

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
Implementation



Vina Subbasin GSA

Butte County

Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Plan – FINAL

Approved on October 10, 2019

Background

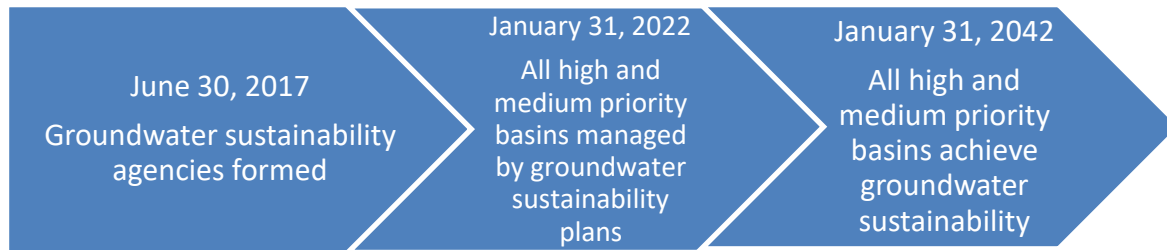
The purpose of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed by Governor Brown in 2014, is to ensure local sustainable groundwater management in medium- and high-priority groundwater basins statewide. **California’s Department of Water Resources has determined that Butte County has three priority subbasins that are subject to SGMA Implementation:**

- Butte Subbasin
- Vina Subbasin
- Wyandotte Creek Subbasin

This Communications & Engagement Plan applies only to the Vina subbasin.

SGMA Milestones: The subbasin achieved the first milestone in SGMA by the establishing the Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), a Joint Powers Authority, comprised of three (3) member agencies: Butte County; The City of Chico and Durham Irrigation District. The second major milestone in SGMA is the adoption of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by January 30, 2022. The GSP is prescribed by SGMA and contains required elements. The third milestone is achieving sustainability by 2042.

Figure 1. SGMA Milestones



Desired Outcomes & Goals of the Plan

Outcomes: The desired outcome of this Communications & Engagement plan is to achieve adoption of the GSP with input from and in consideration of the people, the economy, and the environment within the subbasin and in coordination with adjacent subbasins. As the GSA nears completion of the GSP, this Communications & Engagement Plan will be updated to address implementation issues.

Plan Goals: SGMA requires the GSA to consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater, and encourages involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the subbasin during GSP preparation and implementation. The goals of the Communications & Engagement Plan are to:

1. Enhance understanding and inform the public about water and groundwater resources in the Vina subbasin, the purpose and need for sustainable groundwater management, the benefits of sustainable groundwater management, and the need for a GSP.
2. Engage a diverse group of interested parties and stakeholders and promote informed feedback from stakeholders, the community and groundwater-dependent users throughout the GSP preparation and implementation process.
3. Coordinate communication and involvement between the GSA (Board, Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Management Committee), and other local agencies, elected and appointed officials, and the general public.
4. Utilize the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to facilitate a comprehensive public engagement process.
5. Employ a variety of outreach methods that make public participation accessible and that encourage broad participation.
6. Respond to public concerns and provide accurate and up-to-date information.
7. Manage communications and engagement in a manner that provides maximum value to the public and constitutes an efficient use of GSA and local agency resources.

Time Period: The Plan is intended to cover communications and engagement for May 2019-January 2022, when the GSP is due to be submitted to California Department of Water Resources. Since this is a multi-year effort, the key activities needed to achieve these goals will be broken down into annual work plans, and may be amended, as needed.

Interested Parties and other stakeholders: SGMA identifies interested parties that the GSA must consider when developing and implementing the GSP, including:

- Agricultural users of water
- Domestic well owners
- Municipal well operators
- Public water systems
- Land use planning agencies
- Environmental users of groundwater
- Surface water users
- The federal government
- California Native American tribes (see Appendix A for Tribal Outreach Guidance Document)
- Disadvantaged communities (including those served by private domestic wells or small community water systems).

