



Groundwater Resources Association of California Board Policy Principles and Legislative Guidelines

Purpose: The Groundwater Resources Association of California (GRA) Legislative Guidelines (Guidelines) reflect policy positions adopted by GRA's Board of Directors and/or Legislative Committee. The Guidelines guide GRA's legislative advocates when they evaluate proposed legislation that may affect GRA and/or its members. Legislation that meets or fails to meet the principles set forth in the Guidelines may be supported or opposed by the GRA Legislative Committee, accordingly. Legislation that does not appear to meet the principles set forth in the Guidelines or that has complex or varied implications will continue to be presented to GRA's Board of Directors and Legislative Committee in advance of any position being taken.

I. GRA Mission

GRA is dedicated to resource management that protects and improves groundwater supply and quality through education and technical leadership.

GRA supports legislation that:

1. Promotes professional development of scientists, engineers, and others involved in the assessment, development, quality and management of the state's groundwater resources.
2. Encourages the formulation of statewide policy on the development, management and protection of the state's groundwater resources, soil and groundwater remediation, and environmental assessments.
3. Develops and funds scientific educational programs that promote the understanding and implementation of groundwater assessment, protection, and management.
4. Facilitates the development of alternative technologies and standardization of methods to advance assessment, restoration, management, and protection of California's groundwater resources.

II. Sustainable Groundwater Management

GRA supports sustainable groundwater management as defined in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act that is designed to protect, improve and enhance the quantity and quality of groundwater supplies for long-term beneficial use. Accordingly, the association encourages, supports, and promotes legislation consistent with the following objectives:

A. Basin Operation

1. Support for policies and practices that prevent, reduce or eliminate the depletion of groundwater resources and the associated adverse consequences (e.g., inelastic land subsidence, salt-water intrusion, excessive pump lifts, de-watering of shallow wells).
2. Protection of the long-term integrity and dependability of the groundwater supply.
3. Protection of groundwater rights in accordance with all legal requirements.
4. Support and encouragement for groundwater management programs that include basin management objectives for water levels, water quality, inelastic land subsidence and surface water-groundwater interaction; metrics and performance measures to monitor progress; and management actions to meet basin management objectives.
5. Remove barriers to increasing groundwater recharge done in a manner that considers the benefits of supply reliability with groundwater quality protection and improvement or minimal degradation consistent with state policies.
6. Support for groundwater management programs that promote ongoing assessment and management of groundwater storage (including in lieu storage), conjunctive use, and basin replenishment (natural and augmented). The programs will include measures to preclude adverse consequences (e.g., mobilization/spreading of contamination plumes) and mitigation of potential third-party impacts.
7. Development of, and coordination with, flood and stormwater capture programs, reclaimed/recycled water programs to evaluate opportunities for basin replenishment with flood and stormwater and reclaimed/recycled water with appropriate science and regulation to protect basin water quality.

8. Monitoring programs capable of tracking changes in groundwater levels, groundwater gradients, groundwater quality (including the location/spreading of contamination plumes), surface water flow, and surface water quality in order to evaluate basin conditions and responses to basin management activities.
9. Mapping and enhanced identification of groundwater basins, including physical boundaries, the physical structure and characteristics of the aquifer system, basin recharge areas, and potential land uses that may cause groundwater contamination.
10. Identification of local government agencies responsible for groundwater management and monitoring activities and identification of opportunities for integrated water resources management.
11. Development, application and evaluation of creative management of groundwater supplies, including conjunctive use operations that involve intra/interbasin water transfers and exchanges with appropriate safeguards and consideration of third party impacts.
12. Development of science to better understand the physical infrastructure of California's groundwater basins in relation to available water supplies and historical and projected water demands and land use strategies in the basin.
13. Consider potential climate change impacts in groundwater basin planning and operations, including vulnerability assessments, developing impact metrics, preparing strategies and implementation approaches under uncertain future supply scenarios.

B. Groundwater Management and Governance

GRA supports groundwater governance that promotes the policy objectives identified above. Because each groundwater basin is unique in its physical characteristics, beneficial uses, water rights, stakeholders and other features, GRA supports regionally coordinated, local control over groundwater management as defined in SGMA, with new groundwater sustainability agencies formed to implement sustainable groundwater management.

