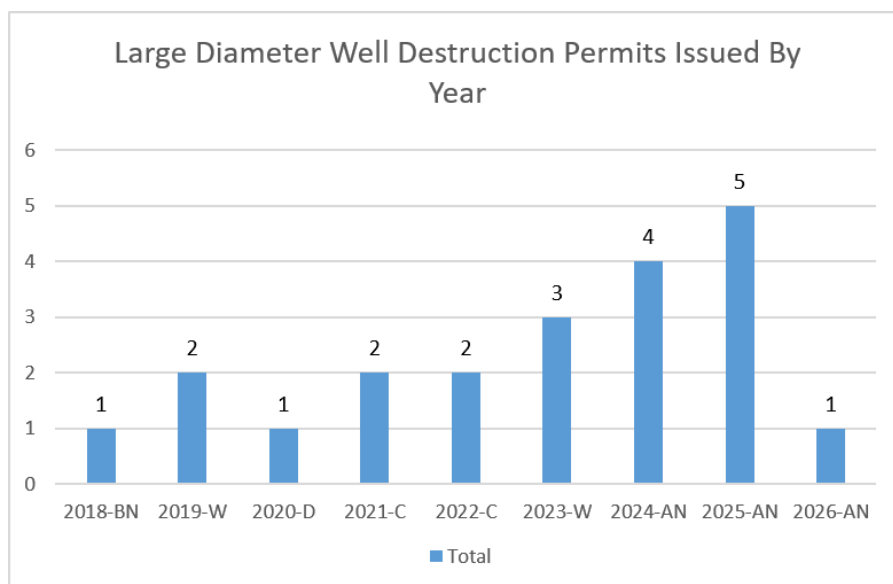
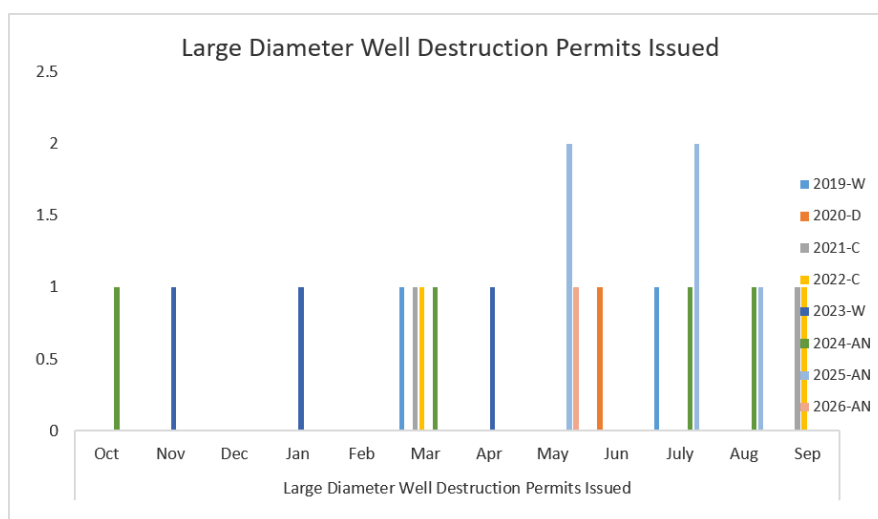
Well Destruction Data – Small Diameter Wells

Water Year	Small Diameter Well Destruction Permits Issued												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2017-W	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	8
2018-BN	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5
2019-W	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	11
2020-D	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
2021-C	0	0	0	5	2	0	5	2	0	0	2	1	17
2022-C	3	0	1	0	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	16
2023-W	0	3	1	1	3	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	16
2024-AN	5	5	2	3	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	2	23
2025-AN	5	0	0	5	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	15
2026	1	1	1										3



Well Destruction Data – Large Diameter Wells

Water Year	Large Diameter Well Destruction Permits Issued												Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	
2017-W	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
2018-BN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
2019-W	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
2020-D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2021-C	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
2022-C	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
2023-W	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
2024-AN	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
2025-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	5
2026-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0				1



Dry Well Data

Water Year	Dry Small Diameter Wells												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2021-C											11	7	18
2022-C	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	4	2	14
2023-W	2	2	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	12
2024-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2025-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2026-AN	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0				1

Water Year	Dry Large Diameter Wells												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2021-C											1	0	1
2022-C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2023-W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2024-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2025-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2026-AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0

