



Communication & Engagement Plan

BOARD APPROVED: APRIL 14, 2020





Montecito Groundwater Basin

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Mission Statement

The Montecito Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's mission is to ensure a reliable and sustainable groundwater supply for the community through effective basin management pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.



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Glossary of Terms/Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
Agency	Montecito Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency.
Aquifer	An underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock, rock fractures, or unconsolidated material (gravel, sand, or silt) that yields significant amounts of groundwater to wells or springs (DWR Bulletin 118). ¹
CEP	Communication & Engagement Plan
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
Engagement	Efforts made to understand and involve stakeholders and their concerns in the activities and decision-making of the Agency.
Groundwater Basin	An important source of water stored in the earth beneath our feet, in spaces between sand, soils, and fractured rock, is known as an aquifer. Layers of aquifers make up a groundwater basin.
GSA	Groundwater Sustainability Agency.
GSP	Groundwater Sustainability Plans
Montecito Groundwater Basin	The Montecito Groundwater Basin covers 11.5 square miles and is situated in the southwestern coastal area of Santa Barbara County.
SGMA	Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
Stakeholder and Interested Parties	Individuals or parties with interest in the Montecito Groundwater Basin GSP.

¹ DWR Bulletin 118, available online at <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118>.

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Background on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act & Groundwater Sustainability Agency Formation

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown on September 16, 2014, created a framework for statewide groundwater management in California. Sustainable groundwater management is to be implemented by Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) through the development and implementation of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). Sustainable groundwater management is defined by SGMA as *the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results. This avoidance of undesirable results is measured through six sustainability indicators:*

1. Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a significant and unreasonable depletion of supply if continued over the planning and implementation horizon
2. Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage
3. Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion
4. Significant and unreasonable degradation of water quality
5. Significant and unreasonable land subsidence
6. Depletion of interconnected surface water and groundwater that has significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of the surface water

California Water Code Section 10720.5(b) says that nothing in the legislation “determines or alters surface water rights or groundwater rights under common law or any provisions of law that determines or grants surface water rights”

The Montecito Groundwater Basin is categorized as a “medium priority” basin by the **California Department of Water Resources** (DWR). Compliance with SGMA is therefore required, including GSA formation and GSP development, adoption, and implementation.

Groundwater Sustainability Agency Formation

As the legislative intent of SGMA is to recognize and preserve the authority of local agencies to manage groundwater, SGMA required the formation of GSAs in critically overdrafted, high-priority, and medium-priority basins. These GSAs form the governance structure responsible for implementing SGMA—specifically, developing the GSP, developing projects toward establishing and maintaining sustainability, and generally realizing the aims of SGMA. Any local agency or combination of local agencies overlying a groundwater basin may form a GSA for the basin. “Local agency” means a local public agency that has water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities within a groundwater basin. As the local agency, the Montecito Water District initiated a 2-year GSA formation process in 2016, which included community outreach via

conventional mail, email, public notices and public meetings and two stakeholder workshops. A single-agency GSA (which is allowed by SGMA), was formed by the Montecito Water District. Specifically, the Montecito Water District adopted Resolution 2169 on July 24, 2018, thereby giving notice to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) of

its intention to become the GSA pursuant to SGMA for the Montecito Groundwater Basin, designated as DWR Basin Number 3049 ("Basin"). In November 2018, DWR declared Montecito Water District as the exclusive GSA for the Basin, and in April 2019, the GSA held its inaugural meeting.

