

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN
MOUND BASIN
(4-004.03) VENTURA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

**SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT
(SGMA) PROGRAM**

**PREPARED BY THE MOUND BASIN GROUNDWATER
SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY
UPDATED AND ADOPTED OCTOBER 21, 2021**

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Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 PURPOSE	3
3 GENERAL INFORMATION.....	4
3.1 Clerk of the Board	4
3.2 Executive Director	4
4 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	4
4.1 Public Notices.....	4
4.2 Stakeholder Identification	5
4.3 Integrated Regional Water Management.....	7
4.4 Public Hearings/Meetings	7
4.4.1 Planning Commission	7
4.4.2 Public Meetings.....	7
4.4.3 Local Agency Meetings.....	7
4.5 Direct Mailings/Email	8
4.6 Newsletters/Columns.....	8
4.7 MBGSA Website	8
4.8 Database	8
4.9 Tribal Engagement	8
4.10 Additional Opportunities.....	8
5 EVALUATION	8
5.1 Attendance/Participation.....	9
5.2 Polling.....	9
5.3 Adherence to Schedule	9
5.4 Plan Update.....	9
APPENDIX A.....	10
TABLE 1	10
FIGURE 1	11

1 INTRODUCTION

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Engagement Plan) summarizes the strategies to educate and involve stakeholders (those individuals and representatives of organizations who have a direct stake in the outcome of the planning process) and other interested parties in the preparation and implementation of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the Mound Basin – Department of Water Resources (DWR) Basin No. 4-004.03 (Figure 1). This GSP will be prepared in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which was signed by Governor Brown in September 2014 and became effective January 1, 2015.

SGMA provides a framework to regulate groundwater for the first time in California’s history. SGMA’s intent is to strengthen local management of specified groundwater basins that are most critical to the state’s water needs by regulating groundwater and land use management activities. SGMA also aims to preserve the jurisdictional authorities of cities, counties and water agencies within groundwater basins while protecting existing surface water and groundwater rights.

The Mound Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MBGSA or Agency), a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), was formed by three local agencies: County of Ventura (County), City of San Buenaventura (City), and United Water Conservation District (UWCD). There was extensive stakeholder engagement during that process. The governing board consists of one representative from each of those agencies plus two stakeholder directors representing environmental and agricultural interests. The GSA is responsible for developing a GSP for the Mound Basin to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. Additionally, SGMA requires and directs GSAs to encourage active involvement of stakeholders and interested parties in the process to sustainability manage the basin.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the outreach activities described in this Engagement Plan is to encourage the active involvement of individual stakeholders and stakeholder organizations, and other interested parties in the development and implementation of the GSP for the Mound Basin. This GSP is required under SGMA to be completed no later than January 31, 2022. The projects and management actions necessary to implement the GSP could affect individuals and groups who have a stake in ensuring the basin is sustainably managed as required by SGMA.

In an effort to understand and involve stakeholders and their interests in the decision- making and activities, the MBGSA has prepared this Engagement Plan to encourage broad, enduring and productive involvement during the GSP development and implementation phases. This Engagement Plan will assist the MBGSA in providing timely information to stakeholders and receive input from interested parties during GSP development. This Engagement Plan will identify stakeholders who have an interest in groundwater in the Mound Basin, and recommend outreach, education, and communication strategies for engaging those stakeholders during the development and implementation of the GSP. The plan also includes an approach for evaluating the overall success of stakeholder engagement and education of both stakeholders and the public. In consideration of the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater in the basin, this Engagement Plan has been developed pursuant to California Water Code Section 10723.2. Additionally, this Engagement Plan has been developed to encourage the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the Mound Basin, in accordance with GSP Regulations Section 354.10.

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

The following personnel will serve as contacts for the public during GSA formation and GSP preparation.

3.1 Clerk of the Board

For general information about MBGSA and the GSP status, contact:

Jackie Lozano, Clerk of the Board, (805) 525-4431, email jackiel@unitedwater.org.

3.2 Executive Director

MBGSA's Executive Director will be available for stakeholders and the public seeking specific detailed information about the GSP, contact:

Bryan Bondy, Executive Director, (805) 212-0484, email bryan@bondygroundwater.com.

4 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

MBGSA will implement the following outreach activities to maximize stakeholder involvement during the development of the GSP and throughout SGMA implementation.