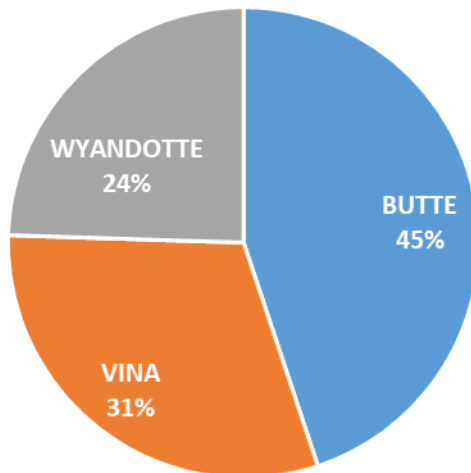
Dry well data started being collected August 2021.

Dry Well Reports to the Butte County Division of Environmental Health by Community								
	Water Year						Total	Average Depth of dry wells (feet)
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026		
Chico	15	5	3	0	0	1	24	109
Durham	4	6	1	0	0	0	11	--
Cohasset	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	121
Berry Creek	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	--
Oroville	0	1	3	0	0	0	4	95
Bangor	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	--
Forest Ranch	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	520
Palermo	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	--
Total	20	17	8	0	0	0	46	

Executive Order N-7-22 Data

Cumulative Number of Wells Under Executive Oder N-7-22			
By Subbasin	Small Diameter	Large Diameter	Totals
BUTTE	0	22	22
VINA	5	10	15
WYANDOTTE	1	11	12
			49
By GSA	Small Diameter	Large Diameter	Totals
Biggs-West Gridley Water District	0	6	6
Butte County	0	6	6
Butte Water District	0	4	4
Richvale Irrigation District	0	2	2
Reclamation District No. 2106	0	2	2
Rock Creek Reclamation District	0	1	1
Vina	5	10	15
Western Canal	0	1	1
Wyandotte Creek	1	11	12
			49

Cumulative Number of Wells Reviewed Under
Executive Oder N-7-22 (% By Subbasin)





CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT OFFICE

715 P Street, 8th Floor | Sacramento, CA 95814 | P.O. Box 942836 | Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

July 29, 2026

Christina Buck
Vina Subbasin – Plan Manager
308 Nelson Ave
Oroville, CA 95965
cbuck@buttecounty.net

RE: Additional Information Request for the Vina Subbasin Annual Report, Water Year 2025

Dear Christina Buck,

As the basin point of contact for the groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) in the Vina Subbasin (Subbasin), this letter is to inform you that the Department of Water Resources (Department) has completed its Water Year 2025 annual report review for the Subbasin.

Following the adoption of a GSP and annually thereafter, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires that an annual report be submitted to the Department by April 1 (Wat. Code § 10728). Once an annual report has been submitted, the Department is required to notify the submitting groundwater sustainability agency (GSA) of receipt within 20 days, review the information to determine whether the basin's GSP is being implemented in a manner likely to achieve its established sustainability goal, and notify the GSA in writing if additional information is required (23 CCR § 355.8).

The Department noted that the annual report provided an update on all the applicable sustainable management criteria for the basin, as required by GSP Regulations (23 CCR § 356.2). SGMA requires that the submitting agency continue to include this information in the next annual report, including a description of progress towards implementing the GSP for each of the applicable sustainability indicators.

The Department requires that the submitting agency provide implementation updates on the SGMA Portal Projects and Management Actions (PMA) Module during each water year. The Department noted that implementation updates on all the PMAs were provided on the SGMA Portal PMA Module, as required by GSP Regulations (23 CCR § 356.2). The Department will require that the submitting agency continue to provide implementation updates on the SGMA Portal PMA Module during each water year. Implementation updates provide a way to report and track progress such as status, accrued benefits, and funding updates on the implementation of the basin's PMAs. Reporting accurate, detailed, and measurable information in the SGMA Portal PMA Module (such as current status, a time-table for the accrual of benefits, and funding

updates on implementation) clearly demonstrates any progress in implementing projects and management actions to the Department since the previous annual report.

