



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

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Salinas, CA 93901

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Review of the 2025 Annual Groundwater Level Contours and Cumulative Change Chart

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) is responsible for data collection and analysis of groundwater data throughout the Salinas Valley to support the ongoing groundwater level contouring, seawater intrusion mapping, and other programs related to current groundwater conditions. Conditions are assessed throughout the year to better understand how aquifers are responding during different hydrologic conditions as well as the relative groundwater storage fluctuations that occur on an annual basis.

These activities align with Strategic Plan Goals B7, *Use of data and analysis to make informed decisions based on science* and E1, *improve public outreach to increase transparency, communication, education and information about Agency projects and programs*. Activities related to groundwater level monitoring are part of the Groundwater Monitoring Program, which is included in Fund 111 (1501) of the Agency's FY 25/26 Adopted Budget.

OVERVIEW OF 2025 DATA

Annual Groundwater Elevation Survey

In the latter part of each fall, from mid-November through December, the Agency measures groundwater levels in approximately 450 wells throughout the Salinas Valley, from the San Ardo oilfields to the coast. The timing of this sampling survey allows the Agency to capture conditions in the groundwater basin at a time when a relative lull in agricultural pumping causes groundwater level troughs to relax, prior to the influence of seasonal recharge in response to winter/spring precipitation. In this way, the Annual survey of groundwater level data is an assessment of the relative, year-to-year change in groundwater storage throughout the valley.

The 2025 Annual contours for the 180-Foot, East Side Shallow, Forebay and Upper Valley Aquifers are included as Attachment A. Compared to the 2024 survey, there was an increase in groundwater elevations between 0 and 1 foot near the coast, with groundwater elevations remaining approximately at sea level. In the East Side Trough, groundwater elevations north of Salinas increased by 3 to 10 feet. Groundwater elevations in the area south of Salinas to Greenfield changed between -1 to 2 feet, and by 0 to 1 foot from Greenfield to the north of San Lucas. South of San Lucas, groundwater elevations were generally within a foot of where they were last year.

The 2025 Annual contours for the 400-Foot and East Side Deep Aquifers are included as Attachment B. Near the coast, groundwater elevations increased by 0 to 4 feet and are just above sea level at the coast. The East Side trough and groundwater elevations in the area north of Salinas generally increased 4 to 10 feet, with some localized decreases in the southeastern area. Groundwater elevations in the area south of Salinas to Gonzales increased by 1 to 5 feet, with some localized areas experiencing higher increases.

Cumulative Groundwater Level Change Chart

The Cumulative Change Chart is an additional product produced using data from the Annual Groundwater Level Survey. This is a cumulative summary of the average change in groundwater elevations between each annual survey, calculated for each subarea, which helps to give an idea of the groundwater storage changes and trends over time.

For 2025, three of the four subareas showed an increase in groundwater elevations from the previous survey, while the Forebay subarea showed no change. The East Side and Pressure subareas experienced increases of 6.5 feet and 4 feet, respectively, while the Upper Valley subarea increased slightly by 0.3 feet. These trends are similar to last year. The Cumulative Change Chart for 1944-2025 is included as Attachment C with a more detailed summary of the changes in Attachment D.

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Attachments:

1. Attachment A: Annual 2025 Groundwater Elevation Contours, 180-Ft and East Side Shallow, Forebay and Upper Valley Aquifers
2. Attachment B: Annual 2025 Groundwater Elevation Contours, 400-Ft and East Side Deep Aquifers
3. Attachment C: Cumulative Groundwater Level Change Chart, 1944-2025
4. Attachment D: Summary of Annual Groundwater Level Changes, 2024 to 2025