

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN
BORREGO VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN (7-24)
SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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

Prepared for



Prepared by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 PURPOSE.....	1
3 GENERAL INFORMATION	2
3.1 SGMA Coordinator.....	2
3.2 Media Contact.....	2
4 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	2
4.1 Public Notices	2
4.2 Stakeholder Identification.....	4
4.3 Town Hall Meetings	5
4.4 Planning Group	5
4.5 Public Hearings/Meetings.....	5
4.5.1 Planning Commission.....	5
4.5.2 District Board Hearings and Meetings	6
4.5.3 County Board of Supervisors Hearings	6
4.6 Direct Mailings/Email.....	6
4.7 Newsletters/Columns	6
4.8 SGMA Website.....	7
4.9 Database.....	7
4.10 Advisory Committee.....	7
5 EVALUATION.....	8
5.1 Attendance/Participation.....	8
5.2 Adherence to Schedule	8
6 REFERENCES	9

TABLE

1	Summary of Statutory Requirements for Stakeholder Engagement in SGMA
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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 of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin (Borrego Basin). 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. The intent of SGMA 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 County of San Diego (County) and Borrego Water District (the District) elected to become a Multi-Agency Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Borrego Basin – Department of Water Resources (DWR) Basin No. 7-24. The primary purpose of a GSA under SGMA is to develop a GSP to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. Additionally, SGMA requires and directs GSAs to involve stakeholders and interested parties in the process to regulate groundwater.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the outreach activities described in this Engagement Plan is to provide individual stakeholders and stakeholder organizations, and other interested parties an opportunity to be involved in the development and evaluation of the GSP for the Borrego Basin. As a Multi-Agency GSA, the County and the District intend to develop and implement a basin-specific GSP for the Borrego Basin. This GSP is required under SGMA to be completed by no later than January 31, 2020. The projects and management actions necessary to implement the GSP could affect numerous 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 concerns in the decision-making and activities of the GSA, the County and the District have prepared this Engagement Plan to achieve broad, enduring and productive involvement during the GSP development and implementation phases. This Engagement Plan will assist the County and the District 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 Borrego 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 general 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.

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

The following personnel at the County will serve as contacts for the public during preparation of the GSP.

3.1 SGMA Coordinator

The County's SGMA Coordinator will serve as the central contact for stakeholders and the public. For information on the GSP, contact:

Jim Bennett, Groundwater Geologist
Planning & Development Services
County of San Diego
PDS.groundwater@sdcounty.ca.gov
(858) 694-3820

3.2 Media Contact

Media inquiries should be addressed to:

Alex Bell, Group Communications Officer
Land Use and Environment Group
County of San Diego
Alex.Bell@sdcounty.ca.gov
(619) 531-5410

4 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The County and the District 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 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.
- 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 10723(b), the following was noticed to the public:

- On October 20, 2015, the District held a public hearing to consider becoming a GSA for the portion of the Borrego Basin within their boundaries. The District noticed the hearing in both the bi-weekly Borrego Sun and the daily San Diego Union Tribune newspapers.
- On January 6, 2016, the County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to consider becoming a GSA over the portion of the Borrego Basin within San Diego County. The public hearing was noticed in the Daily Transcript in accordance with Government Code Section 6066.
- On September 20, 2016, the District held a public hearing to consider adopting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the District and the County. The District noticed the hearing in both the bi-weekly Borrego Sun and the daily San Diego Union Tribune newspapers.
- On October 19, 2016, the County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to also consider adopting a MOU between the District and the County. The public hearing was noticed in the Daily Transcript in accordance with Government Code Section 6066.

Future noticing will occur as required by SGMA.

4.2 Stakeholder Identification

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 County and the District compiled a list of interested persons wishing to receive information 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 users.
 - 2) Domestic well owners.
 - 3) Borrego Water District – From the purchase of private water companies
- b) Municipal well operators – No incorporated cities within the GSA boundary.
- c) Public water systems – Borrego Water District.
- d) Local land use planning agencies – County of San Diego and Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group.
- e) Environmental users of groundwater – Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.
- f) Surface water users, if there is a hydrologic connection between surface and groundwater bodies – No hydrologic connection.
- g) The federal government, including, but not limited to, the military and managers of federal lands – None.
- h) California Native American tribes – None.
- i) Disadvantaged communities, including, but not limited to, those served by private domestic wells or small community water systems – Borrego Water District ratepayers and domestic well owners.
- 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 District and County have filed and maintain California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) monitoring data with the DWR.

The County intends to work cooperatively with stakeholders and interested parties to develop and implement the GSP for the Borrego Basin and will maintain a list of stakeholders and interested parties to be included in the formation of the GSP.

4.3 Town Hall Meetings

The District hosts an annual town hall meeting for the public each March. The County and the District will continue outreach efforts to identify stakeholders and interested parties and conduct a stakeholder assessment during the town hall meeting on March 29, 2017. Some key questions for the stakeholder assessment will be:

- What are their interests, concerns, and priorities?
- What is the best way to communicate with them?
- How involved would they like to be in development of the GSP?
- What information would be helpful for engagement of stakeholders and interested parties to better participate in the development and/or implementation of the GSP?