Based on the review of the annual report, the Department requests additional information pursuant to 23 CCR § 355.8.(b). Specifically, the Department formally requests additional information regarding:

- Further details on the status of the Domestic Well Mitigation Program

This request is based on the Subbasin's Water Year 2025 annual report¹ which indicates that the GSA's Domestic Well Mitigation Program management action is "not being pursued at this time."² Public GSA meetings also suggest the Vina GSA has chosen to not implement its Domestic Well Mitigation Program, and instead rely on Butte County's Draft Drought Resilience Plan³ to mitigate dry domestic wells.

Because the Vina GSA's specific actions are unclear, the Department is requesting a description of how the GSA will rely on the County's efforts, how that effort will sufficiently consider the beneficial uses and users of groundwater in the Subbasin, how the GSA has determined that the County project will provide a comparable level of mitigation to what was described in the Plan, how it will coordinate with the County and monitor the County's progress and actions to ensure the County's effort lives up to expectations, and whether the GSA has any plans to address a situation where the County project proves insufficient.

The GSA should provide additional information to the Department in the upcoming periodic evaluation. Failure to provide additional information requested may prevent the Department from concluding that the Plan is being implemented in a manner that will likely achieve the sustainability goal for the basin.

Please contact the assigned Department basin point-of-contact or sgmps@water.ca.gov if you have questions about this notice or the annual reporting process. The Department looks forward to receiving your Water Year 2026 Annual Report by April 1, 2027.

Thank You,



Keith Wallace, P.E.
Assistant Deputy Director
Sustainable Water Management

¹ <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/service/gspar/document/5886>

² Vina Subbasin WY 2025 Annual Report, Appendix G, p. 114.

³ <https://www.buttecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/19202/Butte-County-Drought-Resilience-Plan---Administrative-Final>

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/bone-dry-bosque-río-grande-stops-flowing-in-albuquerque/article_c2615ceb-ae88-4b4e-ae65-2fdd074d9ab5.html

Bone-dry bosque: Río Grande stops flowing in Albuquerque

★ Follow Alaina Mencinger

By Alaina Mencinger amencinger@sfnewmexican.com

Jun 4, 2026



The dry riverbed on a stretch of the Río Grande is shown Thursday in Albuquerque. After a particularly disappointing winter and warm spring and following two prior dry years, the parched river is a harbinger of challenges to come.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

This week was not the first time Duke City residents saw the Río Grande run dry.



But after a particularly disappointing winter and warm spring — and following two prior dry years — the parched river in Albuquerque is a harbinger of challenges to come.

"We talk about this particular river being a different river every year," said Sharon Wirth, Interstate Stream Commission's Middle Rio Grande Bureau chief. "And that's true, but this year is unique in many ways that those of us in this water community have never seen before."

The pressure is compounded after several years of poor snowpack. The river is starting to dry earlier and farther north than in previous years, Wirth said.



A shallow puddle is filled with dozens of dead silvery minnows Wednesday in the dry Rio Grande in Albuquerque.
Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

On top of the hydrological conditions, the Rio Grande Compact — a 1938 interstate water delivery deal signed by Colorado, New Mexico and Texas — limits storage of flows, and New Mexico's reservoirs are already running near empty: El Vado Reservoir is 13% full, Elephant Butte Reservoir is

at 9% and Caballo Reservoir is at 18%.

A lot of that water is spoken for; Wirth said every water management action needs to keep the compact's delivery obligations to Elephant Butte in mind.

"A lot of the decisions don't make sense, necessarily, unless you understand that context of the compact as well," she said.

Systemwide impacts

Paul Tashjian, director of freshwater conservation for Audubon Southwest, said the river going dry impacts the entire water system, from farmers to flycatchers.

Due to low mountain snowpack flowing into the Rio Grande this year in Colorado and New Mexico — the worst on record by far — water is trickling into Cochiti Reservoir, Tashjian said. The limited water stored in the state's reservoirs north of Albuquerque could theoretically be released, he added, but would wreak havoc with complying with the Rio Grande Compact.

That leaves New Mexico "between a rock and a hard place," and water managers, nonprofits and irrigation districts scrambling to triage.

"What we'll probably see in the next few weeks is drying like we've never, ever seen," Tashjian said.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation earlier this year released Colorado River Basin water to the Rio Grande through the San Juan-Chama Project to create a brief higher flow through Albuquerque to benefit the endangered silvery minnow. Record-low snowpack this winter and a warm March meant the Rio Grande didn't have a natural spring pulse, which is needed to trigger the fish's spawning.



