

# **County of Monterey**

Government Center - Board Chambers  
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901



## **Meeting Agenda - Final**

**Tuesday, March 19, 2024**

**10:30 AM**

**Join via Zoom at <https://montereycty.zoom.us/j/224397747> or in person at the  
address listed above**

### **Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency**

*Chair Supervisor Glenn Church - District 2*  
*Vice Chair Supervisor Chris Lopez - District 3*  
*Supervisor Wendy Root Askew - District 4*  
*Supervisor Mary L. Adams - District 5*  
*Supervisor Luis A. Alejo - District 1*

## Participation in meetings

While the Board chambers remain open, members of the public may participate in Board meetings in 2 ways:

1. You may attend the meeting in person; or,
2. You may observe the live stream of the Board of Supervisors meetings at <https://monterey.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>, <http://www.mgtvonline.com/>, [www.youtube.com/c/MontereyCountyTV](http://www.youtube.com/c/MontereyCountyTV) or <https://www.facebook.com/MontereyCoInfo/>

If you choose not to attend the Board of Supervisors meeting but desire to make general public comment, or comment on a specific item on the agenda, you may do so in 2 ways:

a. submit your comment via email by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Board meeting. Please submit your comment to the Clerk of the Board at [cob@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:cob@co.monterey.ca.us). In an effort to assist the Clerk in identifying the agenda item relating to your public comment please indicate in the Subject Line, the meeting body (i.e. Board of Supervisors Agenda) and item number (i.e. Item No. 10). Your comment will be placed into the record at the Board meeting.

b. you may participate through ZOOM. For ZOOM participation please join by computer audio at: <https://montereycty.zoom.us/j/224397747>

OR to participate by phone call any of these numbers below:

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)  
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)  
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)  
+1 253 215 8782 US  
+1 301 715 8592 US

Enter this Meeting ID number: 224397747 when prompted. Please note there is no Participant Code, you will just hit # again after the recording prompts you.

You will be placed in the meeting as an attendee; when you are ready to make a public comment if joined by computer audio please Raise your Hand; and by phone please push \*9 on your keypad.

**PLEASE NOTE: IF ALL BOARD MEMBERS ARE PRESENT IN PERSON, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION BY ZOOM IS FOR CONVENIENCE ONLY AND IS NOT REQUIRED BY LAW. IF THE ZOOM FEED IS LOST FOR ANY REASON, THE MEETING MAY BE PAUSED WHILE A FIX IS ATTEMPTED BUT THE MEETING MAY CONTINUE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRPERSON.**

## **Participación en reuniones**

Mientras las cámaras de la Junta permanezcan abiertas, los miembros del público pueden participar en las reuniones de la Junta de 2 maneras:

- 1. Podrá asistir personalmente a la reunión; o,**
- 2. Puede observar la transmisión en vivo de las reuniones de la Junta de Supervisores en <https://monterey.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>, <http://www.mgtvonline.com/>, [www.youtube.com/c/MontereyCountyTV](http://www.youtube.com/c/MontereyCountyTV) o <https://www.facebook.com/MontereyCoInfo/>**

Si elige no asistir a la reunión de la Junta de Supervisores pero desea hacer comentarios del público en general o comentar un tema específico de la agenda, puede hacerlo de 2 maneras:

a. envíe su comentario por correo electrónico antes de las 5:00 p.m. el lunes anterior a la reunión de la Junta. Envíe su comentario al Secretario de la Junta a [cob@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:cob@co.monterey.ca.us). En un esfuerzo por ayudar al secretario a identificar el tema de la agenda relacionado con su comentario público, indique en la línea de asunto el cuerpo de la reunión (es decir, la agenda de la Junta de Supervisores) y el número de artículo (es decir, el artículo n.º 10). Su comentario se colocará en el registro en la reunión de la Junta.

b. puedes participar a través de ZOOM. Para participar en ZOOM, únase por audio de computadora en: <https://montereycty.zoom.us/j/224397747>

O para participar por teléfono llame a cualquiera de estos números a continuación:

+1 669 900 6833 EE. UU. (San José)  
+1 346 248 7799 EE. UU. (Houston)  
+1 312 626 6799 EE. UU. (Chicago)  
+1 929 205 6099 EE. UU. (Nueva York)  
+1 253 215 8782 EE. UU.  
+1 301 715 8592 EE. UU.

