
State Water Resources Control Board

December 8, 2025

Paul Gosselin
Deputy Director
Sustainable Groundwater Management Office
Department of Water Resources

Sent via Email: Paul.Gosselin@water.ca.gov

RETURNING THE KERN COUNTY SUBBASIN TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES UNDER THE SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT

On March 2, 2023, the Department of Water Resources (Department) found, pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), that the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) for the Kern County Subbasin were inadequate (2022 GSP Inadequate Determination). Upon the Department's 2022 GSP Inadequate Determination, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or Board) assumed regulatory oversight over the Subbasin. On September 17, 2025, the State Water Board adopted [Resolution No. 2025-0029](#), finding that revisions in the Kern County Subbasin's draft GSPs submitted to the Board on June 20, 2025 (draft 2025 GSPs) substantially addressed the deficiencies identified in the 2022 GSP Inadequate Determination as well as additional issues raised by State Water Board staff during review of subsequent GSPs. Resolution No. 2025-0029 directed staff to transmit a letter to the Department formalizing the return of the Kern County Subbasin to Department's jurisdiction, pending Board staff's review of the Kern County Subbasin's adopted GSPs submitted to the Board on September 2, 2025 (adopted 2025 GSPs). Board staff completed review of the adopted GSPs, and this letter serves as notice to the Department that the State Water Board is returning the Kern County Subbasin to the Department's jurisdiction.

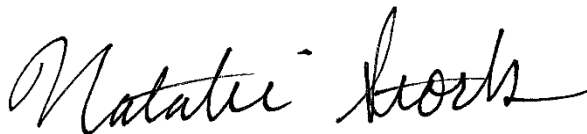
In accordance with the Board's directive to return the subbasin to the Department's jurisdiction, Board staff reviewed the adopted 2025 GSPs for consistency with the draft 2025 GSPs and changes needed to address three priority deficiencies that Board staff identified in the draft 2025 GSPs: (1) providing an adequate mitigation program for drinking water wells impacted by any constituent for which a minimum threshold is established in the GSPs, where groundwater management activities cause concentrations to exceed those minimum thresholds; (2) providing an adequate mitigation program for state small water system wells impacted by groundwater

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | ERIC OPPENHEIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

management activities; and (3) eliminating the sunset provision in the Kern Non-Districted Land Authority Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement. Following review, Board staff determined that the adopted 2025 GSPs were consistent with the draft 2025 GSPs. Board staff further determined that the adopted 2025 GSPs, along with a memorandum that Kern County Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) submitted to Board staff on October 21, 2025, describing the progress of developing the mitigation program for state small water system wells impacted by groundwater management activities (enclosed here) satisfactorily resolved the three identified priority deficiencies. Accordingly, designation of the Kern County Subbasin as a probationary basin is unnecessary at this time and the Subbasin is being returned to the jurisdiction of the Department under Chapter 10 of SGMA (Wat. Code, § 10733, seq.) in accordance with Resolution No. 2025-0029.

While the State Water Board found the Kern County Subbasin's adopted 2025 GSPs, along with the October 21, 2025, memorandum on well mitigation program, are sufficient to return the subbasin to the Department's jurisdiction, Board staff included recommendations for GSP improvement in the [Board Staff Review \(released on September 5, 2025\)](#) to further SGMA's sustainability goals. For the GSAs' consideration and for the Department's awareness during annual and periodic reviews under Water Code sections 10733.4 and 10733.8, both the GSAs and the Department may consider the recommendations for GSP improvement contained in Section 4.0 of the Board Staff Review.

Please contact me at Natalie.Stork@waterboards.ca.gov if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Natalie Stork". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Natalie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Stork".

Natalie Stork, P.G.
Director
Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management
State Water Resources Control Board

Enclosure: Kern County Subbasin State Small Water System Financial Assistance
Track Updates Memorandum



M E M O R A N D U M

Date: October 20, 2025

To: Natalie Stork
Sustainable Groundwater Management Director
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100 Sacramento, California 95812-1000

Via: Electronic Mail

From: Kristin Pittack
Kern County Subbasin Plan Manager / Point-of-Contact
kernsubbasinpoc@rinconconsultants.com

Subject: Kern County Subbasin State Small Water System Financial Assistance Track Updates

This memorandum is submitted on behalf of the Kern County Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (Kern Subbasin). On September 17, 2025, before the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the Kern Subbasin shared their commitment to develop a State Small Water System Financial Assistance Track, which would be incorporated into the Kern Subbasin Well Mitigation Program. This memorandum further documents that commitment and the anticipated process for development and adoption of the State Small Water System Financial Assistance Track (Financial Assistance Track) for inclusion into the Kern Subbasin Well Mitigation Program.

As conveyed at the SWRCB public hearing on September 17, the Financial Assistance Track will be available to State Small Water Systems, as defined by the Health and Safety Code as being systems “for the provision of piped water to the public for human consumption that serves at least five, but not more than 14, service connections and does not regularly serve drinking water to more than an average of 25 individuals daily for more than 60 days out of the year” (Health & Safety Code, § 116275(n)). State Small Water Systems are not considered public water systems.

In general, the Kern Subbasin will provide financial assistance up to \$100,000 per system in the event that a groundwater well serving the system becomes dry after January 1, 2015, if determined that the impact is due to GSA groundwater management activities, and the State Small Water System otherwise meets application eligibility criteria for assistance. Further, under the Financial Assistance Track, emergency drinking water will be supplied to residents served by the system. To determine how best to disseminate financial assistance, the Kern Subbasin expects to conduct a case-by-case analysis to evaluate available options. Examples of such options include working with a third-party contractor such as Self-Help Enterprises to assist the State Small Water System, working with a Technical Assistance Provider through the SWRCB SAFER program, and engaging an independent contractor to implement the solution for the groundwater well in question.

Currently, the Kern Subbasin is working on draft language to revise the Kern Subbasin Well Mitigation Program. This draft language will set forth the framework for such assistance as well as the application submittal and review process. Once the revisions are completed, the revised Kern Subbasin Well Mitigation Program document will need to be considered by each GSA for approval because it would be considered as a minor amendment to the Kern Subbasin 2025 Groundwater Sustainability Plans. With respect to timing, the Kern Subbasin set a goal for completing this task by the end of 2025, or early 2026 at the latest. In the meantime, the Kern Subbasin is actively considering



Kern County Subbasin
Groundwater Sustainability Agencies

requests from State Small Water Systems for assistance and conducting case-by-case analysis as to eligibility for assistance.

Please contact Kristin Pittack at kernsubbasinpoc@rinconconsultants.com if you have further questions regarding the State Small Water System Financial Assistance Track.

Sincerely,

Kristin Pittack, MS
Kern County Subbasin Plan Manager / Point-of-Contact