C. Groundwater Information

GRA recognizes that large amounts of groundwater data are currently being collected by multiple agencies and organizations statewide and there are many

users of groundwater data. GRA also recognizes that better coordination and improved and consistent methods for the collection of groundwater information, at both the local and regional level, will promote the sustainable management and protection of California's groundwater resources. Accordingly GRA supports:

1. Providing for coordinated approaches by all levels of government, including federal, state, regional and local agencies to effectively monitor, protect, and manage groundwater.
2. Improved and consistent methods for the collection, storing, transfer, and communication of California's groundwater, subsurface and related information including Drillers (well) logs, with support and encouragement for state agencies to develop web portals to make data more easily manageable and accessible
3. Providing funding for preparation of a report by the state in coordination with local agencies, on the status of abandoned wells, which are wells that have permanently ceased to serve any useful purpose, or are in such a state of repair that their original purpose cannot be reasonably achieved.
4. Recognition of the importance of science education and the application of earth sciences (including hydrology and hydrogeology) and engineering to sustain California's groundwater resources.
5. Supporting funding for research, investigations, and educational programs performed by academia and state and federal agencies, including (but not limited to) the California Department of Water Resources, California State Water Resources Control Board, California Geological Survey and US Geological Survey in the areas of geologic, hydrologic, and hydrogeologic research, geologic and hazards mapping, water resource data collection, evaluation and data dissemination.
6. Collaborative efforts to advance water and groundwater science and technology with public and private partnerships, between all levels of government, including states, national and international affiliations.

III. Water Quality Protection and Improvement

GRA supports appropriations and program priorities that emphasize resource protection efforts, protection of surface-water and groundwater quality, source water protection, as well as programs that improve the quality of our resources through better management practices and implementation of timely remedial activities. Control of sources and prevention of groundwater contamination, by constituents such as MTBE, perchlorate and perchloroethylene, should be a national and statewide objective, as well as improved groundwater remedial technologies to mitigate contamination, thereby reducing future resource impacts and optimizing resource needs.

GRA recognizes that additional waste reduction, education, technology transfer, and funding for continued research on better cleanup methodologies are needed. However, GRA also recognizes that our society is dependent on certain chemical usage and thus a goal of complete non-degradation may be economically and technically impractical in some circumstances.

GRA recognizes the long-term water quality consequences that may occur due to historically accepted practices that have contributed to ubiquitous issues relating to increased salinity, including nitrate concentrations.

Considering all the above, GRA supports legislation, regulations, appropriations and administrative efforts consistent with the following water quality protection program objectives:

1. Protect the long-term beneficial uses of surface water bodies and groundwater basins.
2. Allow and encourage innovative approaches to source water quality protection.
3. Provide the necessary funding for research on the occurrence, treatment, health effects, and environmental clean up related to surface water and groundwater supplies affected by natural or man-made contaminants.
4. Incorporate sound scientific principles in adopting drinking water standards.
5. Support statewide, regional and local monitoring programs, analyzing for a broader range of constituents based on the water quality concerns of a given groundwater basins, including analytical

parameters such as age dating, environmental isotopes, and lower detection levels for VOCs.

6. Groundwater basin monitoring and assessments consistent with SB 1938 (Groundwater Management Act of 2002), SBX7-6 (2009 Statewide, Comprehensive Groundwater Level Monitoring) named the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring program (CASGEM), and with appropriate prioritization of basins, as being considered under CASGEM and being implemented under the AB 599 process (Groundwater Quality Monitoring Act of 2001).
7. Laws and regulations to explicitly include protection of surface-water, groundwater quality and public drinking water supplies as goals, and to expedite financial and other assistance for groundwater cleanup programs.
8. Identification, monitoring, containment and remediation of groundwater contamination to enhance long-term beneficial use of groundwater resources.
9. Additional funding and staff to help the California State Agencies such as the Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, and Regional Water Quality Control Boards accomplish their groundwater resources and groundwater quality protection missions.
10. Additional laws and regulation as necessary and appropriate to ensure: complete transparency of all information on oil & gas drilling and operations such as hydraulic fracturing; that oil & gas wells are properly sealed below the depth of the Underground Sources of Drinking Water as defined by US EPA; and that all abandoned (orphan) oil & gas wells are properly plugged.

IV. Watershed and Integrated Regional Water Management

GRA recognizes that comprehensive multidisciplinary approaches to water supply planning and groundwater issues may best be managed on a watershed and regional basis to adequately address water quality problems and threats to groundwater.

A watershed management approach attempts to comprehensively address natural resource issues, including groundwater, in a manner that includes multiple jurisdictions and cuts across political boundaries, integrates concerns about surface-water and groundwater quality and quantity and coordinates insights from the natural and social sciences.