Ingrese este número de ID de reunión: 224397747 cuando se le solicite. Tenga en cuenta que no hay un código de participante, simplemente presione # nuevamente después de que la grabación lo solicite.

Se le colocará en la reunión como asistente; cuando esté listo para hacer un comentario público si se une al audio de la computadora, levante la mano; y por teléfono, presione \*9 en su teclado.

**TENGA EN CUENTA: SI TODOS LOS MIEMBROS DE LA JUNTA ESTÁN PRESENTES EN PERSONA, LA PARTICIPACIÓN DEL PÚBLICO POR ZOOM ES ÚNICAMENTE POR CONVENIENCIA Y NO ES REQUERIDA POR LA LEY. SI LA ALIMENTACIÓN DE ZOOM SE PIERDE POR CUALQUIER MOTIVO, LA REUNIÓN PUEDE PAUSARSE MIENTRAS SE INTENTA UNA SOLUCIÓN, PERO LA REUNIÓN PUEDE CONTINUAR A DISCRECIÓN DEL PRESIDENTE.**

**NOTE: All agenda titles related to numbered agenda items are live web links. Click on the title to be directed to the corresponding Board Report.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS: Members of the public may address comments to the Board concerning each agenda item. The timing of public comment shall be at the discretion of the Chair.**

**10:30 A.M. - Call to Order**

**Roll Call**

**Additions and Corrections by Clerk**

The Clerk of the Board will announce agenda corrections and proposed additions, which may be acted on by the Board as provided in Sections 54954.2 of the California Government Code.

**General Public Comments**

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons to address the Board on any matter not on this agenda but under the jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors. Board members may respond briefly to the statement made or questions posed. They may ask a question for clarification; make a referral to staff for factual information or request staff to report back to the Board at a future meeting.

**Scheduled Matters**

1. Consider receiving an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

**Attachments:**     [Board Report](#)  
                             [Exhibit A - Map of Expansion Areas](#)

**Adjournment**



# County of Monterey

## Item No.1

### Board Report

Board of Supervisors  
Chambers  
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: WRAG 24-033

March 19, 2024

Introduced: 2/29/2024

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: WR General Agenda

Consider receiving an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

#### SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

##### **BACKGROUND:**

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) began collecting groundwater extraction data through the Groundwater Extraction Management System (GEMS) program in 1993. All well owners, agricultural and urban, with wells having a discharge pipe diameter of at least 3 inches, in an Agency defined area ("Zones 2, 2A, & 2B"), are required to register and annually self-report extraction data and water conservation information to the Agency through a dedicated web portal. The GEMS program was established by 3 ordinances, 3660, 3717, and 3718, adopted by the Agency. The GEMS program supports two other ordinances, 3851 and 3886, that implement Agricultural and Urban Water Conservation Plans, respectively. The Agency estimates annual self-reporting compliance in the mid-ninety percent range. The Agency aggregates data to monitor changes in regional groundwater usage and track implementation of Best Management Practices and publishes its findings in an annual report.

In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) became law. The aim of SGMA is to establish a statewide framework to manage groundwater sustainably over the long-term. SGMA directed the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to identify and prioritize groundwater basins throughout the state. High and medium priority (Priority) basins, as defined by DWR, were required, with few exceptions, to establish Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), to develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs), and to manage their basins to sustainability by 2040 or 2042, depending upon Priority, and for 30 years thereafter. DWR identified 5 basins and 8 subbasins within Monterey County. Of these, only 3 are not considered Priority. The remaining basins and subbasins are managed by 6 GSAs: Arroyo Seco, City of Marina, County of Monterey, Marina Coast Water District, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, and the Salinas Valley Basin (SVB).

All the GSAs are dependent upon collecting and monitoring groundwater data related to their respective jurisdictions to inform their GSPs and gauge sustainability in the future. The SVB is responsible for managing 6 subbasins and has 6 approved GSPs it is working towards implementing. Although the Agency's GEMS monitoring data was vital in the preparation of the SVB's GSPs, the 6 subbasins, which were established by DWR, do not align entirely with the Agency's GEMS Zones, which means there are gaps in the monitoring network that need to be filled to inform the first five-year evaluations of the SVB's GSPs in January 2025 and 2027. In addition, the SVB received a "Recommended Corrective Action" from DWR to provide more information on groundwater level impacts to domestic well owners. In order to address the Corrective Action, the SVB requires more precise data about the location and depth of wells.

