

Editorial: Time for Calif. to manage groundwater

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This has to be the year that California finally starts to regulate groundwater. It has to be.

Not since the drought of 1977 have water resources been in such dire straits. To cope, the state is taking drastic steps when it comes to surface water. Last week, the State Water Resources Control Board ordered more than 4,200 "junior" water rights holders in the Sacramento and San Joaquin watersheds to stop pumping water from streams and warned that, if things got worse, "senior" water rights holders might see restrictions as well.

This move will only put more pressure on farmers and water districts to turn to groundwater – a practice that has already had dramatic, and disturbing, results.

Wells have run dry; overdrafting of groundwater has caused the land to sink – up to 28 feet in some places in the Valley; and aquifers aren't getting recharged.

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