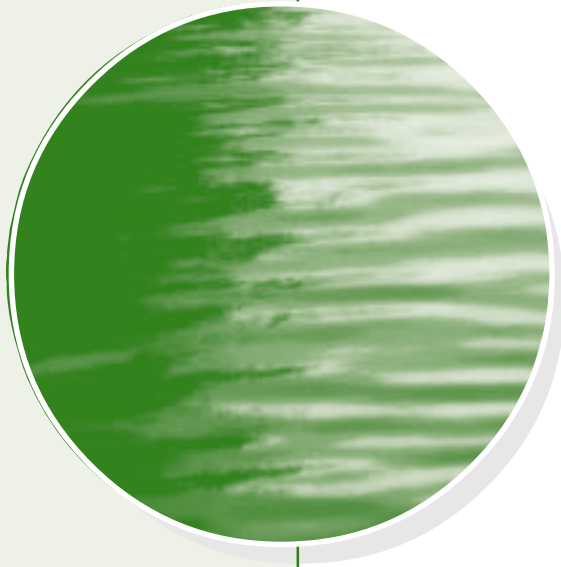


# Central Sacramento County Groundwater Forum

**A Partnership of the Water Forum,  
California Department of Water Resources and  
the California Center for Public Dispute Resolution**



## What's the Situation?

- About two-thirds of the water used in the Central Sacramento County area comes from underground. This groundwater is vital to all segments of the community – agriculture, business, the environment and residents.
- While actual use varies according to conditions, in 1990 about 250,000 acre-feet of groundwater was pumped in Central Sacramento County for ranching, farming, environmental, business and residential uses.
- Significant increases in urban demand are anticipated, which could increase reliance on the groundwater aquifer.

## What's Broken?

- For years, the risk facing Central Sacramento County's groundwater resource has been growing. The presence and migration of contamination within the aquifer and continued reliance on groundwater threaten to affect groundwater storage capacity and quality.
- In some areas, groundwater pumping levels have declined,
- Several contamination sites affect Central County groundwater, including three USEPA Superfund sites, Aerojet, the former Mather AFB, and Sacramento Army Depot. Other sites are Kiefer Landfill, the abandoned PG&E site adjacent to the Sacramento River, Southern Pacific and Union Pacific RR yards in downtown Sacramento, and the former McDonald-Douglas Rancho Cordova rocket test site (also known as the Inactive Rancho Cordova Test Site).



## What Are the Risks of No Action?

- Unless there is a plan for preventing over-pumping and further contamination, groundwater availability and quality in Central Sacramento County is at risk.
- Many community members are concerned about increased costs – to pump water, drill wells, clean up contamination, and pay for replacement surface water.
- As groundwater levels decline, well owners may be forced to incur the expense of deepening or drilling new wells.
- Water purveyors may be forced to spend more money on increased water treatment, installation of new, and/or deeper wells, and the purchase of surface water. These expenses will be passed on to consumers.
- A result of falling groundwater levels is a decline in river and stream flows, including Laguna Creek, Deer Creek, and the Cosumnes River. These flow reductions have negatively affected the populations of salmon and other native fish species.
- Contamination in the groundwater aquifer is spreading more quickly than once anticipated. Pumping can increase and accelerate the movement of contamination plumes.
- The state may intervene with legislation.
- Potential lawsuits could force adjudication, a process that will be less responsive to local interests and concerns than would a locally developed management plan.

## What's the Path to a Solution?

- Everyone who relies upon groundwater, including ranchers and farmers, residents, business and environmental interests, must take action now to prevent a groundwater crisis in the future.
- Management of groundwater by those who use the resource most and know it best is the most promising solution. Determining the best management structure should come through collaboration among all the stakeholder interests.
- While there are a number of possible solutions to the Central Sacramento County's groundwater problem, the first step is to convene the local stakeholder groups and engage them in the problem-solving process.

## What's the Process?

- The Water Forum is sponsoring the Central Sacramento County Groundwater Forum to provide an avenue for local stakeholders to collaboratively develop recommendations to protect the health and viability of the Central Sacramento County groundwater basin.
- Participants in the Central County Groundwater Forum include representatives of stakeholder interests in the Central County area, including ranchers and farmers, business, community and environmental interests, local government and public agencies, water purveyors and agricultural/residential users.
- Through education and negotiation, the Central Groundwater Forum will protect the long-term interests of Central Sacramento County stakeholders by developing recommendations that will protect and use groundwater resources in a sustainable manner.
- Stakeholder group representatives are responsible for communicating with members of their interest group and representing these interests in the Central County Groundwater Forum process.
- The Groundwater Forum is not a decision-making body. Proposed recommendations will be presented to the Water Forum stakeholders for review and approval, and forwarded to the relevant public agencies for implementation as appropriate.

## What are the Benefits?

- Creating a groundwater management plan for the Central Sacramento County area will result in a number of positive and tangible benefits for all stakeholders.
- Groundwater will be used in a responsible and sustainable manner.
- Central Area groundwater users, small and large, public and private, can have a voice in the future use of their groundwater resource.
- Stabilizing groundwater levels will benefit rivers, streams, and wetlands in the Central County area and provide a predictable foundation for undertaking habitat enhancement and restoration programs.

## What Are the Challenges?

- Although there are a number of challenges inherent in any discussion of groundwater management, the process of interest-based negotiation by local stakeholders is designed to find common ground.
- Areas of concern, including property rights, cost-benefit, governance, growth, taxes, safety, water quality, reliability, energy costs, equity, rates and fees, equitable cost-sharing and a realistic sustainable yield, are all issues that will need to be addressed before management recommendations can be developed.
- Consistent with the Water Forum Agreement, recommendations for groundwater management plans must respect the existing rights of any entity and individual and recognize the vested nature of both exercised and unexercised overlying groundwater rights.

## About the Groundwater Basin

- The Central County Area is bounded on the north by the American River, on the east by the Sierra foothills, on the south by the Cosumnes River and on the west by the Sacramento River and Interstate 5.



- The groundwater basin underlying Sacramento County covers about 880 square miles and stores about 48 million acre-feet of water. It is part of the Central Valley groundwater basin, which covers 20,000 square miles and stores 1,927 million acre-feet of water.
- In the Central Area of Sacramento County, over 609,000 residents rely upon this important resource. Over 140,000 acres are farmed. More than 6,000 residents and businesses rely on private wells.
- Groundwater recharge comes from deep percolation of rainfall and applied water, streams and rivers, and underground inflow from adjacent areas. It varies from year to year, depending on hydrologic conditions and use. Recharge in 1990, for example, was approximately 250 thousand acre-feet.

## About the Water Forum and the Central County Groundwater Forum



The Water Forum is a diverse group of business and agricultural leaders, citizens groups, environmentalists, water managers and local governments in Sacramento County, and water managers in Placer and El Dorado Counties. They engaged in a six-year process to develop and negotiate the Water Forum Agreement, which was adopted in April 2000. The Agreement is a long-term plan to provide a reliable and safe water supply for the region, and preserve the Lower American River.

The Central County Groundwater Forum was started in 2002 to fulfill an element of the Water Forum Agreement. Its mission is to develop recommendations designed to protect the health and viability of the Central Sacramento County groundwater basin as a sustainable resource for both current users and future generations.

For more information about the Water Forum and the Central County Groundwater Forum, contact the Water Forum office (916)264-1999  
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