To this end, the Agency and SVB have been meeting together and with other agencies with responsibility over groundwater, the County of Monterey's Health Department and the Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc., as well as stakeholders, to explore how to ensure effective and efficient expansion of well registration and the GEMS program, the consolidation of existing well data, and the potential to improve existing groundwater monitoring efforts through cooperation and potential consolidation of work. This memorandum provides some insight into those discussions and offers some recommendations for future action.

#### **PROPOSED GEMS EXPANSION:**

The map, attached as Exhibit A, illustrates the areas where expansion of the GEMS program will need to occur to meet the near-future data needs of the SVB. To address gaps in the monitoring network that need to be filled to inform the first five-year evaluations of the SVB's GSPs, wells outside of the existing GEMS program that are not "de minimis" will need to begin collecting groundwater extraction data effective November 1, 2024. The new requirement will trigger an effort to collect, manage, analyze, aggregate, and disseminate relevant information. There are basically three ways for this effort to be undertaken:

- 1) The Agency expands its current GEMS program to include the new areas currently not reporting;
- 2) The Agency transfers its GEMS program to the SVB for all future administration; or
- 3) The SVB develops a GEMS like program to address the areas currently not reporting.

While the focus of this discussion is the expansion of GEMS to meet the near-future informational needs of the SVB, the Agency and SVB are considering merging GEMS expansion and Well Registration into one program. In addition, there may be opportunities in the future to improve existing groundwater monitoring efforts through cooperation and potential consolidation of work such as groundwater quality monitoring and data management. Future efforts by the Agency may include providing services to other GSAs and agencies in the County that rely upon groundwater monitoring and data management to meet their respective regulatory responsibilities.

#### **GROUNDWATER MONITORING OBJECTIVES:**

- Effectively fill data gaps to improve planning and reduce uncertainty.
- Improve monitoring efficiency through communication, coordination, potential consolidation.
- Ensure cost effective, quality data and valued service.
- Promote stakeholder engagement and satisfaction.

- Support, inform, and demonstrate groundwater sustainability by 2040 or 2042.

**WELL REGISTRATION:**

In response to DWR’s “Recommended Corrective Action”, the SVB is proposing registration of wells not currently in the Agency’s data base. Since 1973, pursuant to Monterey County Code Chapter 15.08, as amended, all well construction, repair, and reconstruction permits have been issued by the Health Department, which currently holds records of over 15,000 wells County-wide.

However, these well records can be incomplete or outdated, especially with regard to ownership, location data, and current well status; therefore, a system of registration will need to be developed to complete or update the record of wells within the 6 subbasins. Furthermore, the Agency’s prior registration efforts have been focused on wells required to report to GEMS, which has a less expansive monitoring area and does not include wells with discharge pipes smaller than 3 inches in diameter. New well registration requirements will require all wells to register going forward, though “de minimis” wells will need not report extractions.

**AUTHORITY (Agency):**

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency Act (Agency Act) establishes broad authorities for the Agency to manage water within the County of Monterey, including to “carry on technical and other necessary investigations, make measurements, collect data, make analyses, studies, and inspections pertaining to water supply, water rights, control of flood and storm waters, and use of water both within and without the Agency relating to watercourses or streams flooding in or into the Agency.” To achieve these goals, the Agency is further authorized to adopt, by ordinance, reasonable regulations to implement the Agency Act, and may specify in any ordinance that a violation of the ordinance is an infraction.

**AUTHORITY (SVB):**

The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency was formed in accordance with the requirements of California Water Code Sec 10723 et seq. SVB is a joint power authority that was formed for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin in accordance with the requirements of California Government Code Sec 6500 et seq. The JPA signatories are all local agencies with water or land use authority that are independently eligible to serve as GSAs: County of Monterey, MCWRA, City of Salinas, City of Soledad, City of Gonzales, City of King, Castroville CSD.

