

Note: Further refinements to this section are also anticipated during the Public DRAFT GSP review process.

SIERRA VALLEY GSP CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

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1 1.0 Introduction

2 The Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District (SVGMD) and Plumas County, the

3 Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) for the Sierra Valley Groundwater Subbasin

4 (SV Subbasin), developed this Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP or Plan) in accordance

5 with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Sustainable Groundwater

- 6 Management Act (SGMA) of 2014. The purpose of the Plan is to roadmap the process to
- 7 achieving sustainable groundwater management, as defined by SGMA, in the SV Subbasin
- 8 (DWR Subbasin No. 5-012.01).
- 9 SGMA is a three-bill legislative package comprised of Assembly Bill (AB) 1739 (Dickinson),
- 10 Senate Bill (SB) 1168 (Pavley), and SB 1319 (Pavley) signed into law in 2014 and codified in
- 11 Section 10720 of the California Water Code. SGMA expands the role of DWR to support local
- 12 implementation of GSPs and allows for intervention by the State Water Resources Control
- 13 Board (SWRCB) at discrete points throughout the process if local agencies are not willing or
- able to manage groundwater sustainably. In addition to the one Assembly Bill and two Senate
- 15 Bills, SGMA is partially defined by the "emergency regulations" (adopted by the DWR and
- 16 incorporated into the California Code of Regulations, Sections 350 354.4) and a number of other documents¹
- 17 other documents¹.
- 18 SGMA required critically-overdrafted, high- and medium-priority basins to be managed under a

19 GSP by January 31, 2020, and all other groundwater basins designated as high- or medium-

20 priority basins to be managed under a GSP by January 31, 2022. Additionally, SMGA requires 21 demonstrated sustainability within 20 years of GSP implementation, and continued sustainability

- through the 50-year planning and implementation horizon.
- 23 SV Subbasin boundary modifications were completed in early 2019 and basin prioritization for
- 24 the modified basins were revised by DWR in spring 2019. The SV Subbasin was characterized
- as a medium-priority basin that is not critically overdrafted per DWR Bulletin 118 (2019). An
- eligible local agency was therefore required to develop and implement a GSP by January 31,
- 27 2022 and achieve demonstrated sustainability by January 31, 2042. SVGMD and Plumas
- 28 County chose to pursue sustainability and compliance with the requirements of SGMA via a 29 multi-GSA, single GSP approach, led by SVGMD with the support of Plumas County, in hopes
- 30 that SVGMD can retain their authority to manage groundwater in the SV Subbasin into the
- indefinite future. It is the belief of SVGMD and Plumas County that groundwater management
- 32 by a local entity will best ensure the local communities' needs are met and voices are heard
- 33 while striving toward optimized groundwater management, consistent with the belief of former
- 34 California Governor Jerry Brown who emphasized in his signing statement that "groundwater
- 35 management in California is best accomplished locally".
- 36 To facilitate such sustainable groundwater management, this Plan provides:
- Agency information and management structure (Chapter 1);
- All pertinent background information (Chapter 2) including description of the Plan Area and SV Subbasin setting, historical conditions, and current conditions;
- Modeled water budget information (Section 2.2.3.) including the estimated sustainable
 yield and discussion on how the value may change over time as a result of changes in
 climate;

¹ <u>https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/SGMA-Groundwater-Management</u>



- Sustainable management criteria (Chapter 3) that will serve as the basis for evaluation
 of the sustainability of groundwater management in the SV Subbasin and the efficacy of
 this Plan;
- Assessment of the sustainability of the existing condition (Section 3.3) based on the
 sustainable indicators defined in SGMA and analysis of data collected over the past
 several decades, building upon the historic and existing conditions information provided
 in Section 2.2.2;
- Description of the existing monitoring network and protocol (Section 3.4), assessment of
 the existing network and protocol with respect to its ability to generate the data
 necessary to sufficiently evaluate the sustainability of groundwater management in the
 SV Subbasin, and planned improvements;
- Exisiting and potential projects and management actions that the GSAs are considering to achieve sustainability, i.e., meet the sustainable management criteria (Chapter 4); and
- GSP implementation information (Chapter 5) including estimated cost, implementation
 schedule, annual reporting protocol, and periodic evaluation protocol for evaluating the
 Plan's efficacy and amending the Plan as needed to achieve sustainability.

