



Eastern Merced groundwater basin receives \$2.4 million grant for local groundwater sustainability

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Communities in eastern Merced County have collectively received a \$2.4 million state grant from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) for local groundwater sustainability.

The grant award will help offset the costs for local governments toward compliance with a state mandate related to groundwater management. The specific area is south of the Merced River and recognized as the Merced Groundwater Basin.

“This is a tremendous benefit to our community as we seek to move toward compliance with this new state mandate,” said Hicham Eltal, a Merced Groundwater Basin representative and the Deputy General Manager for the Merced Irrigation District. Mr. Eltal added, “We have a significant amount of work to do and this will help defray some of the cost to our local community.”

In 2014, the state of California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The Act requires local governments and water agencies to develop a plan to address overdrafted groundwater basins. With multiple users, both agricultural and domestic, the eastern Merced County groundwater subbasin is considered critically overdrafted.

Under SGMA, local governments must take actions to reach sustainability of their regional groundwater. If a community fails to address its regional groundwater challenges – or meet the set deadlines – the State of California is required to step in and manage a community’s local groundwater.

Funded through the California Department of Water Resources, the grant received by eastern Merced County will be used to support the following:

- Development of the required groundwater sustainability plan for the eastern Merced groundwater basin.
- A pilot project for the community of Planada, recharging local groundwater with surface water. Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water for the community of Planada.
- A study of a potential intertie between Meadowbrook Water Co. and other local municipal water providers.
- Two Groundwater monitoring wells located in various locations in the El Nido area, which generally receive groundwater recharge through MID operations.

In accordance with the state's SGMA requirements, three local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies – or GSAs – have been formed to address groundwater for the Merced Groundwater Basin. They are: Merced Subbasin GSA; Merced Irrigation Urban GSA; and Turner Island Water District GSA.

Residents and property owners within the Merced Irrigation District, the cities of Merced, Atwater, and Livingston, or the communities of Planada, Le Grand and Winton are within the Merced Irrigation Urban GSA.

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