Outreach Roles

The **GSA Board** is comprised of elected officials from each of the member agencies and two stakeholder board members appointed by the Butte County Board of Supervisors, representing commercial agricultural and domestic well users in the subbasin. As required by the Joint Powers Authority agreement that created the GSA, the Board will consider the recommendations of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

In regard to outreach, the Board is responsible for:

- Adopting and overseeing implementation of the C&E Plan;
- Entering into Memoranda of Understanding with other public agencies such as Rock Creek Reclamation District to codify agency to agency engagement activities for the development and implementation of the GSP;
- Receiving public comments made verbally and in writing;
- Considering the recommendations of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

In addition, the Board may choose to play a more active role in outreach through communication with the public, stakeholder groups, and the entities it represents.

The **Management Committee**, established by the Board is comprised of at least one staff representative from each of the public agencies that are members of the GSA. As required by the Joint Powers Authority agreement, the Management Committee shall recommend agenda items, administer the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, establish and administer technical working groups, and bring staff reports before the Board.

In regard to outreach, the Management Committee is responsible for:

- Development and implementation of the C&E Plan with Board approval and oversight;
- Administering the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and ad hoc technical advisory committees;
- Documenting the recommendations of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee in staff reports to the Board.

The **Stakeholder Advisory Committee** is comprised of members appointed by the GSA Board. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee is charged with actively engaging with the public for input and feedback. This charge will be carried out through various activities, but generally includes:

- Actively seeking input from represented stakeholder groups on groundwater related issues before the GSA; as described in the Charter adopted by the GSA Board;
- Sharing input and feedback at Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings;
- Making recommendations to the Board.

The Vina GSA Board, The GSA Management Committee, and the GSA Stakeholder Advisory Committee are committed to keeping the **public informed**, providing the public with **balanced and objective information** to assist the public in understanding SGMA, available options and recommendations, and **creating an open process** for public involvement on the development and implementation of the GSP.

When evaluating the options and making decisions, the Board, Management Committee, and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee will **solicit public input** through a variety of methods, including public workshops, written and verbal comments, meetings with stakeholder organizations, and other. Input can be made during public comment periods at the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Board meetings, and in writing.

Communications and Engagement for GSP Plan Elements

To truly engage the public in development of a GSP that is science-based, complex, technical, and includes achievable outcomes, the GSA will strive to meet these overall objectives:

- Educate the public in meaningful ways. Communicate what may often be complex concepts in straightforward, comprehensible ways;
- Show how the input received has been incorporated into the plan or process;
- Remain focused on results.

Community engagement activities will be focused on development of GSP plan elements. The GSP will be prepared iteratively and in a logical progression, building on previously developed technical and policy information. Throughout the process of preparing the GSP, background materials along with draft text, figures and tables for each section will be provided to the GSA member agency staff, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, the GSA Board and the public in advance of meetings for input and comment. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee, public and Board will have opportunities to comment on each element, before the element is ultimately adopted by the Board.

It is anticipated that the GSP will be developed in six phases:

1. Preparation and submittal of initial notification of GSP preparation
2. Definition of plan area and basin setting
3. Development of sustainable management criteria, including the sustainability goal, undesirable results, minimum thresholds, measurable objectives and interim milestones
4. Design of monitoring program and data management system
5. Identification and evaluation of proposed projects and management actions

6. Development of GSP implementation costs, detailed schedule, and reporting

Each phase requires robust outreach with the goal of educating and engaging the general public, stakeholders, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Board on the technical and policy aspects of the GSP plan elements. Each phase will include a mix of communication tools, to be used in a variety of forums.

Communication & Engagement Forums

Member Agencies Governance Briefings

Member Agency board members may brief their councils or boards regularly on GSA activities and may work with the GSA Management Committee to provide additional briefings on sensitive or important topics.

Stakeholder Briefings

Stakeholder Advisory Committee members will meet with and communicate regularly with organizations comprised of the stakeholder groups they represent. To promote consistent messaging, all briefings will be coordinated with the GSA Management Committee.

Public Meetings/Hearing

Public meetings or hearings are formal opportunities for people to provide official comments on programs, plans and proposals. The Vina GSA Board meetings and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings constitute regular public meetings that will be noticed and conducted in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. SGMA requires that a public meeting be held prior to the adoption of a fee and that public hearings are held for the adoption of GSP elements and the final GSP plan. There are also constitutional requirements for public hearings for some fee/rate options. Public meetings and hearings are an important forum for people to share viewpoints and concerns, but often occur at the end of a process, when only one option is under consideration. The GSA will hold required public meetings and hearings, but will also use less formal public workshops to solicit feedback and information early in the process.