59 **1.1** Purpose of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP or Plan)

The purpose of this Plan is to ensure that "sustainable groundwater management" in the SV Subbasin is achieved by the SVGMD by 2042 and maintained at least until 2072. Sustainable groundwater management is the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing "undesirable results." Undesirable results are defined by SGMA as one or more of the following effects caused by groundwater conditions occurring throughout a groundwater basin:

- (a) Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a significant and unreasonable
 depletion of supply if continued over the planning and implementation horizon. Overdraft
 during a period of drought is not sufficient to establish a chronic lowering of groundwater
 levels if extractions and groundwater recharge are managed as necessary to ensure that
 reductions in groundwater levels or storage during a period of drought are offset by
 increases in groundwater levels or storage during other periods.
- 72 (b) Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage.
- 73 (c) Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion (*not applicable to Sierra Valley*).
- (d) Significant and unreasonable degraded water quality, including the migration ofcontaminant plumes that impair water supplies.
- (e) Significant and unreasonable land subsidence that substantially interferes with surface
 land uses.
- (f) Depletions of interconnected surface water that have significant and unreasonable
 adverse impacts on beneficial uses of the surface water.
- To complete a specific local definition of undesirable results for each of the sustainability indicators, the SV Subbasin GSAs engaged stakeholders to develop a description of what would be considered "significant and unreasonable" impacts associated with each of the five pertinent undesirable results categories in the SV Subbasin. This requirement of the Plan is set forth in SGMA.



- 85 The purpose of this Plan, as implemented by the GSAs, is as follows:
- to facilitate groundwater management in the SV Subbasin with the objective of reducing
 and/or eliminating impacts associated with groundwater level declines, groundwater
 storage reductions, water quality degradation, land subsidence, and surface water
 depletions that result from groundwater extraction and are locally considered to be
 significant and unreasonable, and
- to prevent to the extent practicable any such impacts from occurring by 2042 and thereafter until at least 2072.
- 93 This purpose serves as the basis of the intention of the sustainability goal described in the 94 following section.

95 **1.2 Sustainability Goal**

- 96 As required by SGMA, the sustainability goal for the Basin was created through input from all
- 97 the stakeholders who participated in the GSP planning effort. The goal fulfills the regulations put
- 98 forward by the DWR to develop a sustainability goal that "...culminates in the absence of 99 undesirable results within 20 years...." (23 CCR § 354.24).
- 100 The GSAs strive for equal access to groundwater for all current and future members of the
- 101 Basin and that the water will be put to beneficial uses while being able to sustainably meet 102 demand and avoid any undesirable results.
- 103 The overarching sustainability goal for groundwater management in the Sierra Valley Subbasin104 is:

105 To manage groundwater resources in a manner that best supports the long-term health

- 106 of the people, the environment, and the economy of Sierra Valley into the future by 107 avoiding significant and unreasonable impacts to environmental, domestic, agricultural,
- 108 and industrial beneficial uses and users of groundwater.
- 109 The purpose of this goal is to avoid significant and unreasonable impacts to the environmental,
- agricultural, domestic, industrial, and community beneficial uses and users of groundwater in
- 111 Sierra Valley. Progress toward the goal will be cumulatively quantified by the Sustainable 112 Management Criteria discussed in Chapter 3.
- 113 Community input from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) indicated that priorities for 114 Sierra Valley include:
- Maintaining viable agriculture and the quiet, rural nature of the valley;
- Maintaining and enhancing the habitat for wildlife, including migratory and local bird
 populations;
- Preventing drying out of wetlands, streams, and braided channels
- Preventing water quality degradation;
- Preventing impacts to domestic well users that would require drilling deeper wells;
- Reducing or preventing new development, including industrial farming, airport expansion
 and housing developments;
- Preventing subsidence; and
- Managing the Subbasin to mitigate impacts of drought and to differentiate between drought conditions and other actions that cause undesirable results.



