MID-KINGS RIVER
GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

July 28, 2026

Mid-Kings River GSA Proposing Funding Plan to Support State Probation Exit and Keep Groundwater Decisions Local

Proposed funding would support efforts to keep groundwater decisions close to home.

The Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) is proposing a two-part funding package including a land-based assessment and groundwater pumping fee to meet Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requirements and regain local control over groundwater management.

The Board of Directors approved an Engineer's Report detailing the 5-year budget funded through the assessments and accepted the Cost-of-Service Study outlining the pumping fee at the July 28th Board Meeting. The Board also set a public hearing related to the funding package for September 29th at 1:00 p.m.

"This is about keeping groundwater decisions here in Kings County instead of Sacramento," said Chuck Kinney, General Manager of the Mid-Kings River GSA. **"Local landowners understand local conditions better than anyone, but we need the financial resources to prove we can be sustainable locally or decisions will continue to be made for us by the State."**

Why is Funding Needed?

In 2024, the State Water Resources Control Board placed the Tulare Lake Subbasin on probation after determining its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP or Plan) did not provide sufficient evidence that the basin would achieve groundwater sustainability by the required 2040 deadline. The State cited concerns related to groundwater level declines, land subsidence, impacts to drinking water wells, and lack of reliable funding to implement the Plan.

As a result of probation, the State Water Board has taken a more direct role over SGMA starting with requiring landowners to report groundwater extractions and pay fees to cover their regulatory efforts. If probation continues, the State will take further action and advance its own groundwater plan. Under a fully State-managed plan or "Interim Plan", local flexibility would be greatly reduced as decisions like how much groundwater landowners can pump are made by state regulators with less tailoring to local conditions.

The GSA is currently reliant on financial assistance from Kings County for its operations, an unsustainable approach hindering the agency's ability to fully carry out the necessary activities and plan long-term.

A reliable, ongoing revenue source is a critical piece of demonstrating readiness and ability to manage locally, get off the probationary pathway, and avoid a State-developed Interim Plan.

Why a Local Approach to SGMA Matters

Since being put on probation, the Mid-Kings River GSA has expanded stakeholder engagement through its Stakeholder Advisory Committee, made up of local landowners who are refining the approach to local groundwater management. The funding proposal, including the 5-year agency budget, was developed through direct collaboration with Committee members over the course of several months leading up to the development of the Engineer's Report and July 28th Board Meeting.

"A locally led approach allows us to develop policies that reflect the needs of our landowners, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all decisions from the State," stated Kinney. "It also keeps money local, giving the people who fund the agency greater visibility into how those dollars are spent and a stronger voice in shaping groundwater policy."

The State requires sustainability under the SGMA law. The Mid-Kings River GSA's goal is to meet State requirements while keeping decisions informed by the people who depend on water for their livelihoods.

A locally led, locally funded GSA will give our community the autonomy to develop the rules and frameworks that give landowners as much flexibility as possible to operate within changes driven by SGMA.

What Comes Next?

- Property owners affected by the funding proposal will receive notices and a ballot in the mail in August to participate in the decision-making process.
- The land-based assessment will follow Proposition 218 election procedures, including landowner balloting to consider approval of a maximum rate.
- The groundwater pumping fee will follow Proposition 26 procedures and will include public noticing and consideration for adoption by the Board of Directors at a public meeting.
- The Mid-Kings River GSA will be hosting opportunities for the public to engage and ask questions about the proposal at upcoming public workshops in August. Additional information, workshop dates, and public hearing information will be available in the coming weeks.