The purpose of SVB is to cooperatively carry out the requirements of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) including but not limited to, serving as the GSA for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin and developing, adopting, and implementing GSPs that achieves groundwater sustainability in the Basin, all through exercise of powers granted to a GSA by SGMA and those provided by Joint Exercise of Powers Act. Pursuant to California Water Code sections 10725.8 and 10927, the SVB has the authority to monitor and report groundwater elevations within its jurisdiction and, with the exception of de-minimis users, require the use of any groundwater extraction facility to be measured by a water-measuring device or methodology satisfactory to the SVB, and require the owner of a groundwater extraction facility to file an annual report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Consider options for GEMS expansion and Well Registration that meet the needs of the Agency, the



SVB, and are supported by the stakeholder community. Staff of the Agency and the SVB needs to continue making progress in order to meet the milestones and comply with SGMA.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, County of Monterey Environmental Health Bureau

FINANCING:

Costs associated with the various Expansion options has not yet been developed.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ara Azhderian, General Manager, (831)755-4860

Attachments:

1. Exhibit A: Map of Expansion Areas.



# County of Monterey

**Item No.**

## Board Report

Board of Supervisors  
Chambers  
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

**Legistar File Number: WRAG 24-033**

**March 19, 2024**

**Introduced:** 2/29/2024

**Current Status:** Agenda Ready

**Version:** 1

**Matter Type:** WR General Agenda

Consider receiving an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

### SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) began collecting groundwater extraction data through the Groundwater Extraction Management System (GEMS) program in 1993. All well owners, agricultural and urban, with wells having a discharge pipe diameter of at least 3 inches, in an Agency defined area ("Zones 2, 2A, & 2B"), are required to register and annually self-report extraction data and water conservation information to the Agency through a dedicated web portal. The GEMS program was established by 3 ordinances, 3660, 3717, and 3718, adopted by the Agency. The GEMS program supports two other ordinances, 3851 and 3886, that implement Agricultural and Urban Water Conservation Plans, respectively. The Agency estimates annual self-reporting compliance in the mid-ninety percent range. The Agency aggregates data to monitor changes in regional groundwater usage and track implementation of Best Management Practices and publishes its findings in an annual report.

In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) became law. The aim of SGMA is to establish a statewide framework to manage groundwater sustainably over the long-term. SGMA directed the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to identify and prioritize groundwater basins throughout the state. High and medium priority (Priority) basins, as defined by DWR, were required, with few exceptions, to establish Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), to develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs), and to manage their basins to sustainability by 2040 or 2042, depending upon Priority, and for 30 years thereafter. DWR identified 5 basins and 8 subbasins within Monterey County. Of these, only 3 are not considered Priority. The remaining basins and subbasins are managed by 6 GSAs: Arroyo Seco, City of Marina, County of Monterey, Marina Coast Water District, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, and the Salinas Valley Basin (SVB).

All the GSAs are dependent upon collecting and monitoring groundwater data related to their respective jurisdictions to inform their GSPs and gauge sustainability in the future. The SVB is responsible for managing 6 subbasins and has 6 approved GSPs it is working towards implementing. Although the Agency's GEMS monitoring data was vital in the preparation of the SVB's GSPs, the 6 subbasins, which were established by DWR, do not align entirely with the Agency's GEMS Zones, which means there are gaps in the monitoring network that need to be filled to inform the first five-year evaluations of the SVB's GSPs in January 2025 and 2027. In addition, the SVB received a "Recommended Corrective Action" from DWR to provide more information on groundwater level impacts to domestic well owners. In order to address the Corrective Action, the SVB requires more precise data about the location and depth of wells.

To this end, the Agency and SVB have been meeting together and with other agencies with responsibility over groundwater, the County of Monterey's Health Department and the Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc., as well as stakeholders, to explore how to ensure effective and efficient expansion of well registration and the GEMS program, the consolidation of existing well data, and the potential to improve existing groundwater monitoring efforts through cooperation and potential consolidation of work. This memorandum provides some insight into those discussions and offers some recommendations for future action.