4.4 Planning Group

The Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group is actively involved in the community on matters dealing with planning and land use in Borrego Valley. Since this group provides a forum for the discussion of land use planning that directly impacts GSP issues that are important to the community, it is important for this group to be well informed throughout GSP development. County/District team members will attend these meetings at key milestones to provide up-to-date information and hear feedback from group members.

4.5 Public Hearings/Meetings

4.5.1 Planning Commission

On April 22, 2016, County staff presented an informational item about SGMA to the County's Planning Commission. The presentation served to inform the commission and community on SGMA and what impacts the legislation has on San Diego County. Periodic updates on SGMA implementation will be provided to the commission and the public will be invited to listen. No action will be taken during these meetings. Planning Commission hearings can be viewed online at: http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/PC/sop/PCHearing_stream.html.

4.5.2 District Board Hearings and Meetings

On October 20, 2015, the Board of Directors for the District held a public hearing and voted to become a GSA for the portion of the Borrego Basin within their boundaries. On September 20, 2016, the District held a public hearing and adopted a MOU between the District and the County, which serves to memorialize each agency's role and responsibilities for developing a GSP. SGMA has been, and will continue to be, an agenda item at the regular meetings of the District's Board of Directors. These meetings are held every third Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at the District office, 806 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs, CA. Each meeting has a scheduled time for public comments. Information about upcoming meetings can be found on the District's website (<http://www.borregowd.org/>). Additionally, on most third Tuesdays of each month, an informal workshop is held for the public to discuss SGMA and GSP-related issues.

4.5.3 County Board of Supervisors Hearings

On January 6, 2016, the County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing and voted to become a GSA over the portion of the Borrego Basin within San Diego County. On October 19, 2016, the County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to also consider adopting a MOU between the District and the County. Additional Board of Supervisors Hearings will be scheduled at key stages during SGMA implementation, including adoption of the GSP for Borrego Basin. Hearings can be viewed online at: <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/general/board-meeting-video.html>.

4.6 Direct Mailings/Email

Advisory committee meetings and project information will be disseminated through email. This communication will provide information for the Borrego Valley 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 will be notified via email and/or direct mailings about the establishment of an interested persons list and given the opportunity to receive future notices.

4.7 Newsletters/Columns

Recurring updates in the *Borrego Sun* newspaper and County Planning & Development Services (PDS) newsletter, *eBlast*, will be provided to advise, educate, and inform the public on SGMA implementation in Borrego Valley. The latest County PDS *eBlast* can be found online at <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/>.

4.8 SGMA Website

A variety of information about SGMA and groundwater conditions will be produced by the County and the District. 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 County's SGMA webpage located at: <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/SGMA.html>. County staff will update the website regularly and invite users to request information or be added to the interested persons list. Additionally, the District maintains a repository of groundwater, economic, and GSP-related technical studies on its website at: http://www.borregowd.org/Groundwater_Management_EY7H.php.

4.9 Database

To distribute information about GSP development, a mailing list and 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 sponsor group or town hall meetings along with those requesting information via email or through the SGMA website.

4.10 Advisory Committee

Comprehensive stakeholder involvement will include the establishment of an Advisory Committee to aid in developing and implementing the GSP. In addition to signing up to receive information about GSP development at the County's SGMA webpage, interested parties may participate in the development and implementation of the GSP by attending public Advisory Committee meetings in Borrego Springs, in accordance with Water Code Section 10727.8(a). The Multi-Agency GSA approved nine-member Borrego Valley Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) comprises the following members:

- Borrego Water Coalition - 1 agricultural member; 1 recreation member; 1 independent pumper; 1 at large member,
- 1 member Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group,
- 1 member Borrego Valley Stewardship Council,
- 1 member District representative for ratepayers/property owners,
- 1 member San Diego County Farm Bureau, and
- 1 member California State Parks, Colorado Desert Region.

The Borrego Water Coalition represents a broad cross-section of groundwater pumpers and users of the Borrego Basin who together represent approximately 80% of annual withdrawals from the Borrego Basin. The Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group is the officially appointed representative body charged with addressing land use issues to the County. The Borrego Valley Stewardship Council represents community groups associated with the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and geotourism economic

development initiative. The District represents over 2,000 ratepayers/property owners in Borrego Springs. Through the Agricultural Alliance for Water and Resource Education (AAWARE), the San Diego County Farm Bureau represents farming interests in Borrego Springs who, at present, collectively use approximately 70% of annual withdrawals from the Borrego Basin. The California State Parks represent the approximately 600,000 acre Anza-Borrego Desert State Park that surrounds Borrego Springs.

5 EVALUATION

To determine the level of success of the Engagement Plan, the County and the District will implement the following measures:

5.1 Attendance/Participation

A record of those attending public and Advisory Committee meetings will be maintained throughout the GSP development process. The County and the District 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 SGMA website once approved.

5.2 Adherence to Schedule

Public participation in developing 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. Early identification of milestones and due dates will be important in ensuring a commitment from Advisory Committee members.

6 REFERENCES

Community Water Center. 2015. *Collaborating for Success: Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation*. July.

TABLE

Table 1. Summary of Statutory Requirements for Stakeholder Engagement in SGMA¹

<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)

¹ Source: Community Water Center. *Collaborating for Success: Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation*. July 2015.