



Media Release

Board announces tentative schedule for probationary hearings for 6 critically overdrafted groundwater basins

Basins were referred for state intervention earlier this year

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SACRAMENTO – Moving to address the potential for severe impacts to water users and infrastructure in certain groundwater basins that lack plans for sustainable management, the State Water Resources Control Board has proposed a tentative schedule for probationary hearings for [all six basins referred](#) by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) for state intervention under the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\)](#) earlier this year.

Per the proposed schedule, the first two probationary hearings, for the Tulare Lake Subbasin in Kings County and Tule Subbasin in Tulare County, would proceed in December 2023 and January 2024, respectively. By October 2024 the State Water Board would hold hearings for all four remaining basins – Kaweah, Kern County, Delta-Mendota and Chowchilla – in that order.

“The key thing to remember is that a probationary hearing is only that, a hearing,” said Eric Oppenheimer, chief deputy director for the State Water Board. “No determination about whether a basin will be placed on probation has been made. All probationary hearings will be publicly noticed and robust public participation is anticipated and welcomed, especially from water users in the basins themselves.”

Since it is not feasible for the board to conduct hearings on all six basins simultaneously, staff used key factors to determine the proposed sequence of the hearings. These factors included the potential for urgent impacts to drinking water supplies, impacts to infrastructure from subsidence, the amount of overdraft in the basins and the degree of inadequacy in the plans submitted by the basins’ groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs).

GSAs can update their plans before a probationary hearing, potentially precluding the need to designate the basin as probationary. However, board staff must receive updated GSPs with sufficient time for review before the scheduled probationary hearing for the revised plan to be considered. Likewise, GSAs will have ongoing opportunities to update plans to address deficiencies even if a basin is designated as probationary.



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The tentative hearing schedule is the latest in a series of steps to implement SGMA, which is intended to make vulnerable groundwater resources more robust for generations to come through a mix of long-term and near-term measures. While the law recognizes that groundwater management is best accomplished at the local level, it has triggers that provide for [state intervention](#) if certain conditions and goals are not addressed in groundwater sustainability plans, or GSPs.

Probation is the first phase of the state intervention process during which the board will work with GSAs to resolve failures in their plans and require many groundwater pumpers in the basin to report information about their groundwater use. With some exceptions, pumpers who are required to report will also be required to pay fees.

The tentative schedule sets hearing dates far enough in advance to allow for the required public noticing stipulated by SGMA regulations. The board will provide at least 90 days' notice to cities and counties, and 60 days' notice to all known well owners, before it holds a probationary hearing for a basin.

More information about the state intervention process under SGMA is available on the board's [website](#).

The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation for present and future generations.