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a collaborative effort to manage all aspects of water resources in a region, which crosses jurisdictional, watershed, and political boundaries; involves multiple agencies, stakeholders, individuals, and groups; and attempts to address the issues and differing perspectives of all the entities involved through mutually beneficial solutions.

GRA believes that successful watershed and IRWM approaches must include the support, participation, and leadership of water rights holders and other local stakeholders and land users. Accordingly, GRA generally supports legislation, appropriations, and administrative efforts consistent with the following objectives:

1. Education and Awareness programs that ensure that key groups receive environmental education and use modern technology approaches to enhance programs.
2. Greater coordination between and among government agencies to improve the delivery of information and support to local watershed and regional planning efforts.
3. Monitoring and research efforts that increase coordination of existing and new watershed monitoring programs, ensure data consistency among all monitoring groups, and provide meaningful and timely watershed and regional information to decision-makers and the public.
4. Planning and prioritization to encourage consideration of watershed and regional health in local planning and decision-making.
5. Funding and technical assistance to support watershed and IRWM protection and restoration efforts and develop education campaigns

that inform watershed and IRWM groups about financial and technical assistance tools.

6. Implementation approaches that ensure that watershed and IRWM plans lead to action including appropriate monitoring, maintenance and evaluation activities, and adequate enforcement of laws and regulations.
7. Support for sustainability strategies in Watershed and IRWM planning linking efficient management of local surface and ground water resources.
8. Evaluation approaches using established science-based indicators for watershed and regional programs and projects, and incorporate outcome-oriented measures into assistance programs, also common indicators for assessing watershed and IRWM health and common measures for tracking and reporting performance.
9. Support for the development of strategies, approaches and projects to address and adapt to possible impacts of climate change on a watershed and IRWM basis, through regional climate change impacts and adaptation analysis that include initial vulnerability assessments, impact measurement, strategy evaluation and implementation under uncertainty principles.

V. Water Conservation and Water Use Efficiency

GRA supports programs and activities that increase water conservation and improve water use efficiency. GRA recognizes that there is a need for improved water conservation and water use efficiency practices, and that many urban water systems are in the process of meeting and exceeding the CUWCC BMPs, which include water use surveys, audits, conservation, and efficiency elements. As the largest use of water in the state, GRA believes agriculture needs to also take aggressive measures to increase water conservation and improve water use efficiency wherever possible.

Accordingly, the association encourages, supports, and promotes legislation consistent with the following objectives and outcomes:

1. Incentives to increase water conservation and water use efficiency in urban areas and rural areas through further implementation of the CUWCC BMPs. This may include, but not be limited to, programs such as adoption of allocated tiered conservation rate structures, high efficiency plumbing fixtures and appliances, optimized irrigation systems, appropriately designed landscaping for climatological region, public education and outreach to help increase water conservation and improve water use efficiency of all California urban and rural residential settings.
2. Incentives to increase water conservation and water use efficiency in agricultural areas include adopting a water management strategy, using water conserving irrigation systems, and using water budgets and deficit irrigation techniques. Sound water management contributes to sustainability through increasing fruit quality (economic), reducing the need for water and fertilizers (environmental, social and economic), and preventing pollution from soil erosion and off-site movement of nutrients.
3. Comprehensive strategies for water use efficiency that recognize demand reduction measures are to be combined with implementation of efficient management of all surface and groundwater resources in order to achieve the ultimate goal of watershed sustainability.

VI. Funding for Groundwater

GRA acknowledges current projections of continued population growth with corresponding future water supply and water quality challenges. GRA further acknowledges the critically significant challenges California faces to address widespread and chronic groundwater depletion, develop and implement a Delta solution, changing climate, and drought. To meet these critically significant challenges will require a number of innovative and comprehensive solutions which will be very costly, but absolutely necessary to maintain the economic health of California and will necessarily require more efficient management of surface water and groundwater resources. Substantial capital investment, on the order of several billions of dollars per year or more, is critically needed in California for water supply infrastructure and conveyance, groundwater studies, monitoring and recharge facility construction, watershed and water quality assessment and restoration.

GRA supports funding for groundwater programs to achieve goals consistent with those outlined in these Guidelines. GRA advocates for recognition of the necessary funding to better understand, monitor and sustainably manage groundwater.

GRA opposes legislation that would divert bond or other revenue funding for groundwater protection, assessment and management from their original purpose to backfill State Departments or the General Fund.