Groundwater

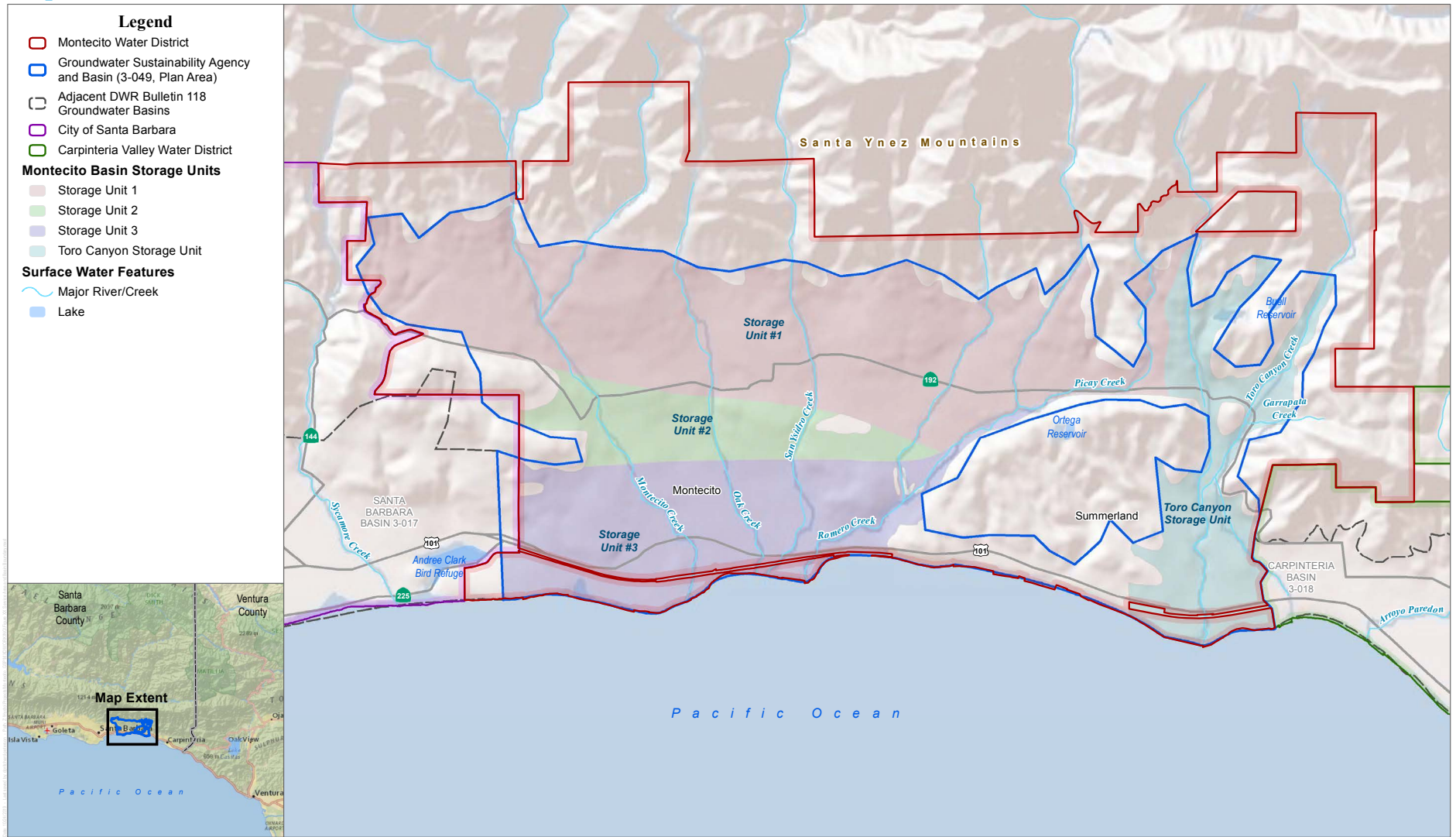
What is Groundwater?

Water gets into the ground mostly through snowmelt and rain seeping into the soil and broken rocks underneath the ground and through overland flow in channels, such as creeks, streams, rivers, and ponds.

The water infiltrating the underground basin moves gradually, pulled by gravity, into the saturated zone of the subsurface. From here, groundwater will flow

toward points of discharge, such as rivers, lakes, or the ocean, to begin the cycle anew. Groundwater is collected with wells and pumps, or it can flow naturally to the surface via seepage or springs. Groundwater can be thousands of years old, although typically it is extracted within years or decades after it originally moves underground through small openings within porous material, called aquifers.

Map of the Montecito Groundwater Basin



DUDEK 0 0.5 1 Miles

Montecito Groundwater Sustainability Agency and Basin Boundary

Groundwater Sustainability Plan

A GSP is a required document with statutorily mandated contents, and is ultimately a tool used to help a GSA sustainably manage a basin. The criteria for sustainable management, including determining what is **significant and unreasonable** within the parameters of SGMA for the groundwater basin managed by that GSA, must be assessed, with input from stakeholders, before the GSP can be adopted.¹

It is the express intent of the Agency to fully engage the community in the process of GSP development in order to implement its mission, comply with SGMA, and serve the residents of the Montecito Groundwater Basin.

Why is Groundwater Important in Montecito?

Public wells owned by Montecito Water District and many private wells draw from the Montecito Groundwater Basin. Groundwater is heavily relied upon for residential use, along with some commercial and agricultural uses. Available data suggests that groundwater levels are low following the most recent and worst drought in the region's history. The Montecito GSA is charged with ensuring sustainable ongoing supply for the basin users, while at the same time avoiding undesirable results.

¹ See "What Is Groundwater?" inset for a definition of groundwater and its importance to residents of the Montecito Groundwater Basin, based on the Water Education Foundation's 2015 SGMA Handbook, which is available online at https://www.watereducation.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/groundwatermgthandbook_oct2015.pdf.