#### **PROPOSED GEMS EXPANSION:**

The map, attached as Exhibit A, illustrates the areas where expansion of the GEMS program will need to occur to meet the near-future data needs of the SVB. To address gaps in the monitoring network that need to be filled to inform the first five-year evaluations of the SVB's GSPs, wells outside of the existing GEMS program that are not "de minimis" will need to begin collecting groundwater extraction data effective November 1, 2024. The new requirement will trigger an effort to collect, manage, analyze, aggregate, and disseminate relevant information. There are basically three ways for this effort to be undertaken:

- 1) The Agency expands its current GEMS program to include the new areas currently not reporting;
- 2) The Agency transfers its GEMS program to the SVB for all future administration; or
- 3) The SVB develops a GEMS like program to address the areas currently not reporting.

While the focus of this discussion is the expansion of GEMS to meet the near-future informational needs of the SVB, the Agency and SVB are considering merging GEMS expansion and Well Registration into one program. In addition, there may be opportunities in the future to improve existing groundwater monitoring efforts through cooperation and potential consolidation of work such as groundwater quality monitoring and data management. Future efforts by the Agency may include providing services to other GSAs and agencies in the County that rely upon groundwater monitoring and data management to meet their respective regulatory responsibilities.

#### **GROUNDWATER MONITORING OBJECTIVES:**

- Effectively fill data gaps to improve planning and reduce uncertainty.
- Improve monitoring efficiency through communication, coordination, potential consolidation.
- Ensure cost effective, quality data and valued service.
- Promote stakeholder engagement and satisfaction.

- Support, inform, and demonstrate groundwater sustainability by 2040 or 2042.

**WELL REGISTRATION:**

In response to DWR's "Recommended Corrective Action", the SVB is proposing registration of wells not currently in the Agency's data base. Since 1973, pursuant to Monterey County Code Chapter 15.08, as amended, all well construction, repair, and reconstruction permits have been issued by the Health Department, which currently holds records of over 15,000 wells County-wide.

However, these well records can be incomplete or outdated, especially with regard to ownership, location data, and current well status; therefore, a system of registration will need to be developed to complete or update the record of wells within the 6 subbasins. Furthermore, the Agency's prior registration efforts have been focused on wells required to report to GEMS, which has a less expansive monitoring area and does not include wells with discharge pipes smaller than 3 inches in diameter. New well registration requirements will require all wells to register going forward, though "de minimis" wells will need not report extractions.

**AUTHORITY (Agency):**

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency Act (Agency Act) establishes broad authorities for the Agency to manage water within the County of Monterey, including to "carry on technical and other necessary investigations, make measurements, collect data, make analyses, studies, and inspections pertaining to water supply, water rights, control of flood and storm waters, and use of water both within and without the Agency relating to watercourses or streams flooding in or into the Agency." To achieve these goals, the Agency is further authorized to adopt, by ordinance, reasonable regulations to implement the Agency Act, and may specify in any ordinance that a violation of the ordinance is an infraction.

**AUTHORITY (SVB):**

The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency was formed in accordance with the requirements of California Water Code Sec 10723 et seq. SVB is a joint power authority that was formed for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin in accordance with the requirements of California Government Code Sec 6500 et seq. The JPA signatories are all local agencies with water or land use authority that are independently eligible to serve as GSAs: County of Monterey, MCWRA, City of Salinas, City of Soledad, City of Gonzales, City of King, Castroville CSD.

The purpose of SVB is to cooperatively carry out the requirements of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) including but not limited to, serving as the GSA for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin and developing, adopting, and implementing GSPs that achieves groundwater sustainability in the Basin, all through exercise of powers granted to a GSA by SGMA and those provided by Joint Exercise of Powers Act. Pursuant to California Water Code sections 10725.8 and 10927, the SVB has the authority to monitor and report groundwater elevations within its jurisdiction and, with the exception of de-minimis users, require the use of any groundwater extraction facility to be measured by a water-measuring device or methodology satisfactory to the SVB, and require the owner of a groundwater extraction facility to file an annual report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Consider options for GEMS expansion and Well Registration that meet the needs of the Agency, the

Legistar File Number: WRAG 24-033

---

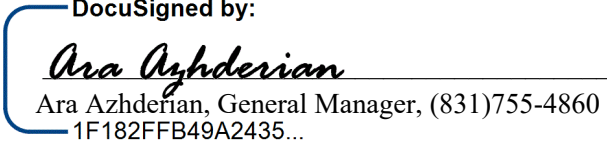
SVB, and are supported by the stakeholder community. Staff of the Agency and the SVB needs to continue making progress in order to meet the milestones and comply with SGMA.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, County of Monterey Environmental Health Bureau

FINANCING:

Costs associated with the various Expansion options has not yet been developed.