Public Workshops

Public educational workshops provide less formal opportunities for people to learn about groundwater, SGMA, and GSP elements. Workshops can be organized in a variety of ways, including open houses, “stations” where people can ask questions one-on-one, and traditional presentations with facilitated question and answer sessions. In order to solicit feedback from people who may not be comfortable speaking in public, workshops can include small group breakout discussions, comment cards and other techniques. Whatever format is used, workshops will be designed to maximize opportunities for public input.

Public Notices

In addition to the public notice required for fee adoption, SGMA requires that prior to initiating the development of a GSP, the GSA must provide a written statement describing the manner in which interested parties may participate in the development and implementation of the GSP. The statement must be provided to all the cities within the subbasin and to the County of Butte.

As outlined in this Community Engagement Plan, there will be a variety of opportunities for people to participate in the development and implementation of the GSP, including workshops, public hearings, providing comments at Board and Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings and through written comments.

Communication & Engagement Tools

The Vina GSA will use a variety of communications and engagement tools to keep the public informed, including the following.

Interested Parties List: SGMA mandates the creation of an interested parties list. SGMA does not specify the type of list (email versus hard copy). The first preference is an email list, to get information out quickly and to reduce costs. A secondary list will be developed for people who don't use email. Board members (and the agencies they represent), the Stakeholder Advisory Committee members and staff can contribute names of organizations, agencies, and individuals to the list. Whenever new inquiries are made and when new individuals participate in public meetings and workshops, their names will be added to the list.

The list is broad and includes anyone who would like to stay informed about SGMA activities and anyone the Board and Stakeholder Advisory Committee thinks should be informed about the GSP process and the outcomes of the planning effort. The Management Committee will coordinate the distribution of periodic updates to the interested parties list. This list will also be used for dissemination of information about public workshops, public meetings, etc.

Informational Materials: Developing a variety of informational materials is critical to successful education and necessary to circulate consistent, accurate information. The Management Committee with input from the Stakeholder Advisory Committee will develop a range of materials, which may include:

- **Talking Points:** Clear, concise messages to be used by Board and Stakeholder Advisory Committee members and Management Committee when communicating with media, organizations, and stakeholders.
- **Milestone Fact Sheets:** For initiating the GSP and completion of elements of the GSP.
- **Periodic Updates:** As stated above, the Management Committee will coordinate on the distribution of periodic updates that can then be used by Stakeholder Advisory Committee for distribution to the groups and organizations they represent using existing communications tools, such as newsletters, social media, list serves, etc.
- **Newspaper editorials:** Authored by the Management Committee, Board, or Stakeholder Advisory Committee members (after review and approval of the full Advisory Committee and Management Committee) for submittal to local news sources.
- **Briefing Packets:** For milestone briefings to the public and stakeholders. Packets will include standard talking points, and other materials to assist in educational outreach and for soliciting feedback.

Website: The Vina GSA website will be a tool for distributing and archiving meeting and communication materials as well as a repository for any studies and informative, educational materials. The Management Committee will coordinate to ensure that the website is updated on a

consistent basis to ensure up to date, timely information. The website will include the following information:

- Home page: summary, calendar of meetings and events, highlighted topics
- Groundwater basics, SGMA background including links to existing sources of relevant information, such as <https://groundwaterexchange.org>.
- Vina subbasin specific information
- Board of Directors information: Board members, agendas, and meeting materials
- Stakeholder Advisory Committee information: Stakeholder Advisory Committee members, agendas, and meeting materials

Mailings and Utility Bill Notifications: Individual member agencies may utilize postcards and include updates and relevant GSP development information in utility bills.

Social Media: Existing Facebook, Twitter, and other emerging social media technologies will be leveraged to provide updates on milestone progress to interested parties.

Surveys: Online tools, such as Survey Monkey, may be used periodically to gather stakeholder ideas and to provide feedback on key issues.

Media Plan: The Management Committee will develop press releases and Public Service Announcements (if appropriate) at each milestone and for meetings and workshops. The press releases will be distributed to local and regional media and elected officials. See Appendix C for a media contact list that will be updated on a periodic basis.

