



EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2022

CONTACT:

Kris Balaji, SJC Public Works Director
(916) 799-6779 / kbalaji@sjgov.org

San Joaquin County and Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority Announce Award of Multi-Million Dollar State Grant to Provide Foundation for Groundwater Sustainability in the Region

(STOCKTON) As severe drought conditions persist in California, news of a \$7.6 million state grant for the [Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority](#) (ESJGWA) to implement its mandated Groundwater Sustainability Plan couldn't come at a better time. The ESJGWA, which includes 16 regional Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), will soon benefit from the grant funding to help this overdrafted basin start down the path to sustainability. Overdraft is when more water is pumped from the groundwater basin on average than is returned to the basin via natural and artificial groundwater recharge.

A total of \$150 million in funding is being awarded by the California Department of Water Resources to statewide regional groundwater agencies through the [Sustainable Groundwater Management \(SGM\) Grant Program](#). The funding will go toward projects focused on water efficiency, groundwater recharge, feasibility studies for alternative water supplies, and the installation of monitoring wells. The grant funding is made possible by a \$171 million investment from the Budget Act of 2021 and will support other benefits such as improving drinking water quality and restoring habitat.

"The ultimate goal of this initial \$7.6 million is to promote projects that will replace groundwater use as well as recharge groundwater supplies," said San Joaquin County Public Works Department Director, Kris Balaji. "This will not only benefit the region's local economy, reduce overdraft and effectively manage water resources, but it will also promote coordinated use of available surface and groundwater supplies to achieve sustainability and prevent undesirable results like dry wells."

Phase 1 work will be devoted to the following:

- An Eastern San Joaquin geophysical investigation and groundwater recharge program to implement multi-benefit, groundwater recharge, and floodplain enhancement projects in support of securing a pending surface water right application on the Mokelumne River;
- A geotechnical investigation for Delta Water Treatment Plant groundwater recharge improvements that would allow the City of Stockton to store water diverted from the Delta; and

- Improving North San Joaquin Water Conservation District’s North System to allow excess surface water, when available, to recharge groundwater through an approach known as Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge (Flood-MAR).

“These projects are part of the long-range plan to expand the water supply portfolio so that the Eastern San Joaquin region has a resilient water supply able to withstand drought without requiring mandatory cutbacks implemented as a drought response measure”, said San Joaquin County Public Works Department Water Resources Manager, Matt Zidar.

Joe Valente, President of the North San Joaquin Water Conservation District Board of Directors explained, “The District is excited to begin work on the North System and associated groundwater recharge projects, especially since the North System has not operated for more than a decade. We are thankful to DWR and our cooperating landowners for making this project possible.”

With groundwater levels declining, some domestic, municipal and agricultural wells in the basin are more expensive to operate and at risk of going dry. Providing for surface water use in-lieu of groundwater pumping and developing large-scale direct recharge projects will help reduce overdraft and stabilize groundwater levels for wells in the community – especially in new normal conditions of long-term droughts and climate change impacts.

“Our GSAs and the Groundwater Authority sincerely appreciate this grant award. This seed funding certainly will kick-start the GSP implementation process, though the critically over-drafted basins need a lot more funding to get to the finish line,” said City of Stockton Councilmember Dan Wright. “While the funding is a fraction of the total required, it will enable the first phase of this effort to begin while we continue to seek other funding sources to address groundwater overdraft in our East County Basin.”

Without state funding, the GSAs may not have sufficient funding for projects and management actions that address groundwater sustainability which turn could result in the need for substantial water rate increases. Such increases have the potential to cause pronounced and disproportionate affordability challenges for underrepresented and disadvantaged communities, which account for approximately 40 percent of the land area and approximately 55 percent of the population in the groundwater basin. Further, many of these communities are dependent on shallow groundwater wells for their drinking water supply. Efforts funded through the grant will help to raise groundwater levels, which will support continued use of shallow domestic wells.

San Joaquin County Supervisor Chuck Winn stated, “This grant award is a great example of our state and County doing everything possible to improve one of the most valuable resources we have during a drought – our groundwater basin. We thank our County’s Public Works team and our dedicated 16 local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies for literally leaving no stone unturned searching for funding to address the enormous challenge presented to us. Most importantly, thanks to the Legislature and the state Department of Water Resources for recognizing and investing in our critical water needs.”

For more information about the Project or the grant visit this [LINK](#).

###