

## Sustainable Groundwater Management Legislation

SB 1168, SB 1319 & AB 1739

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### Summary:

- Countless communities in the most parched and impoverished parts of the state have already run out of water due to uncontrolled groundwater pumping and have limited or even no resources to drill a new well.
- SB 1168, AB 1739, and SB 1319 work together to create the first comprehensive groundwater management regulation for the state of California.
- These laws require the creation of regionally controlled groundwater management agencies (GSAs) with the mandate to achieve sustainable management of local groundwater basins within 25-35 years.
- SB 1168 and AB 1739 are the core bills while SB 1319 was added to the end of the process. It amended provisions in AB 1739, providing additional time for the development of plans in some circumstances.
- A diverse set of stakeholders supports this legislation because it provides a basic framework for local groundwater management, with safeguards to ensure meaningful participation at the local level, and sufficient state oversight to ensure that plans are properly developed and implemented.
- The major components of SB 1168 and AB 1739 are summarized below:
  1. Adopts state policy that groundwater resources be managed sustainably and affirms that groundwater is most effectively managed at the local level.
  2. Requires local communities with high- and medium-priority groundwater basins to identify or form one or more groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) by 2017.
  3. Focuses on groundwater basins ranked as high- and medium-priority by the Department of Water Resources (DWR).
  4. Sets goals and timeframes for groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) to address overdraft and other groundwater problems, and allows 20 years to achieve the goals.
  5. Provides a state “backstop” for groundwater basins that do not meet the requirements. Provides an opportunity for local agencies to remedy problems prior to state involvement.
  6. Increases coordination and information sharing between local land use agencies and groundwater management agencies.
  7. Exempts adjudicated basins, except for an annual reporting requirement.
  8. Provides for DWR technical assistance to groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs).
  9. Provides fee authority to local GSAs to fund their groundwater sustainability program, and to SWRCB for implementation of the state backstop.
  10. Provides GSAs with a toolbox of new tools and authorities to choose from to effectively manage their groundwater.
  11. Provides CEQA exemptions for the preparation and adoption of GSPs.