

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

2022 Update of the Alternative Groundwater Sustainability Plan (Alternative GSP) for the Livermore Valley Groundwater Basin

1. Who is responsible for implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) within the Livermore Valley Groundwater Basin? How is SGMA being implemented?

As the exclusive Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Livermore Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin), Zone 7 Water Agency (Zone 7) has exclusive regulatory authority to implement SGMA within the Basin. Under SGMA, GSAs are required to adopt Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) or functionally equivalent Alternative Plans (Alternative GSPs) for their basins and to implement the measures identified in the GSP to achieve and maintain long-term sustainable management of the basin. More information about SGMA, including the GSP regulations, can be found at the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) website

(<https://water.ca.gov/programs/groundwater-management/sgma-groundwater-management>).

2. How can I participate in the 2022 Alternative Groundwater Sustainability Plan (Alternative GSP) Update development and implementation process?

Zone 7 Board and Committee meetings are open to the public and held on the third Wednesday of every month. Board meeting agendas and packets are posted to the Zone 7 website (<http://www.zone7water.com/library/board-meetings>). Additionally, all draft Alternative GSP materials have been uploaded to the Zone 7 website (<https://www.zone7water.com/alternative-groundwater-sustainability-plan-and-updates>) to facilitate public review and comment in advance of the January 1, 2022 submission deadline. Public can make comments on the draft Alternative GSP until December 3, 2021 and will have another opportunity to comment on the final Alternative GSP up to 90 days when DWR posts the document on their website.

3. What types of projects and management actions have been done or are going to occur in my area?

Zone 7 has implemented several projects and management actions that are outlined in the Well Master Plan (2003), Salt Management Plan (2004), Nutrient Management Plan (2015), and 2016 Alternative GSP. Additional proposed projects and management actions

are described in Section 15 of the 2022 Alternative GSP, and generally fall into one of four categories: (1) water supply augmentation, (2) water demand reduction, (3) groundwater quality improvement, and (4) data gap-filling activities.

4. Are pump meters going to be required?

Possibly. SGMA provides GSAs with an array of regulatory and non-regulatory tools that can be used to achieve and monitor groundwater sustainability. The local GSAs will have to decide which tools they will use, and well metering could be one such tool. At this point, Zone is still evaluating the need to require meters for single family residential, domestic, or agricultural wells on case-by-case basis. Municipal groundwater use is typically metered, and other data sources and/or measurement methods may be sufficient to provide adequate information to estimate other groundwater uses. However, Zone 7 reserves its right to require well meters in the future if necessary to maintain ongoing sustainable management of the Basin. SGMA requires that public stakeholders be engaged in the development and implementation of the GSP, which will allow additional opportunity for interested stakeholders to provide input on this issue throughout SGMA implementation.

5. Who is paying for 2022 Alternative GSP development and implementation?

Funding for development of the 2022 Alternative GSP and subsequent plan implementation comes from Zone 7's Fund 100, which is paid by treated water rate payers. The funding from Zone 7's grant project (California Proposition 68 Bond) also pays for a portion of the effort.

6. How will Zone 7 resolve groundwater conflicts?

The Livermore Valley Groundwater Basin is not adjudicated; therefore, the State of California governs water rights and ownership. Zone 7 will work with landowners and the State to provide guidance and local data to resolve groundwater conflicts.

7. Why does my water taste funny/musty?

Generally, surface water, and not groundwater, is more likely to have taste and odor issues. For example, during the warm summer months, algae that produces a musty/muddy odor can grow in the surface waters of the South Bay Aqueduct (SBA), from which the Tri-Valley gets 80% of its water supply. DWR, which controls the SBA, treats the water periodically to minimize the growth of algae. Zone 7 is also in the process of building two ozone facilities that provide additional treatment to reduce the

musty taste caused by algae. Consumer Confidence Report provided information on local drinking water quality can be accessed through the Zone 7 website (<http://www.zone7water.com/36-public/content/120-consumer-confidence-report>).

8. Why is my water so hard? Why are there white spots on my glassware or car after washing?

Groundwater likely contains naturally occurring minerals and groundwater samples are tested on a regular basis to ensure that the mineral levels for consumption are safe and meet water quality standards. Although inconvenient, the white spots are not harmful and just a sign of mineral buildup. In the late 1980s, total dissolved solids (TDS) concentrations increased in the Basin and have been relatively steady since that time. Zone 7 has been proactively addressing TDS concentrations, including implementing demineralization projects, both ongoing (Mocho Wellfield demineralization) and planned (Tri-Valley Recycled Water Project). Ongoing and future planned projects and management actions to improve groundwater quality are described in detail in Section 15 of the 2022 Alternative GSP.

9. Is my water contaminated with Nitrate/Chromium/Boron/PFAS?

Drinking water delivered to homes and businesses is closely monitored. While these constituents of concern are present in the Basin, Zone 7 closely monitors the extent of these constituents and ensures that the concentrations of these constituents do not exceed any drinking water limits when introduced into the water distribution system.