Outreach Partners

In addition to the communication tools listed above, other organizations can also partner to assist the Vina GSA reach its communications and engagement goals including, but not limited to:

- ✓ Butte County Farm Bureau;
- ✓ The Groundwater Pumpers Advisory Committee (GPAC);
- ✓ Agricultural Groundwater Users of Butte County (AGUBC) Butte County Water Commission;
- ✓ Butte Environmental Council
- ✓ Butte College
- ✓ California State University, Chico
- ✓ Upper Feather River Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) and the North Sacramento Valley (NSV) Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) group
- ✓ Butte County Resource Conservation District;
- ✓ Chico Chamber of Commerce (calendar); and
- ✓ Service Clubs and other professional organizations.

Intra-Basin Coordination

There are two GSAs in the Vina subbasin: the Vina GSA and Rock Creek Reclamation District. The Vina GSA Board of Directors will enter into an agreement with Rock Creek Reclamation District specifying the parameters of the two agencies' coordination. Further, the Vina Management Committee will coordinate with Rock Creek Reclamation District's designated representative(s) to ensure basinwide sustainability.

Inter-Basin Coordination

While inter-basin agreements are optional under SGMA, The Vina GSA intends to coordinate with adjacent basins to share technical information and to ensure that the implementation of the GSPs in adjacent basins are compatible and will not cause any adverse effects in the Vina subbasin or any other adjacent basins.

Evaluation and Assessment

Any communication strategy should include opportunities to check in at various points during implementation to ensure that it is meeting the communication and engagement goals and complying with SGMA. These check-ins will occur at least on an annual basis.

Appendix A: Tribal Engagement in Butte County: Guidance Document Tribes in Butte County

There are four* federally-recognized Native American tribes in Butte County, including:

- Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria
- Concow-Maidu Tribe of the Mooretown Rancheria
- Tyme Maidu Tribe of the Berry Creek Rancheria
- Enterprise Rancheria of Maidu Indians of California

The KonKow Valley Band of Maidu Indians is also recognized by the County and the State and has applied for federal recognition. Three of the four Native American tribes are located in subbasins subject to SGMA. The Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico is located in the Vina subbasin. The Concow-Maidu Tribe of the Mooretown Rancheria and the Tyme Maidu Tribe of the Berry Creek Rancheria are partially located in the Wyandotte Creek subbasin. The Enterprise Rancheria of Maidu Indians are not located in a subbasin subject to SGMA. Since these federally recognized Tribal lands are outside of the Butte subbasin, tribal engagement will not be a focus in this subbasin, however tribes that have used lands within the Butte subbasin historically as ancestral lands will be informed of future activities through their efforts in engaging through Department updates and through other subbasin updates.

Meaningful Tribal outreach, dialogue and consultation is a shared obligation of all the GSAs in the applicable subbasin where Tribal lands exist. However, since Tribal lands are predominately in unincorporated portions of Butte County, Butte County will lead SGMA related outreach and consultation efforts with the Mechoopda Indian Tribe and the Mooretown Rancheria.

*SOURCE: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/orip/list/agencies_files/California_Federally-recognized_Tribes_District_MPOs RTPAs.pdf

Outreach Steps – Phase I

1. Confirm that the two Native American tribes identified above are correctly posed for SGMA outreach.
2. Butte County will prepare background materials related to Native American tribal outreach and engagement. The material will include a compilation of past Native American tribal outreach methods, goals, and results (including primary points of contact). The materials will include SGMA-related obligations for GSAs pursuant to SGMA, and interests and goals as they relate to tribal outreach and potential participation in sustainable groundwater management planning (see *Relevant DWR Information* below).
3. Butte County will conduct an initial, informal communication with tribal primary points of contact to clarify interest in communicating formally regarding SGMA and tribal interests; request advice about appropriate avenues for outreach; and identify next steps. In the event a tribal representative cannot be contacted within 45 days, the County will consult with DWR's Office of Tribal Policy Advisor for guidance (Anecita Agustinez, DWR Tribal Policy Advisor - Anecita.Agustinez@water.ca.gov).
4. Following successful initial communication with the Native American tribes, Butte County will facilitate the implementation of the next steps identified in #3. Actions may include preparation of a

formal letter from the Board to each of the tribes, involvement of other GSAs with the tribes, and/or establishing a consultation framework.

