



Groundwater Sustainability Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)?

A: A Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) outlines how a basin and/or Groundwater Sustainability Agency will avoid the adverse effects of groundwater overdraft and achieve sustainable levels of groundwater. The GSP includes a physical description of the groundwater management area including groundwater conditions, a water budget, sustainability criteria, a monitoring program, and projects and measurable objectives to become sustainable by 2040.

Q: Why did North Fork Kings GSA develop a GSP?

A: The GSP is a requirement of the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The State law requires all high- and medium-priority basin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to develop and implement a GSP. The GSP was submitted on January 28 to the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) for their review to meet the January 31, 2020 deadline.

Q: How did GSP development take into account the interests of all stakeholders?

A: The North Fork Kings GSA held numerous public meetings and actively solicited feedback from stakeholders throughout the GSP development process. This included Board Meetings, Rural Community Advisory Committee meetings, landowner and community workshops, webinars, and surveys. The full GSP draft was made available to the public in July 2019 for a 90-day review and comment period. Comments were considered and the GSP was adopted at a Public Hearing on December 18, 2019. North Fork Kings GSA will continue to consider any and all input from stakeholders through implementation.

Q: Who determines whether North Fork Kings GSA's GSP is sufficient?

A: Upon receipt on January 28, 2020, the CA Department of Water Resources posted the GSP on its Groundwater Portal for an additional public comment period concluding May 15, 2020 (the initial 75-day comment period was extended due to COVID-19). DWR has two years from the submittal date to review the GSP to determine whether it meets the requirements of SGMA.

Q: When does the North Fork Kings GSA have to start implementing the GSP?

A: Implementation started immediately upon submittal of the GSP to the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR). This will be done through implementing management actions, projects and programs identified in the GSP. The North Fork Kings GSA is prioritizing filling groundwater data gaps by expanding its monitoring network of wells.

Q: Does the GSP take away the ability of growers to pump groundwater if we enter a period of drought?

A: The North Fork Kings GSA Board will prioritize project implementation that will increase water supply in wet years to offset groundwater overdraft. The sustainable management criteria in the GSP include a range called "operational flexibility." This allows fluctuating groundwater levels as long as levels recover and improve over the long run. However, under the SGMA law the North Fork Kings GSA has the power to limit groundwater pumping to achieve sustainability. If



groundwater pumping continues to decrease groundwater levels at an unsustainable rate, North Fork Kings GSA may consider limiting pumping.

Q: How much groundwater overdraft does the North Fork Kings GSA need to correct to reach sustainability?

A: The North Fork Kings GSA must correct an estimated 59,000 acre feet of annual overdraft occurring within its service area.

Q: How is sustainability measured?

A: Sustainability under SGMA requires avoidance of six “undesirable results”. Undesirable results are significant and unreasonable effects caused by groundwater overdraft. There are five applicable to the North Fork Kings GSA. The GSP establishes measurable objectives and minimum thresholds to avoid these five undesirable results: chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater storage, degraded water quality, land subsidence, and surface water depletion from interconnected streams.

Q: What are some strategies the GSP outlines to achieve sustainability?

A: The GSP outlines potential projects and management actions to mitigate the estimated 59,000 acre feet of annual overdraft occurring in the North Fork Kings GSA. Projects and management actions that either increase water supply or reduce water demand. This includes groundwater recharge basins, on-farm recharge, education and outreach on conservation practices, and a groundwater allocation and credit program. Supply-side solutions are priority before considering demand reducing actions.

Q: Will I be required to put a meter on my well?

A: Installing meters on wells is not a requirement at this time. A metering policy will be considered only if and when water supply enhancing solutions, like recharging excess surface water in wet years, are not enough to mitigate annual overdraft. A metering policy would be required in the future for a landowner to participate in potential groundwater marketing/trading programs.

Q: Why are groundwater allocations considered as a management action in the North Fork Kings GSA?

A: The North Fork Kings GSA plans to prioritize supply-side solutions to groundwater overdraft, like capturing extra surface water supplies when available. Groundwater allocations would be considered if projects and initial management actions are not enough to mitigate groundwater overdraft. Additionally, groundwater allocations are a necessary component of implementing a groundwater market and trading program if needed.

Q: Will I be limited on how much I can pump?

A: The North Fork Kings GSA has the authority under SGMA to limit groundwater pumping to achieve sustainability. It is the priority of the North Kings GSA to first implement water supply enhancing projects before considering pumping restrictions. If pumping restrictions must be implemented to achieve sustainability, a groundwater market and trading program may accompany the restrictions to provide flexibility to landowners.

Q: Who will implement and require management actions?



A: The North Fork Kings GSA Board will consider potential management actions included in the GSP as needed. The North Fork Kings GSA, a public agency, is the local implementation authority for the landowners within its service area boundaries. It is strongly encouraged stakeholders and landowners are involved in GSP implementation to provide input as decisions on groundwater management are made.

Q: If I own land in different areas of North Fork Kings GSA, will I have to follow different rules?

A: All landowners within the North Fork Kings GSA will be treated equitably. If you own land in different regions of the agency, you currently will not be required to follow different management policies.

Q: How will the Kings Subbasin coordinate to achieve Subbasin-wide sustainability?

A: Each GSA within the Kings Subbasin developed its own Groundwater Sustainability Plan. As required by SGMA, the North Fork Kings GSA is working alongside the neighboring six GSAs in the Kings Subbasin under the terms of a basin coordination agreement that aligns sustainability goals. This coordination agreement was submitted to the CA Department of Water Resources for review at the same time GSPs were submitted. The Kings Subbasin is working together to correct a total estimated 122,000 acre feet of annual groundwater overdraft.

Q: Will there be any incentives programs available to landowners who implement GSA programs down the road?

A: Incentives will be considered to encourage landowner participation in North Fork Kings GSA's management actions. There are no specific programs in place at this time. Any number of incentives will be considered by the North Fork Kings GSA Board as appropriate during the entire period of GSP implementation.

Q: What should landowners do now during the next 1-5 years to be prepared for GSP implementation?

A: The best way landowners can prepare is to stay engaged with the North Fork Kings GSA's activities and provide input on future project and management action considerations. Landowners can stay up to date by signing up for the Interested Persons email list online at www.northforkkings.org, attending Board meetings and public workshops, and by expressing priorities, ideas, and input on project and management action decisions.

Q: Will there be any other costs to landowners beyond the \$10/acre Prop 218 assessment?

A: Moving forward over the next 20 years, the North Fork Kings GSA will continue to apply for grant funding to cover as many costs as possible. The North Fork Kings GSA may need to consider additional funding mechanisms in addition to land-based assessments to cover the anticipated costs of developing and constructing specific projects and implementing management actions.

Q: What happens if sustainability is not achieved?

A: The CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) requires GSAs to submit annual reports to DWR each April 1 following adoption of a GSP. The annual reports will provide information on groundwater conditions and implementation of the plan for the prior water year. If DWR finds

groundwater is not adequately being managed in the subbasin, the GSA may be subject to intervention by the State Water Resources Control Board. Under State Intervention, the State could designate the basin as probationary and intervene to directly manage groundwater extractions and impose stringent fees to recoup its costs of intervention.