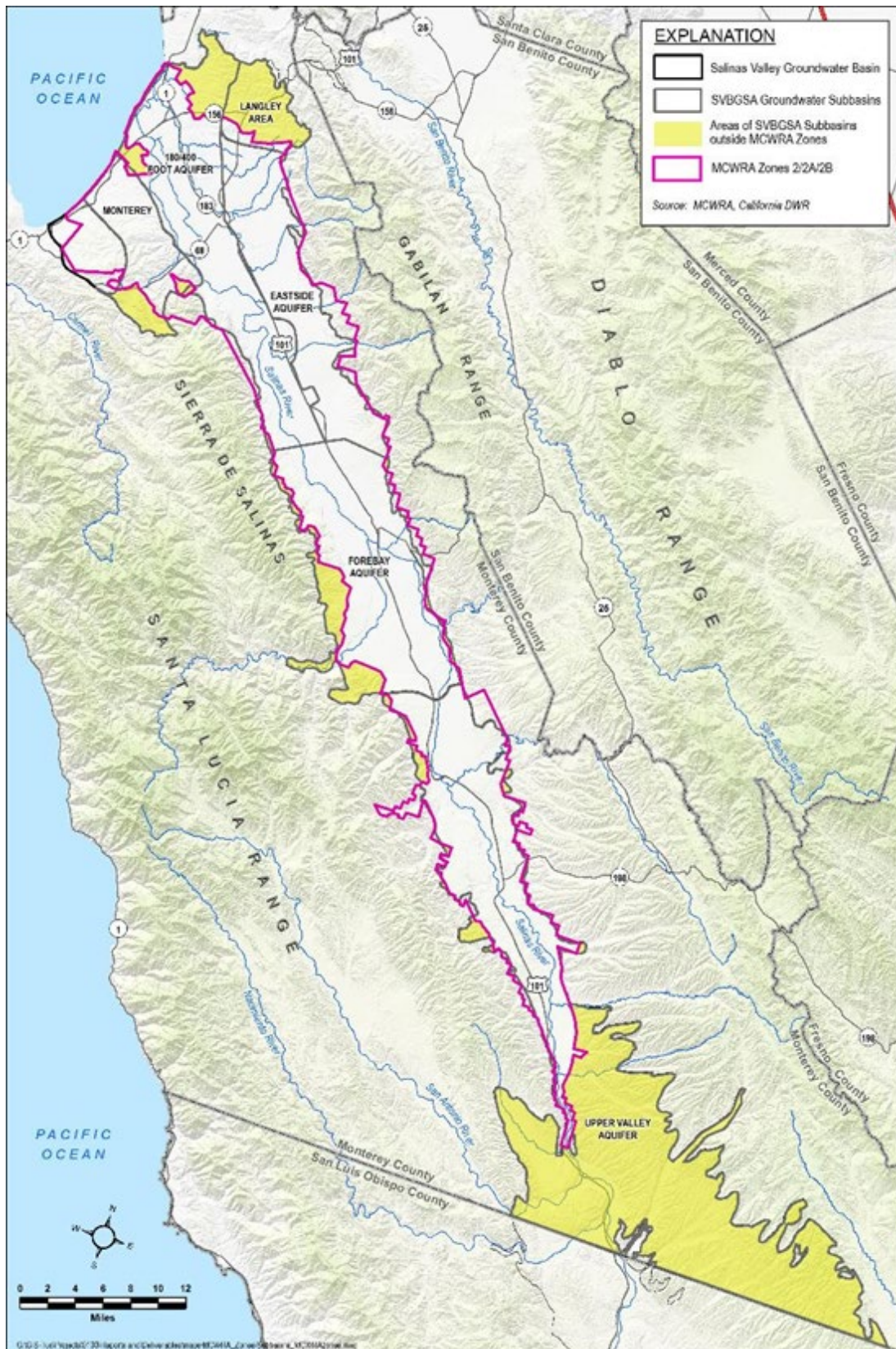
Prepared by:  DocuSigned by:  
Ara Azhderian  
Ara Azhderian, General Manager, (831)755-4860  
1F182FFB49A2435...