Outreach Steps – Phase II
Contingent on Phase I outcomes.

Relevant DWR Information

SGMA Section 10720.3. ...any federally recognized Indian Tribe, appreciating the shared interest in assuring the sustainability of groundwater resources, may voluntarily agree to participate in the preparation or administration of a groundwater sustainability plan or groundwater management plan under this part through a joint powers authority or other agreement with local agencies in the basin. A participating Tribe shall be eligible to participate fully in planning, financing, and management under this part, including eligibility for grants and technical assistance, if any exercise of regulatory authority, enforcement, or imposition and collection of fees is pursuant to the Tribe's independent authority and not pursuant to authority granted to a groundwater sustainability agency under this part.

Draft Discussion Paper Tribal Participation with Groundwater Sustainability Agencies

http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/pdfs/SGMA_Tribal_GSAs.pdf

Must a local agency exclude federal and tribal lands from its service area when forming a GSA?

No, federal lands and tribal lands need not be excluded from a local agency's GSA area if a local agency has jurisdiction in those areas; however, those areas are not subject to SGMA. But, a local agency in its GSA formation notice shall explain how it will consider the interests of the federal government and California Native American tribes when forming a GSA and developing a GSP. DWR strongly recommends that local agencies communicate with federal and tribal representatives prior to deciding to become a GSA. As stated in Water Code §10720.3, the federal government or any federally recognized Indian tribe, appreciating the shared interest in assuring the sustainability of groundwater resources, may voluntarily agree to participate in the preparation or administration of a GSP or groundwater management plan through a JPA or other agreement with local agencies in the basin. Water Code References: §10720.3, §10723.2, §10723.8

Tribal Outreach Resources

The follow are links to agency tribal outreach resources and considerations, each of which captures important principles and resources for tribal outreach. A short summary of key outreach principles can be found below.

- ◆ [Draft Discussion Paper Tribal Participation with Groundwater Sustainability Agencies](#)
- ◆ [CalEPA Tribal Consultation Policy Memo \(August 2015\)](#)
- ◆ [DWR Tribal Engagement Policy \(May 2016\)](#)
- ◆ [CA Natural Resources Agency Tribal Consultation Policy \(November 2012\)](#)
- ◆ [SWRCB Proposed Tribal Beneficial Uses](#)
- ◆ [Butte County Associate of Governments: Policy For Government-To-Government Consultation With Federally Recognized Native American Tribal Governments \(a model from the transportation sector\)](#)

- ◆ CA Court Tribal Outreach and Engagement Strategies
- ◆ Traditional Ecological Knowledge resources
- ◆ Water Education Foundation Tribal Water Issues

Key Outreach Principles

- ◆ *Engage early and often*
- ◆ *Consider tribal beneficial uses in decision-making (identified by region here); identify and seek to protect tribal cultural resources*
- ◆ *Share relevant documentation with tribal officials*
- ◆ *Conduct meetings at times convenient for tribal participation with ample notifications*
- ◆ *Request relevant process input/ data/ information from tribes*
- ◆ *Empower tribes to act as tribal cultural resources caretakers*
- ◆ *Designate a tribal liaison(s) where appropriate*
- ◆ *Share resources for tribal involvement as is feasible*
- ◆ *Develop MOUs where relevant*
- ◆ *Be mindful of the traditions and cultural norms of tribes in your area*

Key Outreach Partners/Liaisons

The following are potential partners for Butte County tribal SGMA outreach:

- ◆ SGMA Tribal Advisory Group (TAG): “The Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) includes tribal leadership, subject matter experts, and technical and non-technical members of local, academic, and tribal governments that are actively engaged in local groundwater management and will be key in local implementation of SGMA. TAG members will be responsible for distribution of information and resources to their respective tribes and organizations.”
- ◆ California Indian Water Commission, Inc.
- ◆ DWR Office of Tribal Advisor
- ◆ DWR Regional Office

Appendix B: Media Contact List

Media Outlet
Action News Now
Chico Enterprise Record
Chico News and Review
Forest Ranch Post
Gridley Herald
KCHO News
KHSL TV Channel 12
KNVN
KRCR Channel 7
KRBS
KZFR
NCEN
News 10
Oroville Mercury Register (Legals)
Paradise Post
Plumas News
Durham Community Voice
Other