

# Calif. works to implement Groundwater Management Act

By Sean Hood, Water Deeply

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires each local Groundwater Sustainability Agency to develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan for its basin and the first plans for critically overdrafted basins are due to be completed by January 31, 2020. Each plan must be designed to achieve safe yield within 20 years.

This new regime of groundwater management is a monumental change in California water law. Overlying land owners have long enjoyed the right to extract groundwater for beneficial use on their land, and the agricultural, municipal, mining and industrial sectors rely heavily on groundwater resources to meet their water needs. It is difficult to fathom the collective investment that California businesses have made in reliance on the right to make beneficial use of groundwater.

In response to SGMA's passage, public and private stakeholders have scurried to identify new water sources to augment existing supplies. However, the Department of Water Resources' recently issued Water Available for Replenishment report seems to confirm longstanding conventional wisdom: There is no water supply panacea for solving California's groundwater management crisis.

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