

DRAFT SOUTH FORK KINGS WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Background and Purpose

The South Fork Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SFK GSA or GSA) has prepared this Water Level Management Plan to minimize and avoid undesirable impacts from decreasing water levels across the GSA.

- 1.1. The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) establishes Measurable Objective (MOs) and Minimum Thresholds (MTs) related to groundwater levels as required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).
- 1.2. Impacts from decreasing water levels include wells going dry, reduced pumping yield, pump damage, and water quality issues. The SFK GSA recognizes that these impacts can vary greatly depending on the depth of pumping and from which aquifer the pumping is occurring.
- 1.3. The SFK GSA recognizes that water levels fluctuate across the year and from year to year. Historically water levels will decrease over periods of drought and recover during wetter years. Furthermore, flow in the Kings River and the availability of surface water from a variety of sources will impact water levels.
- 1.4. The Measurable Objectives and Minimum Thresholds in the GSP are described as a set water elevation that varies across the GSA and across the different aquifers. The GSA has also established Interim Milestones to set water levels on a path to sustainability by 2040.
- 1.5. The GSP requires at least semi-annual water level monitoring, although there are locations with continuous monitoring. If the groundwater levels measured exceed the Interim Milestone for that area in any given year, the GSA will implement management actions to minimize exceedances. Exceedance of a Minimum Threshold is an undesirable result under SGMA that the GSA will manage groundwater pumping to minimize and avoid.
- 1.6. The purpose of this Plan is to establish management actions to address decreasing water levels and to minimize exceeding the Minimum Thresholds .
- 1.7. To manage subsidence in the GSA, there is a need to gather more specific information about the pumping occurring in areas of the GSA where water levels are decreasing at the highest rate.
- 1.8. The GSA recognizes that further technical data and analysis is needed. Therefore, the Plan may need to be amended over time to address new information or understanding regarding this challenging issue.

2. Water Level Monitoring and Management Areas (Areas):

The SFK GSA will use the Water Level Monitoring Areas (Areas) as set forth in **Exhibit XX** to address the decrease in water levels caused by groundwater pumping. This will allow for targeted

monitoring, focused early actions, and corrective management to address specific wells or areas that are experience impacts. SFK may adjust the Areas in the future as warranted at a noticed meeting.

3. High Risk Areas and Implement Early Action Management Plans

- 3.1. Designation: The SFK GSA Board will identify and designate High-Risk Water Level Monitoring Areas based on based on historical data. An area will be considered “High Risk” based on historical pumping in the area, known impacts, or historically low water levels. The High-Risk Areas, along with supporting information, will be presented at a public meeting and the GSA will maintain a record of the data supporting the designation. At a minimum, the Board will revisit the designations annually.
- 3.2. Notice of Designation: Within 60 days of the designation of a High-Risk Area, SFK GSA will provide notice of the designation to all landowners within the Area. The notice will provide the technical basis for the determination of the area as a High-Risk Area and will indicate the GSA’s intention to develop and adopt a proposed Early Action Management Plan applicable to the Area.
- 3.3. Early Action Management Plan: SFK GSA will develop a proposed Early Action Management Plan for High Risk Areas (either individually or in aggregate). The Early Action Management Plan will include both landowner requirements and specific actions by SFK GSA, including one or more of the following:
 - 3.3.1. Landowner Well Registration and Metering: The GSA shall require compliance with the SFK GSA Well Registration and Metering policies for all non-domestic wells within the High-Risk Areas. Landowners will also have to submit a third-party certification that an in-line flowmeter is installed correctly on the discharge pipeline of each well and is calibrated. The landowner is then required to upload month-end meter readings by the 10th of the following month to the xxx portal. From time to time, the GSA will conduct site visits to verify meter readings and meter installations.
 - 3.3.2. GSA-initiated Actions: SFK GSA will identify and implement specific management actions to reduce pumping, increase recharge, and improve infrastructure to minimize further impacts. Funding for these actions in intended to come from pumping fees collected by the GSA as well as grant funding that may be obtained. Priority actions that will be investigated by SFK GSA include:
 - Land repurposing programs in some areas. These actions will be coordinated with Kings County.
 - Deep aquifer injection to the lower aquifer (Aquifer Storage and Recovery) in suitable areas. These actions will be coordinated with SWRCB, RWQCB and Department of Drinking water.
 - Projects. These actions will likely occur primarily on private land but may include projects that will need to be coordinated with Kings County.
- 3.4. Notice of Proposed Management Plan: Concurrently with the Notice of Designation of a High-Risk Area, the GSA will provide notice of intent to adopt the proposed Early Action Management Plan to affected landowners, and provide a period of at least 45 days to submit written or verbal comment and input on the proposed Early Action Management Plan.