4.1 Public Notices

To ensure that the general public is apprised of local activities and allow stakeholders to access information, SGMA specifies several public notice requirements for GSAs. Refer to Table 1 in Appendix A for a summary of statutory requirements. Three sections of the California Water Code require public notice before establishing a GSA, adopting (or amending) a GSP, or imposing or increasing fees:

- Section 10723(b). "Before electing to be a groundwater sustainability agency, and after publication of notice pursuant to Section 6066 of the Government Code, the local agency or agencies shall hold a public hearing in the county or counties overlying the basin." In accordance with California Water Code Section 10723(b), the following was noticed to the public: On June 22, 2017, the MBGSA held a public hearing to consider becoming a GSA for the Mound Basin. The public hearing was noticed in the *Ventura County Star* in accordance with Government Code Section 6066.
- Section 10728.4. "A groundwater sustainability agency may adopt or amend a groundwater sustainability plan after a public hearing, held at least 90 days after providing notice to a city or county within the area of the proposed plan or amendment. ..."
- Section 10730(b)(1). "Prior to imposing or increasing a fee, a groundwater sustainability agency shall hold at least one public meeting, at which oral or written presentations may be made as part of the meeting....(3) At least 10 days prior to the meeting, the groundwater sustainability agency shall make available to the public data upon which the proposed fee is based." In accordance with California Water Code Section 10730(b)(1), the following was noticed to the public: On August 23, 2018, the MBGSA held a public hearing to consider establishing a groundwater extraction fee. The public hearing was noticed in the *Ventura County Star* in accordance with Government Code Section 6066 and data upon which the fee is based was posted to the MBGSA website and mailed to all entities on the interested parties list prior to the meeting.
- Future noticing will occur as required by SGMA.

4.2 Stakeholder Identification

Pursuant to Water Code Sections 10723.8(a)(4) and 10723.2, the Agency will consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater, as well as those responsible for implementing a GSP.

MBGSA has engaged stakeholders in the development of the Agency to serve as the GSA. For example, during development of the joint powers authority agreement (“JPA Agreement”) forming the Agency, the signatory members held numerous public meetings to discuss important terms to be included in the JPA Agreement. The signatory members also held multiple stakeholder outreach meetings to engage and educate stakeholders within the Mound Basin about the SGMA requirements the JPA Agreement, and the Agency’s intention to form a GSA for the Mound Basin. In addition to the Agency’s public outreach efforts, it also designated two seats on its five-seat Board of Directors for Stakeholder Directors: one seat is reserved for an Agricultural Stakeholder Director and one seat is reserved for an Environmental Stakeholder Director.

The Agency plans to continue its practice of seeking broad stakeholder engagement in management of the Mound Basin’s groundwater resources as it undertakes the process to develop and implement the Plan for the Mound Basin over the next several years.

SGMA mandates that a GSA establish and maintain a list of persons interested in receiving notices regarding plan preparation, meeting announcements, and availability of draft plans, maps, and other relevant documents. The MBGSA compiled a list of interested persons for this purpose that will be maintained throughout the GSA formation and GSP development phases. An initial list of stakeholders and interested parties include, but are not limited to, the following:

a) Holders of overlying groundwater rights, including:

- 1) Agricultural well owners - There are agricultural users of groundwater operating on land overlying the Basin. To account for these users’ interests, the Agency designated a seat on its five-member governing board to be filled by an Agricultural Stakeholder Director. The Agricultural Stakeholder Director will be appointed from nominations received by the Mound Basin Ag Water Group (MBAWG) or the Ventura County Farm Bureau. The Agricultural Stakeholder Director is responsible for engaging the Basin’s agricultural users of groundwater and representing their interests before the Agency.
- 2) Domestic well owners - There are no domestic wells overlying the Basin. ~~It is believed that the majority of these domestic well owners are de minimus users, as defined by SGMA. The Agency anticipates that the Plan will address the collective interests of domestic users of groundwater wells and plans to engage in outreach to domestic well owners throughout the development of the Plan through inviting their participation in the Agency’s public meetings.~~
- 3) Industrial well owners - Two industrial wells have been identified in the basin: Saticoy Lemon Association (lemon packing facility cooperative) and Ivy Lawn Cemetery Association. Given Saticoy Lemon Association’s ties to agriculture, the Agricultural Stakeholder Director will be responsible for engaging this stakeholder. The Executive Director will be responsible for engaging Ivy Lawn Memorial.
- 4) Other - The County of Ventura operates a well for landscape irrigation at the County Government Center. The County is represented on the Agency’s Board of Directors.