2 / Introduction to the Communication & Engagement Plan



DWR released a Guidance Document for Groundwater Sustainability Plan Stakeholder Communication & Engagement in January, 2018. The Guidance Document details best practices to increase transparency in the GSP development process. **This Communication & Engagement Plan (CEP) conforms to the Guidance Document established by DWR, and has been tailored go above and beyond requirements to promote local involvement and reflect the value that the Montecito Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agency) places on local stakeholder participation.**

This **CEP** is a living document designed to provide a guide for public involvement through the development and submittal of the GSP. The anticipated timeline for these activities is through the 3- to 5-year time period in which the GSP is prepared and approved. As the Agency gets closer to completion of the GSP, this CEP may be reviewed and adapted to provide for community outreach and engagement through GSP implementation.

3 / Purpose, Goals & Outcomes of Community Engagement

Montecito Groundwater Basin Mission Statement

The Montecito Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's mission is to ensure a reliable and sustainable groundwater supply for the community through effective basin management pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Purpose

The Agency is committed to developing a GSP that is reflective of and responsive to the values and goals of basin stakeholders. The purpose of this CEP is to provide a guide outlining how and when stakeholders and the public can actively engage in the process. This document serves as a tool to support the stakeholders, the public, and the Agency throughout the development of the GSP.

Goals

Effective communication and community engagement are intended to achieve the following goals:

- Enhance public understanding of groundwater resources in the Montecito Groundwater Basin and the purpose and need for a Groundwater Sustainability Plan.
- Engage all interested stakeholders in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan process.
- Increase public knowledge on SGMA regulations, laws and compliance

- Educate public regarding users of groundwater
- Promote informed community feedback throughout the Groundwater Sustainability Plan preparation.
- Coordinate communication and involvement between the Agency and other local agencies (including other Groundwater Sustainability Agencies), elected and appointed officials, and the public.
- Employ a variety of outreach methods that make public participation easy and accessible.
- Respond to public concerns and provide accurate and up-to-date information.
- Manage the Communication & Engagement Plan in a manner that provides maximum value to the public and an efficient use of local agency resources.

Outcomes

The desired outcomes for this CEP are as follows:

1. Provide the public and stakeholders with accurate and up-to-date information in all phases of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan development.
2. Obtain public and stakeholder involvement in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan development process.
3. Consider public and stakeholder input in the development of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.
4. Succeed in the development of a responsive and well-supported Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

4 / Community & Stakeholders

Stakeholders have interests that can be affected by decisions made by a Groundwater Sustainability Agency; stakeholders often include individuals, businesses, schools, land stewardship organizations, and state government agencies. A vital, ongoing task of the Agency is to proactively solicit engagement and involve diverse representation throughout the GSP development process.

Recognizing that public and stakeholder engagement serves an important function in the successful development and implementation of a responsive and well-supported GSP, the Agency is pursuing a robust engagement program. SGMA (Section 10723.2) calls for consideration of all interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater if they exist in the basin, and suggests the following potential stakeholder categories summarized in the table below:

Category of Interest	Potential Stakeholder Group Categories
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Groups • Community Leaders
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City and County Planning Departments • Regional Land Use Agencies
Private Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Pumpers • Domestic Users • Schools and Colleges • Mutual Water Companies • Private Water Companies
Urban/Agricultural Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Agencies • Municipal Water Companies • Resource Conservation Districts • Farm Bureau
Industrial Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial and Industrial Self-Suppliers and Groups • Local Trade Associations or Groups
Environmental & Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Groups
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Relators Associations and Other Business Associations • State Senator and Assembly Members • Supervisorial Members
Human Right to Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged Communities/ Severely Disadvantaged Communities and Environmental Justice
Tribes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal Government
Federal and State Lands & Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Forest • California Department of Fish and Wildlife • State Lands Commission • State Water Board • Regional Water Quality Control Board • Coastal Commission
Integrated Regional Water Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Water Management Group

Stakeholders in Adjacent Basins

Other important stakeholders in the development of the GSP and in ongoing Agency coordination and collaboration include the Carpinteria Valley Groundwater Basin and the Santa Barbara Groundwater Basin. The Agency has Memoranda of Understanding in place for the coordination of groundwater boundary discussions and open dialogue on all SGMA issues with the Carpinteria Valley Water District and the City of Santa Barbara, the only two basins adjacent to the Montecito Groundwater Basin.

It is anticipated that the Agency will collaborate on the development of the GSP with these agencies, as well as with the County of Santa Barbara, which is the land use agency with jurisdiction over the Montecito Groundwater Basin.

The Agency is always seeking to educate the public at large on the importance of groundwater for our community, and engage new members in each of the categories to participate in the GSP development process.

4 / Communication Tools & Venues for Engaging

The Agency supports and encourages members of the public and stakeholders to participate in the GSP development process. The Agency will develop and host a variety of opportunities for **Stakeholders & Interested Parties** to participate in the development and implementation of the GSP, including workshops, public hearings, Board and Committee meetings, Advisory Committee meetings, and through written comments. This section summarizes the wide range of communication tools and venues for engaging that will facilitate community participation.