- 3.5. Public Hearing/Adoption of Management Action: After the public comment period, the GSA will hold a public hearing, at the conclusion of which it may adopt, amend, or decline to adopt the proposed Early Action Management Plan. In making its decision, the Board will consider technical data and information provided by the GSA staff and consultants and members of the public.
- 3.6. Enforcement: The GSA will establish an administrative record supporting its decision to adopt an Early Action Management Plan. Any landowner regulatory actions included in a plan will be considered an administrative enforcement decision, which can be appealed or enforced through judicial action as specified by **GSA Policy XXX**.

4. Corrective Management Orders

In areas where pumping is causing exceedances, the GSA will issue Corrective Management Orders (CMO) as part of an enforcement effort.

- 4.1. Investigation: The GSA will review water level monitoring data in all subsidence management areas quarterly to determine the threat of exceedance of Interim Milestones, Measurable Objectives and Minimum Thresholds. If the GSA determines that an Interim Milestone has been or could be exceeded across an Area, GSA staff will conduct an investigation to determine if pumping from one or more wells is contributing to the exceedance. A report on the investigation will be made available for public review.
- 4.2. Notice of Exceedance: If it is determined that pumping from one or more wells are causing the exceedance, the GSA will provide notice within 30 days to the identified well owner(s). This notice will indicate that, based on the draft report, the GSA intends to adopt a Corrective Management Order (CMO) for the identified well or wells. Landowners will then be given the opportunity to appeal the draft determination with a suitable technical analysis. Landowners will have 60 days to review and comment on the draft report.
- 4.3. Corrective Management Order: GSA staff will develop a proposed Corrective Management Order to be proposed for adoption by the Board, subject to review and comment by affected property owners and members of the public. The CMO will include the following elements:
- 4.3.1. If not already metered and registered, all non-domestic wells within the affected area shall be required to be metered and registered. Registration shall include designation of whether the well is extracting from the upper or lower aquifers or combination of both. Registration must also include delineation of areas that receive irrigation from each registered well.
 - 4.3.2. Wells subject to the CSMO shall have the following restrictions of use:
 - (1) When water levels reach 75% of the MT elevation set for that area has been documented to have occurred or at least 2 wells have gone dry in the area, a review of all domestic wells in the area will be conducted. Groundwater monitoring If surface water is available to the areas that receive groundwater irrigation, it must be used first, prior to any groundwater pumping. No new wells will be permitted in the impacted aquifer.
 - (2) When water levels exceed 100% of MT level In an area or at least 4 wells have gone dry, no recharge credits pumping will be allowed in the impacted

aquifer. Exceedances of annual allocations will result in an equal reduction in the following year allocation.

- (3) When water levels exceed 150% of the MT level in an area, no transitional pumping will be allowed. To help the landowner mitigate or offset these impacts, the GSA will work with the landowners in these areas to take actions as described in Section 3.3.2 of this Plan.

4.4. Reporting Data: Landowners with wells subject to a CSMO shall directly report metered pumping data from designated wells and associated irrigated areas for accounting within the GSA groundwater accounting system (currently WaterMark). The GSA may conduct site visits from time to time to verify readings.

4.5. Notice of proposed CSMO: Either concurrently with the Notice of Determination of an Exceedance, or separately, the GSA will provide notice of intent to adopt the proposed CSMO to affected landowners and provide a period of at least 45 days to submit written or verbal comment and input on the proposed CMO.

4.6. Public Hearing/Adoption of Management Action: After allowing at least 45 days of public review of a proposed CMO, the GSA will hold a public hearing, at the conclusion of which it may adopt, amend, or decline to adopt the proposed CMO. In making its decision the Board will consider technical data and information provided by the GSA staff and consultants as well as any technical data and information provided by affected property owners or interested members of the public.

4.7. Enforcement: The GSA will establish an administrative record supporting its decision to adopt a Corrective Subsidence management Order. Any adopted plan or order, including any landowner or well owner obligations, will be considered an administrative enforcement decision, appealable and enforceable through judicial action as specified by GSA Policy XXX.