- 126 To address these priorities, the sustainability goal incorporates managing groundwater 127 conditions for each of the applicable sustainability indicators in the Subbasin so that:
- Groundwater elevations and groundwater storage do not significantly decline below their
 historically measured range (i.e., January 2015 levels), thereby protecting the existing
 well infrastructure from impacts, protecting groundwater-dependent ecosystems, and
 avoiding significant streamflow depletion due to groundwater pumping.
- Groundwater quality is suitable for the beneficial uses in the SV Subbasin and is not significantly or unreasonably degraded.
- Significant and unreasonable land subsidence is prevented in the SV Subbasin.
 Infrastructure (e.g., roads, foundations, water conveyances, and well casings) and agriculture production in the SV Subbasin remain safe from land subsidence.
- Significant and undesirable depletions of interconnected surface water (ISW) due to
 groundwater pumping are avoided by arresting hydraulic gradients near ISW and
 through projects and management actions that bolster groundwater levels.
- The GSA groundwater management is effectively integrated with other watershed and land use planning activities through collaborations and partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, private landowners, and other organizations, to achieve the broader "watershed goal" of adequate groundwater recharge and sufficient surface water flows to sustain healthy ecosystem functions.
- The Sustainability Goal will be achieved by quantifying and minimizing potential impacts to domestic, residential, agricultural, industrial, and environmental beneficial users. Scientifically informed Sustainable Management Criteria will continue to be developed around these assessments that avoid significant and unreasonable impacts to beneficial uses and users of groundwater. Finally, the GSAs will implement projects and management actions, monitor Sustainable Management Criteria, and iteratively refine the GSP so that the Sustainability Goal
- 151 is achieved during Plan implementation and is maintained afterward.

152 **1.3 Agency Information (Reg. § 354.6)**

- Per Reg. § 354.6 of the California Code of Regulations, the GSP must include a copy of the
 information provided pursuant to Water Code Section 10723.8, with any updates, if necessary,
 along with the following information:
- 156 (a) The name and mailing address of the Agency.
- (b) The organization and management structure of the Agency, identifying persons withmanagement authority for implementation of the Plan.
- (c) The name and contact information, including the phone number, mailing address and electronic mail address, of the plan manager.
- (d) The legal authority of the Agency, with specific reference to citations setting forth the
 duties, powers, and responsibilities of the Agency, demonstrating that the Agency has
 the legal authority to implement the Plan.
- (e) An estimate of the cost of implementing the Plan and a general description of how theAgency plans to meet those costs.



- 166 The information provided pursuant to Water Code Section 10723.8 is included as Appendix 1-1.
- 167 The name and mailing address of the lead Agency (SVGMD) is provided on the title page of this
- 168 Plan and is provided below.
- 169
- 170 Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District
- 171 PO Box 88
- 172 Chilcoot, CA 96105
- 173 The name and mailing address of Plumas County (the GSA for the small area of the
- 174 SV Subbasin which is outside of the SVGMD boundary) is provided below. The other
- 175 information (items b, c, d, and e) is provided subsequently in this Chapter.
- 176 Plumas County Board of Supervisors
- 177 520 Main St., Room 309
- 178 Quincy, CA 95971
- 179 The Plan Manager is the individual point of contact for this Plan. The Plan Manager is
- 180 responsible for submitting required documentation to DWR and reporting any comments,
- 181 inquiries, and other Plan-related correspondences to the SVGMD Board of Directors. If the Plan
- 182 Manager is to change, the Plan Manager information below will be updated.
- 183 Jenny Gant
- 184 Clerk of the Board
- 185 Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District
- 186 PO Box 88
- 187 Chilcoot, CA 96105
- 188 (530) 414-6831
- 189 <u>sierravalleygmd@sbcglobal.net</u>

190 1.3.1 Organization and Management Structure of the Groundwater Sustainability 191 Agency (GSA or Agency)

