



SALINAS BASIN AGRICULTURAL WATER ASSOCIATION, INC.

# Water Flow

Newsline - February 2018, Issue 1

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Norm Groot  
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Monterey County  
Farm Bureau

Emily Gardner  
California  
Strawberry Commission

Kurt Gollnick  
Monterey County Vintners  
& Growers Association

Brett Harrell  
Sustainable Ag Water  
Corporation

Abby Taylor-Silva  
Grower-Shipper Association  
of Central California

## DID YOU KNOW YOU'RE ABOUT TO PAY NEW WATER FEES?

Yes, it's true.

**The new Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Salinas Valley is about to consider new water fees on all well owners, as a funding mechanism for this public agency. Before we explain why, we have to turn the clock back to 2014 and explain something called SGMA ...**

## What is SGMA?

On September 14, 2014, Governor Brown signed into law three bills collectively known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). SGMA requires the formation of a groundwater sustainability agency (GSA—not to be confused with the Grower-Shipper Association) in each of the state-designated medium and high priority groundwater basins. The Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin has two high-priority sub-basins; the rest of our sub-basins are medium priority.

In response to the Governor's new law, on December 22, 2016, the County of Monterey and City of Salinas, joined by Water Resources Agency of Monterey County, Cities of Salinas, Gonzales, Soledad and King, Castroville Community Services District, and Monterey One Water (formerly the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency) formed the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) through a joint powers authority agreement. The SVBGSA has jurisdiction over the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin, which has seven sub-basins, plus part of the Paso Robles sub-basin that's in Monterey County.

The SVBGSA's Board has 11 directors; 4 of these Directors are selected by Salinas Valley Agriculture, with one Director coming for each of the four major sub-basins. A super-majority vote of the Board, including 3 of the 4 Ag Directors, is required for all policy and financing decisions.

The SVBGSA has to create a new Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the Salinas Basin and its sub-basins by 2020 in order to satisfy the Governor's new SGMA law. In a nutshell, this means bringing the Basin into balance--whatever water we take out cannot exceed recharge. The SVBGSA has to coordinate its activities with surrounding GSAs (Paso Robles, Pajaro, Marina Coast, Arroyo Seco, etc). It also has to involve the public in developing and implementing the GSP.

Our Salinas Valley Basin contains three GSAs:

1. The big SVBGSA (Salinas Valley Basin GSA)
2. Marina Coast Water District GSA (encompassing their service district)
3. Arroyo Seco GSA (encompassing the City of Greenfield)

The SVBGSA Board of Directors started meeting in March 2017 and meets monthly on the second Thursday at 3pm in the Salinas Rotunda. We encourage you to attend!

More information on the SVBGSA can be found at <http://svbgsa.org>.

**Want to discuss SGMA further?**

**Contact your Sub-Basin Committee Chair**

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**FOREBAY**

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**ACRONYMS DEFINED**

**SGMA**

Sustainable Groundwater  
Management Act of 2014

**GSA**

Groundwater Sustainability  
Agency

**GSP**

Groundwater Sustainability Plan

**SBAWA**

Salinas Basin Agricultural Water  
Association

**SVBGSA**

Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater  
Sustainability Agency

**SBAWA Formation**

As if there weren't enough groups and acronyms already, last year the ag community formed a new group to monitor SGMA implementation in our valley. This new group, Salinas Basin Agricultural Water Association (SBAWA), is made up of:

1. Monterey County Farm Bureau
2. Grower-Shipper Association of Central California
3. California Strawberry Commission
4. Monterey County Vintners & Growers Association
5. Sustainable Ag Water Corporation

SBAWA has two goals:

1. Appoint the four Ag directors to the Board of the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency.
2. Monitor the groundwater sustainability planning of the Salinas Basin.

SBAWA Directors meet once a month. Also, sub-basin committees for the Pressure, Eastside, Forebay and Upper Valley have been formed to keep a close eye on the water planning process and communicate with landowners and growers.

**SVBGSA Funding for 2017 / 2018**

SBAWA (the ag community) committed to fund part of the expenses of our SVBGSA until the agency could figure out how to fund itself.

1. First payment of \$250,000 from the Ag community--paid July 2017.
2. Second payment of \$250,000 from Ag--due July 2018. SBAWA continues to fundraise to meet this goal.

By July 2019, SVBGSA must figure out how to fund itself, as funding from the County and its partners and SBAWA stops at that time. This will mean new water fees for all of us. These could be well head fees, water use fees, parcel taxes (or combination), etc. State Courts have already determined that these new fees and taxes do not require a Proposition 218 vote.

SVBGSA will hire a consultant to explore possible funding sources to support the agency's operational budget, which includes hiring an outfit to develop our GSP by 2020. Funding will be critical in meeting the deadline imposed by the Governor's SGMA law.

**What is the GSP?**

The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is a 20-year plan to balance the Salinas Valley Basin. Basically, this means that extractions must be balanced by equal amounts of percolation and infiltration. Studies indicate that the current imbalance is not that large an amount compared to the average annual extractions for urban and ag.

Having a GSP is required by the Governor's SGMA law. Submission of the GSP to the State is required for high priority sub-basins by early 2020. The SVBGSA plans on submitting a GSP for all the sub-basins at that time, rather than only the two high priority sub-basins.

As the GSP is developed, input will be considered from stakeholders through a facilitated, transparent process. Ag utilizes about 90% of groundwater extractions in the valley, so it is critical that landowners and growers participate in this process!

This spring of 2018, SBAWA (remember, that's the Salinas Basin Ag Water Association) wants to start gathering input. It will be critical for the ag community to stay involved. Once we get some dates nailed down, please be ready to participate in forums and meetings.