



MID-KINGS RIVER

GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kings County Groundwater Agency Proposes Funding Plan to Exit State Probation and Keep Groundwater Decisions Local

Property owners will consider a funding proposal that supports implementation of California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and will help Kings County groundwater agencies exit State Water Resources Control Board probation

HANFORD, Calif. – The Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) is proposing a funding plan to meet requirements under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and to regain local control over groundwater management.

The proposal includes an annual land-based assessment of up to \$26.84 per acre maximum applicable to property owners within the GSA's boundaries, including residents of Hanford, Armona, Home Garden, Hardwick, and surrounding rural and agricultural lands. In addition to a proposed assessment, the GSA will consider adopting a groundwater pumping fee of up to \$19.24 per acre-foot annually applicable only to groundwater pumpers.

Property owners affected by the funding proposal will receive notices and a ballot in the mail in August to participate in the decision-making process.

Together, the proposed funding package would support ongoing groundwater management activities required under SGMA, a California law passed in 2014 requiring groundwater basins across the state to balance the aquifer.

"This is about keeping groundwater decisions here in Kings County instead of Sacramento," said Chuck Kinney, General Manager of the Mid-Kings River GSA. **"Local landowners understand local conditions better than anyone, but we need the financial resources to prove we can be sustainable locally or decisions will continue to be made for us by the State."**

In 2024, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or State) placed the Tulare Lake Subbasin, inclusive of Mid-Kings River GSA, on probation after determining its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP or Plan) did not provide sufficient evidence that the basin would achieve groundwater sustainability by the required 2040 deadline. The State cited concerns related to groundwater level declines, land subsidence, impacts to drinking water wells, and lack of reliable funding to implement the Plan.

As a result of probation, the State Water Board has taken a more direct role in groundwater management by requiring landowners to report their pumping data and pay fees directly into State bank accounts. **Unless the basin demonstrates the ability to implement its Plan, the State will take further action to develop its own groundwater plan that will consolidate decisions about how groundwater is regulated further away from the community affected by them.**

Since being put on probation, the Mid-Kings River GSA has expanded stakeholder engagement by establishing a Stakeholder Advisory Committee made up of local landowners and has refined its approach to groundwater management. The GSA is developing a framework designed to address the State's concerns while providing landowners with as much flexibility as possible as the basin works toward groundwater sustainability.

“A locally led approach allows us to develop policies that reflect the needs of our landowners, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all decisions,” stated Kinney. **“It also keeps money local, giving the people who fund the agency greater visibility into how those dollars are spent and a stronger voice in shaping groundwater policy.”**

A reliable, ongoing funding source is a critical piece of the effort to keep groundwater management in the hands of the local community. It would provide the local revenue needed to implement the groundwater Plan, meet State requirements, and demonstrate the basin has financial capacity to return groundwater management to local control.

Before the Mid-Kings River GSA can implement the proposed assessment, it must meet the requirements of Proposition 218, a California constitutional process inclusive of completing an Engineer's Report, notifying affected property owners, providing opportunity for property owner input, and holding a public hearing. The agency will also be considering the groundwater pumping fee at a public hearing under the requirements of Proposition 26.

For questions about the proposed land-based assessment, groundwater pumping fee, or landowner participation process, contact the Mid-Kings River GSA at MKRGSA@co.kings.ca.us. The agency will be hosting opportunities for the public to engage and ask questions about the proposal at upcoming public workshops. Additional information, workshop dates, and public hearing information will be available at midkingsrivergsa.org in the coming weeks.

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About Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency

*The Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Mid-Kings River GSA) is the local agency responsible for implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) within approximately 97,300 acres (152 square miles) in the northeastern portion of the Tulare Lake Subbasin in Kings County. The GSA serves the communities of **Hanford, Armona, Home Garden, and Hardwick and surrounding rural and agricultural lands**, working to manage groundwater resources and ensure a reliable water supply for farms, businesses, and residents.*

*Mid-Kings River GSA is governed through a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) between the **County of Kings** and the **City of Hanford**. In coordination with neighboring groundwater sustainability agencies, the GSA develops and implements local programs and policies to achieve sustainable groundwater management by 2040 while maintaining local control over groundwater resources.*

Learn more at www.midkingsrivergsa.org.