Attachments:

1. Exhibit A: Map of Expansion Areas.

## EXHIBIT A

### Areas of groundwater extraction data gaps for the SVBGSA







# County of Monterey

**Item No.**

## Board Report

Board of Supervisors  
Chambers  
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

**Legistar File Number: WRAG 24-033**

**March 19, 2024**

**Introduced:** 2/29/2024

**Current Status:** Agenda Ready

**Version:** 1

**Matter Type:** WR General Agenda

Consider receiving an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Groundwater Extraction Management System and discuss options on how to expand that system consistent with the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act requirements related to collecting and monitoring groundwater data; and provide direction to staff.

### SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) began collecting groundwater extraction data through the Groundwater Extraction Management System (GEMS) program in 1993. All well owners, agricultural and urban, with wells having a discharge pipe diameter of at least 3 inches, in an Agency defined area ("Zones 2, 2A, & 2B"), are required to register and annually self-report extraction data and water conservation information to the Agency through a dedicated web portal. The GEMS program was established by 3 ordinances, 3660, 3717, and 3718, adopted by the Agency. The GEMS program supports two other ordinances, 3851 and 3886, that implement Agricultural and Urban Water Conservation Plans, respectively. The Agency estimates annual self-reporting compliance in the mid-ninety percent range. The Agency aggregates data to monitor changes in regional groundwater usage and track implementation of Best Management Practices and publishes its findings in an annual report.

In 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) became law. The aim of SGMA is to establish a statewide framework to manage groundwater sustainably over the long-term. SGMA directed the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to identify and prioritize groundwater basins throughout the state. High and medium priority (Priority) basins, as defined by DWR, were required, with few exceptions, to establish Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), to develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs), and to manage their basins to sustainability by 2040 or 2042, depending upon Priority, and for 30 years thereafter. DWR identified 5 basins and 8 subbasins within Monterey County. Of these, only 3 are not considered Priority. The remaining basins and subbasins are managed by 6 GSAs: Arroyo Seco, City of Marina, County of Monterey, Marina Coast Water District, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, and the Salinas Valley Basin (SVB).

All the GSAs are dependent upon collecting and monitoring groundwater data related to their respective jurisdictions to inform their GSPs and gauge sustainability in the future. The SVB is responsible for managing 6 subbasins and has 6 approved GSPs it is working towards implementing. Although the Agency's GEMS monitoring data was vital in the preparation of the SVB's GSPs, the 6 subbasins, which were established by DWR, do not align entirely with the Agency's GEMS Zones, which means there are gaps in the monitoring network that need to be filled to inform the first five-year evaluations of the SVB's GSPs in January 2025 and 2027. In addition, the SVB received a "Recommended Corrective Action" from DWR to provide more information on groundwater level impacts to domestic well owners. In order to address the Corrective Action, the SVB requires more precise data about the location and depth of wells.

To this end, the Agency and SVB have been meeting together and with other agencies with responsibility over groundwater, the County of Monterey's Health Department and the Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc., as well as stakeholders, to explore how to ensure effective and efficient expansion of well registration and the GEMS program, the consolidation of existing well data, and the potential to improve existing groundwater monitoring efforts through cooperation and potential consolidation of work. This memorandum provides some insight into those discussions and offers some recommendations for future action.

#### **PROPOSED GEMS EXPANSION:**

The map, attached as Exhibit A, illustrates the areas where expansion of the GEMS program will need to occur to meet the near-future data needs of the SVB. To address gaps in the monitoring network that need to be filled to inform the first five-year evaluations of the SVB's GSPs, wells outside of the existing GEMS program that are not "de minimis" will need to begin collecting groundwater extraction data effective November 1, 2024. The new requirement will trigger an effort to collect, manage, analyze, aggregate, and disseminate relevant information. There are basically three ways for this effort to be undertaken:

- 1) The Agency expands its current GEMS program to include the new areas currently not reporting;
- 2) The Agency transfers its GEMS program to the SVB for all future administration; or
- 3) The SVB develops a GEMS like program to address the areas currently not reporting.