10. Does my well require California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance?

Not currently known. Currently, CEQA compliance for supply wells is discretionary (i.e., at the discretion of the local administering agency); however, the California Supreme Court is currently evaluating whether CEQA compliance should be mandatory for all supply wells throughout the state.

11. Is groundwater pumping causing land subsidence?

No. Zone 7 periodically surveyed the land surface in the vicinity of its municipal wells in the City of Pleasanton between 2002 and 2018 and has been monitoring the land surface over the entire Tri-Valley using InSAR satellite technology since 2016. Zone 7 has not seen any evidence of inelastic land subsidence occurring in the Basin and has assigned sustainability criteria to prevent future land subsidence (see Section 13 of the 2022 Alternative GSP).

12. Why do you need monitoring wells?

Per GSP regulations (CCR § 352.4), monitoring wells are necessary to collect groundwater levels and water quality samples to assess groundwater conditions and to demonstrate ongoing sustainable management of the Basin. Monitoring wells can also be used as observation wells during aquifer testing to help characterize the aquifer system and to inform groundwater model development and water budgets.

13. Will a stormwater management plan be part of the GSP?

No. A stormwater management plan is not included in the Alternative GSP; however, the Alternative GSP includes a summary of general plans in the Basin such as stormwater management master plans and other land use plans (see Section 5). Existing and planned stormwater management practices (e.g., holding ponds) are considered in the Alternative GSP as potential sources of recharge to the Basin, so long as pollutants in stormwater can be mitigated to avoid adverse impacts to groundwater quality.

14. How about groundwater contaminants? Will the GSP address contaminants?

Alameda County Dept of Environmental Health and the Regional Water Quality Control Board have primary responsibilities and authorities to regulate contaminant sites. Zone 7 works collaboratively with these regulatory agencies to track known contaminant sites.

In addition, degraded groundwater quality is one of the six sustainability indicators defined under SGMA. Significant and unreasonable degradation of groundwater quality caused by Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) actions, including the migration of contaminant plumes that impair water supplies, can be considered an undesirable result. The GSP will document existing contaminant sites using publicly available information (e.g., GeoTracker) and will include management actions to avoid the impairment of groundwater supply sources caused by GSA management actions (e.g., pumping and recharge). After completion of the 2022 Alternative GSP, the Zone 7's existing groundwater flow model may be modified to analyze how contaminant movements can affect existing and future groundwater wells. However, remediation of groundwater contaminants is primarily being addressed through programs implemented by other agencies, such as the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

15. Will there be a pumping tax or fee?

Not currently known. SGMA gives Groundwater Sustainability Agencies numerous new tools, authorities, and responsibilities to manage groundwater conditions and implement

the objectives of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. These include the authority to conduct investigations, determine the sustainable yield of a groundwater basin, measure and limit extraction, impose fees for groundwater management, and enforce the terms of a GSP. Zone 7 will evaluate any future need to implement fees after the 2022 Alternative GSP is complete based on an analysis of annual costs necessary to sustainably manage the Basin.

16. Do you consider global warming/climate change in the Alternative GSP? How about sea level rise?

Yes. The 2022 Alternative GSP includes a projected water budget that evaluates future water supply reliability under climate change (see Section 9). Specifically, the projected water budget was informed by DWR's 2019 State Water Project (SWP) Delivery Capability Report, which evaluated impacts to SWP supplies under 2035 (Central Tendency) climate conditions and a 45-centimeter sea level rise scenario. The projected water budget also includes a 5-year drought assessment and evaluates the impacts of climate change on Zone 7's local water supplies and water demand and use patterns.

17. Will the GSP override overlying rights for surface water or groundwater?

No. Per California Water Code (CWC) §10720.5, SGMA does not "determine or alter surface water rights or groundwater rights under common law or any provision of law that determines or grants surface water rights." The GSP will not override or replace existing groundwater rights; however, sustainable management criteria defined in the Alternative GSP will be applicable to all beneficial users in the Basin, including well owners.

18. How will management decisions be made? What if someone doesn't agree with the decisions?

The Zone 7 Board of Directors has the authority to make final decisions on SGMA compliance. These decisions will be made during public meetings, where members of the public have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The comment period for the draft Alternative Groundwater Sustainability Plan (Alternative GSP) concluded on December 3, 2021 and the public will have another opportunity to comment on the final Alternative GSP up to 75 days when DWR posts the document on their website.

19. Can the GSA require local land use agencies to incorporate management actions (e.g., stormwater recharge) identified in the GSP into their land use planning documents (e.g., specific plans or general plans)?

No. GSAs are required to coordinate with land use planning agencies to assess activities that could potentially cause undesirable results related to groundwater quality, quantity, or any of the other sustainability indicators and, therefore, could lead to unsustainable groundwater conditions. However, only the local land use agencies have the authority to incorporate management actions into their land use planning documents.