A stretch of the Rio Grande through Albuquerque ran dry earlier this week.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

"Without it, the silvery minnow spawn has been minimal this year," a Bureau of Reclamation spokesperson said in a statement. "Because 2026 is the third poor hydrologic year in a row, silvery minnow numbers are concerningly low."

Now, wide-eyed minnows are beached on a parched riverbed, glinting bright silver against muddy brown rocks.

The manufactured spring pulse is among several actions water managers take to give the parched river a helping hand. Wirth said there once were large enough spring flows to clear debris from the riverbed.

"It would kind of flush the system and clear things out, and we don't get those kinds of clearing flows anymore," Wirth said. "So we have to figure out as river management agencies how to do that mechanically, and where we need to invest our time and money and energy in making sure that the river system is still working the best that we can make it work to move water and sediment."

Aquatic species like the silvery minnow are worst hit when the river dries up, Tashjian said, but other riparian species also feel the impact. The Audubon Society is delivering leased water to certain wetlands in an effort to keep the ecosystems stable until more water arrives.

Until then, Tashjian is praying for rain.

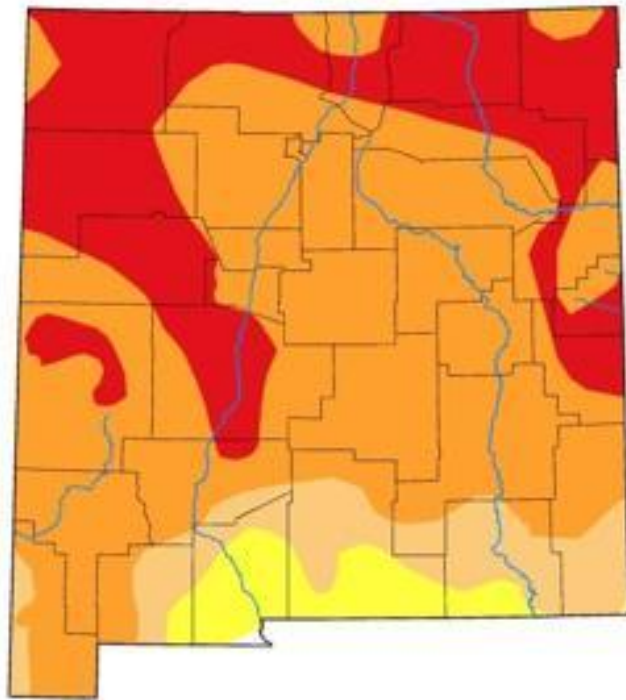
"We're just trying to patch through this, and get so that when the climate does give us a better year, we can try to help the system bounce back," Tashjian said. "But this is going to be impactful, there's no doubt about it."

Water conservation

Mark Kelly, Water Resources Division manager for the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, said while the water system for the state's largest city is redundant, with enough groundwater to meet 100% of user demand, the drying river is a stark reminder the region is facing a hotter, drier climate.

Kelly suspects river flows may not return until September or October — similar to last summer, when the river dried through Albuquerque for several weeks. However, a powerful El Niño weather pattern could mean strong seasonal rains, he said.

"There is an indication that we might get a good monsoon season this year, but I think that's going to be the only thing that's going to put the water back in the river," Kelly said.



Map released: Thurs. June 4, 2026

Data valid: June 2, 2026 at 8 a.m. EDT

Intensity

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Authors

United States and Puerto Rico Author(s):

[Adam Allgood](#), NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC

Pacific Islands and Virgin Islands Author(s):

[Lindsay Johnson](#), National Drought Mitigation Center

Demand on the water authority has been relatively flat over the last 10 years, Kelly said, despite an increasing number of customers. But he hopes the river going dry will serve as reminder of the importance of water conservation.

The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority is urging residents to conserve water.

Kelly said the best way for residents to save water is to limit outdoor irrigation by putting in desert-friendly landscaping.

"Water authority customers have done a great job at conserving," Kelly said. "But we have still some opportunity to conserve even more, and I feel like the river being dry is ... a good reminder for folks to do that."

Rainfall levels drop

A recent study named New Mexico the most historically drought-exposed state and the second-worst state for precipitation losses, following Arizona.

Aditya Sachdeva, who worked on the Payless Power report, said it was surprising how widespread drought was around the nation. In the West, the study found, states spend 75% of the year in some level of drought.