- 192 SVGMD was authorized under SB 1391 in 1980 to protect and oversee the management of the 193 groundwater within the SV Subbasin. SVGMD submitted notification to DWR in 2017 to become
- the exclusive GSA for the portion of the SV Subbasin. SV Subbasin that lies within their groundwater
- 195 management district statutory boundary and thereby became the lead Agency for the majority of
- the SV Subbasin. A relatively small area of the northwest corner of the SV Subbasin
- 197 (approximately 115 acres or <0.1% of total SV Subbasin area) falls outside of SVGMD
- 198 boundary and therefore excludes SVGMD from eligibility to be the GSA for that area.
- Accordingly, Plumas County submitted notification and became the exclusive GSA for that area, and in accordance with Water Code Section 10723.6, SVGMD and Plumas County established
- a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish their respective roles in GSP development
- and implementation. The MOU, provided in Appendix 1-2, outlines that the two entities will work
- 203 together to develop and adopt a single SGMA-compliant GSP for the SV Subbasin using sound
- 204 groundwater science and local expertise.
- 205 The SV Subbasin area for which Plumas County is the GSA is located entirely on Plumas
- 206 National Forest lands and is a hydrologically important area within Sierra Valley along the
- 207 federally designated Wild and Scenic River corridor of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. This
- 208 area stretches from nearf the east end of Rocky Point Road to the western edge of the Sierra
- 209 Valley basin in the Middle Fork Feather corridor. For the local Maidu, Paiute, and Washoe
- 210 tribes, this part of the Wild and Scenic corridor has deep and enduring cultural connections that



- 211 predate both establishment of the U.S. Forest Service and non-tribal settlement of the region.
- 212 Present-day, this area includes a grazing allotment managed by Plumas National Forest ("the
- Ramelli Allotment"), which is the location of an irrigation water right from Big Grizzly Creek near 213 214 its confluence with the Middle Fork of the Feather River.
- 215
- 216 Because SVGMD is the GSA for the vast majority of the SV Subbasin, SVGMD is considered 217 the lead GSA, and, as such:
- 218 Monitors groundwater levels using monitoring wells located throughout the District 219 boundary:
- 220 • Meters active large-capacity agricultural wells (those capable of pumping 100 gallons 221 per minute or more);
- 222 Prepares technical reports and evaluations on groundwater; •
- 223 Reviews development project proposals within the District boundary; and
- 224 Executes all other powers invested in the District by SB 1391 and SGMA.
- 225 As the lead GSA for the SV Subbasin, and in coordination with the Plumas County GSA, the 226 SVGMD will be responsible for overseeing implementation of this Plan, including monitoring and 227 reporting. Furthermore, the SVGMD will coordinate with Sierra County, for the areas within the 228 District's southern boundary.
- 229 The SVGMD Board of Directors holds public Board meetings monthly and regularly publishes 230 meeting minutes, ordinances, technical reports, and other information online². Plumas County 231 representatives, representatives of affected agencies, and engaged community members 232 regularly attend SVGMD Board meetings and participate in discussions. The organization and 233 management structure of SVGMD is as outlined in SVGMD's enabling legislation³. SVGMD's 234 Policies and Procedures Manual and Purchasing Policy, which are included as Appendix 1-3 235 and 1-4, provide additional information pertaining to SVGMD's organization and management 236 structure.
- 237 The Plumas County Board of Supervisors holds public meetings on the first three Tuesdays of 238 every month, and publishes⁴ meeting minutes, agendas, and other information. The Plumas 239 County Board of Supervisors oversees the management of County government, in addition to governing a handful of County special districts including the Plumas County Flood Control & 240 Water Conservation District. Five supervisors are elected by constituencies of each district, and 241 242 serve all citizens of Plumas County during a four-year term. The Clerk of the Board of
- 243 Supervisors⁵ provides support to the Board of Supervisors and information to the public.
- 244 The Sierra County Board of Supervisors⁶ is the governing body of the County and enacts
- 245 ordinances and resolutions, adopts the annual budget, approves contracts, appropriates funds,
- determines land use zoning for the unincorporated area, and appoints certain County officers 246
- 247 and members of various boards and commissions. The Board also sits as the Sierra County
- 248 Flood Control and Water Conservation District and Sierra County Board of Equalization. The 249 Board of Supervisors is composed of five members elected from the five separate districts of the
- 250 County, on a non-partisan basis, to serve four-year staggered terms. The Board meets on the
 - ² http://www.sierravallevgmd.org/