- b) Municipal Well Operators - The Agency is a joint powers authority created by three local public agencies. One of the Agency’s signatory members—the City of San Buenaventura operates municipal wells within the Basin and is represented on the Agency’s Board of Directors.
- c) Public water systems
- 1) Ventura Water (City of San Buenaventura)
The City of San Buenaventura is a signatory member to the JPA Agreement forming the Agency and is represented on the Agency’s Board of Directors.
- d) Local land use planning agencies - Both the County of Ventura (“County”) and the City of San Buenaventura have land use planning authority on land overlying the Basin. Both are signatory members to the JPA Agreement forming the Agency and are represented on the Agency’s Board of Directors.
- e) Environmental - There are several environmental organizations dedicated to preserving and maintaining environmental values operating within the boundaries of the Basin. To account for these users’ interests, the Agency designated a seat on its five-member governing board to be filled by an Environmental Stakeholder Director. The Environmental Stakeholder Director will be appointed from nominations received from local environmental nonprofit organizations supportive of the Basin’s groundwater sustainability. The Environmental Stakeholder Director is responsible for engaging stakeholders within the Basin and representing environmental interests before the Agency.
- f) Surface Water Users ~~if there is a hydrologic connection between surface and groundwater. Not applicable. There are no permitted or licenses surface water diversions within the Basin.~~
- g) The federal government - No land overlying the Mound Basin is managed by the Federal Government.
- h) California Native American Tribes ~~-- There are no tribal trust lands located within the Basin. However, The the Mound Basin lies within the traditional tribal territory of the Chumash. The~~ Agency will ensure that a Chumash representative ~~of overlying California Native American tribes~~ is on the Agency’s interested parties list, in order to receive notices of all Agency meetings and other stakeholder involvement opportunities.
- i) Disadvantaged communities ~~-, including, but not limited to, There are no disadvantaged communities those~~ served by private domestic wells or small community water systems located within the Basin. The City of San Buenaventura (City) serves the areas indicated by DWR as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and Severely Disadvantaged Communities (SDACs). Outreach to DAC’s shall be accomplished via bill stuffers or other means through the City’s water department (Ventura Water), including materials provided in Spanish.
- j) Entities listed in Section 10927 that are monitoring and reporting groundwater elevations in all or a part of a groundwater basin managed by the groundwater sustainability agency. The County is the designated California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (“CASGEM”) entity for the Basin. The County is a signatory member to the JPA Agreement forming the Agency and represented on the Agency’s Board of Directors.

- k) Casitas Municipal Water District (CMWD) - CMWD is a wholesale water agency that provides a portion of the potable water supplied by Ventura Water within the Basin. CMWD does not operate any facilities in the Basin. CMWD's service area overlaps with a western portion of the Basin.

MBGSA intends to work cooperatively with partner agencies, stakeholders, and interested parties to develop and implement the GSP for the Mound Basin and will maintain a list of stakeholders and interested parties to be included in the formation of the GSP.

A person can be added to the interested parties list by submitting an inquiry via the MBGSA website: <http://moundbasingsa.org/contact-us/> or by contacting the Clerk of the Board.

4.3 Integrated Regional Water Management

The Watershed Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) prepared an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan in 2006 and has been updated multiple times since. The Santa Clara River Watershed Committee, a sub organization of WCVC, is actively involved in the community on a wide range of issues affecting the watershed, including the Mound Basin. Since this group provides a forum for the discussion of issues that are important to the community, it is important for this group to be well informed throughout GSP development. Representatives from the MBGSA attend Council meetings and provide up-to-date information and hear feedback from Council members.

4.4 Public Hearings/Meetings

4.4.1 Planning Commission

Periodic updates on SGMA implementation will be provided to the City of Ventura Planning Commission and the Ventura County Planning Commission and the public will be invited to listen.

4.4.2 Public Meetings

Comprehensive stakeholder involvement will include regularly scheduled public meetings to aid in developing and implementing the GSP. Logical subdivisions of the GSP will be the subject of public meetings to receive comments prior to approval. In addition to signing up to receive information about GSP development at the MBGSA webpage, interested parties may participate in the development and implementation of the GSP by attending and participating in public meetings (Water Code Section 10727.8(a)). Public meetings are generally held at Ventura City Hall, 501 Poli Street, Ventura, California 93001. Future public meetings will generally be held at this location, although some meetings may be moved to other locations depending on meeting room availability. Each meeting will have a scheduled time for public comments. While the California Governor's Executive Stay at Home Order and the County of Ventura Health Officer Declared Local Health Emergency and Be Well at Home Order remain in effect, meetings will be held on-line. When appropriate, on-line meetings will include polling features to facilitate stakeholder input. Information about upcoming meetings can be found on the MBGSA website: <http://moundbasingsa.org>.

4.4.3 Local Agency Meetings

To ensure their constituency is kept informed of the progress of GSP development and implementation, the Directors representing MBGSA member agencies, which consist of County of Ventura, City of San Buenaventura, and United Water Conservation District have committed to providing periodic updates during their regularly scheduled board meetings. These meetings offer a chance for the public to receive information and provide comment. Information about upcoming meetings is provided on the following agency websites, or by the means each agency currently meets its legal noticing requirements, whichever is appropriate:

<http://cityofventura.ca.gov>

<http://ventura.org> (Board of Supervisors)

<https://www.unitedwater.org/>

4.5 Direct Mailings/Email

Public meetings and project information will be disseminated through email, from the Agency office, or direct mail under special circumstances if requested. This communication will provide information for the community, public agencies, and other interested persons/organizations about milestones, meetings, and the progress of GSP development. Property owners with groundwater wells within the basin are notified via email and/or direct mailings about the establishment of an interested persons list and given the opportunity to receive future notices.