"I'm originally from California, so I know that in California we've experienced a lot of drought over the last 10, 15 years, which impacts the farming a lot," Sachdeva said. "... But I wasn't aware of how much it impacted other states as well."

He added, "The 10-year outlook is not looking like it's going to get any better, considering there are a lot of states that have a high chance of further drying."

The study looked at drought frequency and spread in the contiguous United States since 2000, using data from the U.S. Drought Monitor, and compared two 30-year periods of precipitation data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The data shows 17 states had less precipitation, on average, between 1996 and 2025 than between 1966 and 1995.

While states have experienced drought before, Sachdeva said, there are new variables impacting drought: the development of artificial intelligence, with its heavy demand for power and water, an increasing number of cars on the road and warming temperatures.

"Patterns repeat themselves, but we have to look at new factors now, too," he said.

About this series

No public-policy discussion about New Mexico's future happens without digging deep into the state's growing water crisis.

This isn't a new problem. But it's a persistent one that touches every county, pueblo and community in the state: Who owns water rights, and where will water come from in the future?

Treading water: Can New Mexico stay afloat? is an ongoing report by *The Santa Fe New Mexican* that will examine water-related issues throughout the state. The collection of stories will include investigative reports, news coverage, data mapping, digital storytelling, solutions-based stories and other related content on the topic.

Content will be made available for all readers without a paywall as a public service for all New Mexicans. All related content also will be distributed through Searchlight New Mexico (searchlightnm.org).

Please send story ideas to citydesk@sfnewmexican.com.

MORE INFORMATION



Santa Fe River flows low, but city officials say overall water supply exceeds demand

Using healthy soil practices to help stretch dwindling water supplies

Wildfire a risk for plants and animals that depend on Rio Grande

Following season of low snowpack, experts say Middle Rio Grande is in trouble

States have settled a decadelong dispute over the Rio Grande. What's next?

'My dad is like my hero': New Mexico farmers, ranchers reflect on following in their fathers' footsteps

Alaina Mencinger

Reporter



river stopped flowing

From Jim Brobeck <jrbrobeck@outlook.com>

Date Wed 8/19/2026 9:36 AM

To vinagsa comments <vinagsapubliccomments@chicoca.gov>

 1 attachment (143 KB)

Wendell, Dan; Maven's Notebook, Groundwater Management Workshop,.docx;

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When too much groundwater is "recovered" streams and rivers run dry. This article shows how aquifer depletion is impacting more areas than the N Sacramento Valley. Attached is another article describing *Sac Valley groundwater pumping and surface water impacts* by **Dan Wendell, Nature Conservancy**.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/now-a-river-stopped-flowing-nw-nature-seems-to-be-squealing/>

About 10 miles east of downtown Spokane, more than a mile-long stretch of the seemingly formidable Spokane River just stopped flowing. The boulder-strewn bed went dry. The same phenomenon happened last year — believed to be the first such flow break for the Spokane dating back more than a century. The Spokane is not some seasonal creek; it's one of the major tributaries of the Columbia River. The riverbed is 100 to 300 feet wide. It's deeply unsettling for part of a Northwest river this big to simply stop.

As one groundwater ecologist wrote to the city of Spokane: "I recently moved to Spokane from Texas. Please look at stories of dying rivers from around the American West

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/bone-dry-bosque-rio-grande-stops-flowing-in-albuquerque/article_c2615ceb-ae88-4b4e-ae65-2fdd074d9ab5.html] and don't let the Spokane River become just another sad, cautionary tale." The river is linked with an underlying aquifer. It's also dammed in spots, with its flows and groundwater stores claimed by farms, cities, subdivisions, industry and recreational users.

Strangely, after disappearing for a mile and a half, the Spokane kicks back to life again. Spring fed from the aquifer, it starts winding toward downtown Spokane again before going over the famed Spokane Falls.



Re: river stopped flowing

From Jim Brobeck <jrbrobeck@outlook.com>

Date Wed 8/19/2026 10:01 AM

To McGregor, Dillon <DMcGregor@buttecounty.ca.gov>

ATTENTION: This message originated from outside **Butte County**. Please exercise judgment before opening attachments, clicking on links, or replying.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/now-a-river-stopped-flowing-nw-nature-seems-to-be-squealing/>

“Something is going terribly wrong here.”