³ https://svgmd.specialdistrict.org/enabling-act

⁴ http://plumascoca.suiteonemedia.com/web/Home.aspx

⁵ https://www.plumascounty.us/418/Clerk-of-the-Board-of-Supervisors

⁶ http://www.sierracounty.ca.gov/182/Board-of-Supervisors



- 251 second and third Tuesday of each month. Meeting agendas and background are available to the 252 public prior to the meeting. The Clerk of the Board of Supervisors provides administrative
- support to the members of the Board of Supervisors in its response to the needs of the public.

1.3.2 Legal Authority of the GSAs

In 1980, SVGMD was authorized under SB 1391 to protect and oversee the management of the
 groundwater within the SV Subbasin. SB 1391 defined the legal boundaries and regulatory

- authority of the District and authorized its creation by a joint exercise of powers agreement
 between Plumas and Sierra counties.
- In late 1980 SB 1401, referred to as the "SB 1391 Clean-Up Bill", amended and repealed
 selected sections of SB 1391 and deleted specified provisions requiring the District to limit or
 suspend groundwater extractions for export before limiting extractions by overlying users (DWR,
 1983). The bill also revised provisions of SB 1391 relating to the approval of proposed
 development projects within the District that propose to extract groundwater for water service
- 264 (DWR, 1983).
- 265 In accordance with Water Code Section 10723(c)(1), SVGMD was deemed the exclusive GSA
- for the portion of the SV Subbasin that is within SVGMD's statutory boundary. In accordance
- with Water Code Section 10723.8, upon submitting notification to DWR to become the GSA for
- that portion of the SV Subbasin, SVGMD was authorized the legal powers of a GSA as described in Chapter 5 of SGMA (Water Code Sections 10725 - 10726.9).
- 270 In accordance with Water Code Section 10723(a), Plumas County was eligible to become the
- 271 exclusive GSA for the portion of the SV Subbasin that is outside of the SVGMD's statutory
- boundary. In accordance with Water Code Section 10723.8, upon submitting notification to
- 273 DWR to become the GSA for the small area of the SV Subbasin that is outside of the SVGMD
- boundary, Plumas County was authorized the legal powers of a GSA as described in Chapter 5 of SGMA (Water Code Sections 10725 - 10726.9).

1.3.3 Estimated Cost of Implementing the GSP and the GSA's Approach to Meet Costs

- 278 The funding for GSP implementation may come from a combination of local, state, and federal
- sources. SVGMD has been funded by contributions from Sierra and Plumas Counties,
- 280 management charges on parcels and on active large-capacity wells, and grants. The general
- direction from the Board of Directors in regard to funding GSP implementation can besummarized as:
- District expenses should be well-controlled
- Funding strategy needs to be locally viable and right sized
- Funding Strategy needs to focus on fairness.
- The SVGMD's Joint Powers Agreement states that the District can request funds from Plumas and Sierra Counties, as needed. In recent years, both Counties have contributed \$4,000 annually towards District operating expenses. SVGMD's existing revenue sources also include two management charges: a "meter fee," associated with large-capacity wells metered by the District, and a "parcel fee," which is based on acreage. The authority to enact these charges derives from the District's enabling act, Water Code Appendix 119. The Board is responsible for enacting charges by ordinance.
- For fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20, the District's parcel fee was fixed at a total of 30 cents per acre, per year, for parcels over 40 acres, and a total charge of \$10.00 per year on all