4.6 Newsletters/Columns

Periodic GSP newsletters will be developed and sent to the interested parties and posted on the website. Periodic updates may be provided to the *Ventura County Star* newspapers to advise, educate, and inform the public on SGMA implementation.

4.7 MBGSA Website

Regular updates on the GSP development and implementation will be provided on the MBGSA website. This information will include maps, timelines, frequently asked questions, groundwater information, and schedules/agenda of upcoming meetings and milestones. This information will be accessible on the MBGSA website: <http://moundbasingsa.org>. MBGSA staff will update the website regularly and invite users to request information or be added to the interested persons list. In addition, general information about SGMA and groundwater conditions will be available on UWCD's website.

4.8 Database

To distribute information about GSP development, an email list has been compiled into a database of interested persons and stakeholders. The database will be updated regularly to add names of attendees at public meetings along with those requesting information via email or the through the MBGSA website.

4.9 Tribal Engagement

~~There are no tribal trust lands located within the Basin. However, the Mound Basin lies within the traditional tribal territory of the Portions of the Barbareno-Ventureno Band of Chumash are located within the Mound Basin. Although the tribe is not subject to the requirements of SGMA, any federally recognized Indian tribe may voluntarily participate with GSAs in the preparation or administration of a GSP.~~ MBGSA will inform the Tribal Elder, Julie Tumamait, and Tribal representative Walter Viar throughout the GSP development process and GSP implementation.

4.10 Additional Opportunities

Additional opportunities for stakeholder participation (e.g., an advisory committee) will be considered as GSP development progresses and as stakeholder interests evolve.

5 EVALUATION

To determine the level of success of the Engagement Plan, the MBGSA will implement the following measures:

5.1 Attendance/Participation

A record of those attending public meetings will be maintained throughout the GSP development process. MBGSA will utilize sign-in sheets and request feedback from attendees to determine adequacy of public education and productive engagement in the GSP development and implementation process. Meeting minutes will also be prepared and will be provided on the MBGSA website once approved.

5.2 Polling

Polls will be used to determine how stakeholders are receiving notices about GSP status and meetings and if any stakeholder categories require additional outreach. Polls will also be used to determine topics of most interest and the level of information that is desired for specific topics. Outreach methods will be tailored based on polling response.

5.3 Adherence to Schedule

Public participation in developing sustainable management criteria and projects and management actions for inclusion in the GSP is instrumental to the success of the GSP. Keeping these tasks on schedule will be an important indicator of stakeholder involvement. GSP development updates will be provided at each Regular Board of Directors meeting. A GSP development schedule will be developed and updated monthly.

5.4 Plan Update

This Plan will be updated at least annually.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE 1

<i>During GSA Formation:</i>	
“Before electing to be a groundwater sustainability agency... the local agency or agencies shall hold a public hearing.”	Water Code Sec. 10723 (b)
“A list of interested parties [shall be] developed [along with] an explanation of how their interests will be considered.”	Water Code Sec. 10723.8.(a)(4)
<i>During GSP Development and Implementation:</i>	
“A groundwater sustainability agency may adopt or amend a groundwater sustainability plan after a public hearing.”	Water Code Sec. 10728.4
“Prior to imposing or increasing a fee, a groundwater sustainability agency shall hold at least one public meeting.”	Water Code Sec. 10730(b)(1)
“The groundwater sustainability agency shall establish and maintain a list of persons interested in receiving notices regarding plan preparation, meeting announcements, and availability of draft plans, maps, and other relevant documents.”	Water Code Sec. 10723.4
“Any federally recognized Indian Tribe... may voluntarily agree to participate in the preparation or administration of a groundwater sustainability plan or groundwater management plan... A participating Tribe shall be eligible to participate fully in planning, financing, and management under this part.”	Water Code Sec. 10720.3(c)
“The groundwater sustainability agency shall make available to the public and the department a written statement describing the manner in which interested parties may participate in the development and implementation of the groundwater sustainability plan.”	Water Code Sec. 10727.8(a)
<i>Throughout SGMA Implementation:</i>	
“The groundwater sustainability agency shall consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater.”	Water Code Sec. 10723.2
“The groundwater sustainability agency shall encourage the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the groundwater basin.”	Water Code Sec. 10727.8(a)

FIGURE 1