This is the uneasy feeling Jule Schultz walks around with. A marine biologist by training, he now works on river science in Spokane.

Only the river isn’t rivering. And the science, for now, is a mystery.

“You think you can depend on the flow of a river,” he told me. “It’s completely disorienting when all of a sudden, it stops.”

That’s what happened last week, on Aug. 9. About 10 miles east of downtown Spokane, more than a mile-long stretch of the seemingly formidable Spokane River [just stopped flowing](#).

The boulder-strewn bed went dry. The same phenomenon happened last year — believed to be the first such flow break for the Spokane dating back more than a century.

The Spokane is not some seasonal creek; it’s one of the major tributaries of the Columbia River. The riverbed is 100 to 300 feet wide. It’s deeply unsettling for part of a Northwest river this big to simply stop.

As one groundwater ecologist wrote to the city of Spokane: “I recently moved to Spokane from Texas. Please look at [stories of dying rivers](#) from around the American West — and don’t let the Spokane River become just another sad, cautionary tale.”

Schulz, who works for an advocacy group called Spokane Riverkeeper, said “we don’t have great evidence for what’s happening.”

The river is linked with an underlying aquifer. It’s also dammed in spots, with its flows and groundwater stores claimed by farms, cities, subdivisions, industry and recreational users.

Clearly there isn’t enough water in the system right now for everybody.

It’s exacerbated by weak snowpack and a drought. The snow season upstream in Idaho was described by a federal land agency as [“the winter that never arrived.”](#)

Strangely, after disappearing for a mile and a half, the Spokane kicks back to life again. Spring fed from the aquifer, it starts winding toward downtown Spokane again before going over the famed Spokane Falls. But the gauge there this week registered only 723 cubic feet per second — 15% below the minimum summer flow target of 850 cfs for a healthy river.

By state law, though, the river itself sits behind the other water users on the water rights priority list. So this flow target has no teeth.

“There’s dead fish and dead crayfish everywhere,” Schulz said of the dry section. “Last year, after a while, it started to reek.”

It won’t be until after Labor Day until the full river starts flowing again. That’s when a dam upstream is set to release more water from Lake Coeur d’Alene.

Some residents see the river’s retreat as existential. But it’s not clear what, if anything, anybody is going to do about it.

“It’s shocking to see this beautiful and vital river run dry overnight,” one resident wrote on a petition asking the city, Spokane County and other surrounding cities to act.

“Who is siphoning off the water?” wondered another. “What will happen when the giant robot corporations demand ALL the water supply?”

“This is a pivotal moment to address water conservation,” urged another. “This isn’t going to go away, nor is it a ‘fluke.’ “

Mauri Pelto, a glacier surveyor, said less snow and more heat is stressing water storage systems across the Northwest.

He’s noticed it with the demise of most of King County’s remaining glaciers, in and around Mount Daniel northeast of Snoqualmie Pass. These feed into Cle Elum reservoir, which provides irrigation to 700 square miles of farmland. This reservoir is now sitting at half its typical volume for this date.

Dan Wendell of The Nature Conservancy, a panelist at a workshop held by the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and California EPA on March 24, 2014, also raised the alarm about existing, significant streamflow losses from groundwater pumping and, even more significantly, how long it takes for those losses to appear:

“The Sacramento Valley still has water levels that are fairly shallow,” he said. “There are numerous perennial streams and healthy ecosystems, and the basin is largely within a reasonable definition of sustainable groundwater yield. However, since the 1940s, groundwater discharge to streams in this area has decreased by about 600,000 acre-feet per year due to groundwater pumping, and it’s going to decrease an additional 600,000 acre-feet in coming years under 2009 status quo conditions due to the time it takes effects of groundwater pumping to reach streams. It takes years to decades, our work is showing.” <https://mavensnotebook.com/2014/04/28/groundwater-management-workshop-part-1-sustainable-groundwater-management-panel/>

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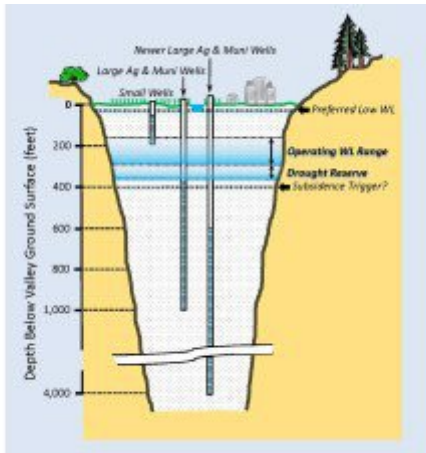
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Dan Wendell, Nature Conservancy