- 295 parcels of 40 acres or less. Beginning in fiscal year 2020-21, this fee was reduced to a rate of
- 15 cents per acre per year, for parcels over 40 acres, and a total charge of \$6.00 per year on all
- 297 parcels of 40 acres or less. The District has established the continuation of this lower rate going
- forward for fiscal year 2021-22. In 2020/21 the parcel fees totaled \$32,798 and the meter fees
- total \$12,200 for a total annual fee revenue of \$44,998.
- 300 On May 13, 2020, under the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and
- 301 Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), SVGMD accepted \$2,000,000 from the
- 302 California Department of Water Resources to assist in financing the Sierra Valley Subbasin
- 303 Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Development Support to improve sustainable
- 304 groundwater management, pursuant to Water Code Section 79700 et seq.
- The cost breakdown for implementing and managing the GSP is presented and described in more detail in Chapter 5 and in Appendix 5-2 but also includes a fiscal reserve for unexpected and miscellaneous costs. The major cost categories are:
- 308 Agency administration and operations
- GSP reporting (annual and 5-year reports)
- Monitoring, data collection, and technical support
- Technical work and model maintenance
- Outreach, coordination, and education
- Legal support
- Projects and management actions
- 315 The total estimated cost of GSP implementation over the next 20 years (2022 to 2042) is
- estimated to be in the range of \$68,500 \$142,000 (present dollar value), annually, based on
 the best available information.
- 318 The GSAs will pursue various available funding opportunities to assist in covering the yearly
- 319 costs as described further in Appendix 5-2. As part of the implementation, SVGMD will review
- 320 its current fee structure and update as necessary. It is expected that SVGMD will manage the
- implementation and reporting of the GSP, with support from other entities as needed. This
- 322 updated fee structure will be continually used to fund the GSAs and GSP implementation up to
- 323 the end of the 20-year period.

324 **1.4 GSP Organization**

- The Plan was developed using the DWR's Groundwater Sustainability Plan Annotated Outline (December 2016) and is therefore organized consistent with that Outline. Content requiring additional information was sourced from the Preparation Checklist for GSP Submittal (DWR 2016).
- 329 DWR's Preparation Checklist for GSP Submittal was completed and added to this Plan as 330 Appendix 1-5 to provide a quick reference guide for locating specific required information.

1.4.1 Description of how the GSP is organized

332 The GSP is organized as follows:



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352

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- Executive Summary: This section presents an overview of the GSP, a background of
 the groundwater conditions within the Basin, a timeline of the GSP Development
 process, and key information from each of the GSP sections.
- Chapter 1.0 Introduction: This section states the purpose of the GSP, the Basin's
 Sustainability Goal, information on the GSA and its member agencies and the
 organization of the GSP.
- Chapter 2.0 Plan Area and Basin Settings: This section describes the Sierra Valley
 Subbasin Groundwater Plan, current conditions within the Subbasin, and a historical
 baseline and models for future scenarios. This historic and projected data provides
 context to be able to sustainably manage the basin into the future. This section also
 provides the Basin water budget as context for achieving long-term sustainability within
 the basin.
- Chapter 3.0 Sustainable Management Criteria: This section discusses the Subbasin's Sustainability Goal as well as the criteria for addressing the five pertinent SGMA Sustainability Indicators, including the associated Minimum Thresholds, Measurable Objectives, and proposed monitoring strategy created for the Sierra Valley Subbasin.
 These criteria provide the framework for when the sustainability of the Basin is at risk, and therefor when management actions need to be undertaken by the GSAs.
 - **Chapter 4.0 Projects and Management Actions**: This section provides a description of projects and management actions proposed to achieve Subbasin sustainability and provides a strategy for evaluating and prioritizing these actions.
- Chapter 5.0 Plan Implementation: This section provides an estimate of GSP operating
 costs and the proposed implementation schedule for management actions. It also
 outlines the procedural requirements for the yearly and 5-year evaluations to the GSP
 and the associated steps necessary if any parts of the GSP need to be updated.

358 **1.4.2 Preparation Checklist for GSP Submittal**

359 This GSP was prepared to meet the regulatory requirements established by DWR, as shown in

360 the completed GSP Elements Guide, provided in Appendix 1-5, which is organized according to

361 the California Code of Regulation Sections of the GSP Emergency Regulations.