While the focus of this discussion is the expansion of GEMS to meet the near-future informational needs of the SVB, the Agency and SVB are considering merging GEMS expansion and Well Registration into one program. In addition, there may be opportunities in the future to improve existing groundwater monitoring efforts through cooperation and potential consolidation of work such as groundwater quality monitoring and data management. Future efforts by the Agency may include providing services to other GSAs and agencies in the County that rely upon groundwater monitoring and data management to meet their respective regulatory responsibilities.

#### **GROUNDWATER MONITORING OBJECTIVES:**

- Effectively fill data gaps to improve planning and reduce uncertainty.
- Improve monitoring efficiency through communication, coordination, potential consolidation.
- Ensure cost effective, quality data and valued service.
- Promote stakeholder engagement and satisfaction.



- Support, inform, and demonstrate groundwater sustainability by 2040 or 2042.

**WELL REGISTRATION:**

In response to DWR's "Recommended Corrective Action", the SVB is proposing registration of wells not currently in the Agency's data base. Since 1973, pursuant to Monterey County Code Chapter 15.08, as amended, all well construction, repair, and reconstruction permits have been issued by the Health Department, which currently holds records of over 15,000 wells County-wide.

However, these well records can be incomplete or outdated, especially with regard to ownership, location data, and current well status; therefore, a system of registration will need to be developed to complete or update the record of wells within the 6 subbasins. Furthermore, the Agency's prior registration efforts have been focused on wells required to report to GEMS, which has a less expansive monitoring area and does not include wells with discharge pipes smaller than 3 inches in diameter. New well registration requirements will require all wells to register going forward, though "de minimis" wells will need not report extractions.

**AUTHORITY (Agency):**

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency Act (Agency Act) establishes broad authorities for the Agency to manage water within the County of Monterey, including to "carry on technical and other necessary investigations, make measurements, collect data, make analyses, studies, and inspections pertaining to water supply, water rights, control of flood and storm waters, and use of water both within and without the Agency relating to watercourses or streams flooding in or into the Agency." To achieve these goals, the Agency is further authorized to adopt, by ordinance, reasonable regulations to implement the Agency Act, and may specify in any ordinance that a violation of the ordinance is an infraction.

**AUTHORITY (SVB):**

The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency was formed in accordance with the requirements of California Water Code Sec 10723 et seq. SVB is a joint power authority that was formed for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin in accordance with the requirements of California Government Code Sec 6500 et seq. The JPA signatories are all local agencies with water or land use authority that are independently eligible to serve as GSAs: County of Monterey, MCWRA, City of Salinas, City of Soledad, City of Gonzales, City of King, Castroville CSD.

The purpose of SVB is to cooperatively carry out the requirements of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) including but not limited to, serving as the GSA for the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin and developing, adopting, and implementing GSPs that achieves groundwater sustainability in the Basin, all through exercise of powers granted to a GSA by SGMA and those provided by Joint Exercise of Powers Act. Pursuant to California Water Code sections 10725.8 and 10927, the SVB has the authority to monitor and report groundwater elevations within its jurisdiction and, with the exception of de-minimis users, require the use of any groundwater extraction facility to be measured by a water-measuring device or methodology satisfactory to the SVB, and require the owner of a groundwater extraction facility to file an annual report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Consider options for GEMS expansion and Well Registration that meet the needs of the Agency, the

Legistar File Number: WRAG 24-033

---

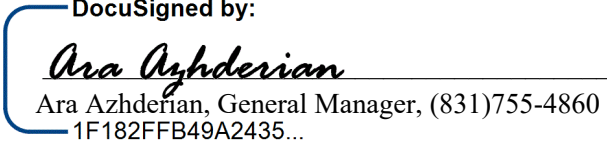
SVB, and are supported by the stakeholder community. Staff of the Agency and the SVB needs to continue making progress in order to meet the milestones and comply with SGMA.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, County of Monterey Environmental Health Bureau

FINANCING:

Costs associated with the various Expansion options has not yet been developed.

Prepared by:  DocuSigned by:  
Ara Azhderian  
Ara Azhderian, General Manager, (831)755-4860  
1F182FFB49A2435...

Attachments:

1. Exhibit A: Map of Expansion Areas.