“We’ve known since the 1940s that there are only two sources of sustainable water supply out of wells,” began Dan Wendell. “One is induced recharge from overflowing recharge areas which are pretty rare, and the other is capture of groundwater that would have otherwise discharged to streams and lakes. This is something we know. In other words, the capture of water that goes to streams or lakes is going to result in decreased streamflow. Therefore, groundwater pumping is only truly sustainable to the degree that we accept the associated impacts to these surface water systems.”



“Groundwater pumping is really just another way of diverting surface water,” he said. “Groundwater systems are storage and conveyance systems, not new sources of water supply. However, California’s law and regulations do not recognize these physical relationships, and instead allow for relatively unconstrained groundwater pumping while exercising a permit system for surface water. The results have been unsatisfactory for most all perspectives, having led to widespread lowering of water tables that has dried up shallow wells, loss of perennial flow in streams that is needed for salmon migration and riparian habitat, land subsidence and the impairment of existing surface water rights.”

To manage groundwater in a sustainable fashion, every significant and adjudicated basin in the state needs to have clearly defined limits on groundwater pumping and water level fluctuations, and the stabilization of water levels, he said. *“This approach needs to recognize the tradeoffs between groundwater pumping and surface water impacts and be arrived at in an open collaborative and stakeholder driven process that accounts for the economic benefits of land cultivation, but also the economic and cultural benefits of instream flows for an important species of fish, the maintenance of important riparian habitat, at least in select streams, and existing surface water rights,”* he said.

“A key measure of success in basins where groundwater levels are still near the surface will be maintenance of perennial flow in key streams and safeguard of established surface water rights,” he said. *“In basins where groundwater is already strongly decoupled from surface water systems, such as many areas in the southern San Joaquin Valley, the simple stabilization of water levels and the avoidance of additional impacts such as land subsidence may be the best that we can hope for in the foreseeable future. Key measures of success in these cases would be groundwater level changes that average out to zero over a period of time, say 10 years.”*

“Many people automatically assume that overdrafted groundwater basins, especially where land subsidence and well failures are present, have the most complex and pressing problems and therefore require the most intention and money, but we don’t agree,” said Mr. Wendell. “If we want to avoid problems in areas that are reasonably healthy today, it is imperative that we consider the overall value of the hydrologic system, both to man and to nature. Time is of the essence in these cases, since the environmental and surface water rights impacts occur very early in groundwater development, when modest water level declines of only 20 to 40 feet can result in significant depletion of streamflow and even perhaps loss of perennial flow and the impact of surface water rights.”



“The Sacramento Valley still has water levels that are fairly shallow,” he said. “There are numerous perennial streams and healthy ecosystems, and the basin is largely within a reasonable definition of sustainable groundwater yield. However, since the 1940s, groundwater discharge to streams in this area has decreased by about 600,000 acre-feet per year due to groundwater pumping, and it’s going to decrease an additional 600,000 acre-feet in coming years under 2009 status quo conditions due to the time it takes effects of groundwater pumping to reach streams. It takes years to decades, our work is showing.”

“This represents a loss of 1.2 million acre-feet of stream flow,” Mr. Wendell said. “This is real water. This is streamflow that would have otherwise ended up in the Delta. And our current estimates are that 400,000 acre-feet of this 1.2 MAF per year is lost export capacity. This represents a very real decrease in the yield of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project, especially for purveyors south of the Delta. At a time when we’re trying to increase water supplies, we are actually moving in opposite direction from the perspective of these particular areas.”

“Successful groundwater management will require the use of robust models, most of which exist today in key basins, informed decision making, adaptive, flexible and inclusive management approaches that are implemented locally wherever possible, active recharge projects, and some mechanism to ensure that limits on groundwater pumping and water level fluctuations in groundwater basins are arrived at in an reasonable fashion and are properly implemented and maintained,” he said. “And some form of bad cop to make sure these things really happen, because these actions are commonly perceived as going against local self interests. In other words, we’re at the tragedy of the commons.”