Communication Tools

■ Stakeholders & Interested Parties List

SGMA requires the development and maintenance of a Stakeholders & Interested Parties list. Public and stakeholder engagement began in 2016 with the GSA formation process and included substantial outreach, community meetings, and the initiation of a Stakeholders & Interested Parties list. The Agency will use the Stakeholders & Interested Parties list developed during Groundwater Sustainability Agency formation as a baseline for the GSP development stakeholder list.

The Agency has and will continue to proactively develop the Stakeholders & Interested Parties list by conducting stakeholder mapping to ensure that the list represents an adequate, balanced, and diverse group of stakeholders. The list is broad and is intended to include anyone who requests to stay informed about SGMA activities and anyone the Agency determines should be informed about the

process and/or the outcome of the planning effort.

The Agency's primary method of communicating with all Stakeholders & Interested Parties on the list is via **email**. Join the Stakeholders & Interested Parties email list today in one of three ways:

- **Email info@montecitogsa.com**
- **Visit www.montecitogsa.com**
- **Call 805.969.2271**

■ Agency Website

Available 24/7, the Agency website will be the primary source of ongoing, up-to-date information for the public. The website is fully operational and can be found at the Agency's website: www.montecitogsa.com.

In addition to being a tool for distributing and archiving meeting and communication materials, the website will serve as an educational resource for the community. It will provide easy access to information on SGMA and local efforts, and be a repository for meeting minutes, draft GSP language, and supplemental information.

The website includes the following information:

- Home page: Navigation to all topics and "what's new" information
- Groundwater General Information and SGMA Resources
- Agency-Specific Information including:
 - Meeting schedules, meeting materials, updates, FAQs, etc.
 - Substantive information relative to the GSP



Email Updates

Agency staff will send updates to the Stakeholders & Interested Parties list on a regular basis, increasing over time as the GSP is drafted, discussed, and decided upon by the Agency Board. Sign up in one of the three following ways:

- Email info@montecitogsa.com
- Visit www.montecitogsa.com
- Call 805.969.2271

Press Releases

Press releases will be used to announce key milestones in the process, significant aspects of the GSP, and/or developments with the Agency. Press releases will be distributed to local and regional media and the Stakeholders & Interested Parties list.

Public Notices

All Agency Board meetings are noticed in accordance with the Brown Act, and noticed on the Agency website. Agency Board meetings may be noticed in print publications such as Santa Barbara News Press, Montecito Journal, The Independent, and in online publications such as Noozhawk and EdHat.

Informational Materials (Flyers, Advertisements, Postcards)

Flyers and notices (not related to Brown Act compliance) may be posted in public gathering places, including but not limited to libraries, YMCAs, post offices, and local businesses. The Agency may also choose to send out postcards, mailers, or include notices and notifications in mailings to relevant constituents. Advertisements may also be placed in local publications such as Montecito Journal and Montecito Neighbors Magazine.



Venues for Engaging

■ Board & Committee Meetings

The Agency Board is composed of the five publicly elected members of the Montecito Water District who are sworn to adhere to Agency-specific bylaws, which include compliance with the Brown Act. The Agency Board has formed two committees to date, the Strategic Planning Committee and the Finance Committee, and may form others as determined necessary. All Agency Board and Committee meetings are publicly noticed, open to the public, and provide a forum for public comment.

Regularly scheduled Agency meetings occur quarterly in January, April, July, and October on the second Tuesday of the month. All dates, times, agendas, and location information is on the website (www.montecitogsa.com). Check the website for the latest meeting information, as they are subject to change.

Demonstrating a strong commitment to public engagement, the Agency Board is responsible for the following:

- Adopting and overseeing the implementation of the Communication & Engagement Plan

- Receiving public comments made in writing and at Agency Board meetings
- Considering the recommendations of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee
- Decision-making and actions for all matters, including financing options, pertaining to developing and implementing the GSP

■ Advisory Committee Meetings

The Agency Board has acted to form two advisory committees, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee, with the express goal of gaining public involvement. The Advisory Committee members are appointed by the Agency Board.

- **The Stakeholder Advisory Committee** provides local knowledge and insight, and advises and makes recommendations to the Agency Board concerning non-technical aspects of the development of a GSP.
- **The Technical Advisory Committee** provides local knowledge and insight, and advises and makes recommendations to the Agency Board concerning technical aspects of the development of a GSP.

Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. More details on committee constituents and processes, including meeting locations, times, dates, agendas, and materials are available on the Agency's website: www.montecitogsa.com.

■ Public Meetings & Hearings

Public meetings or hearings are formal opportunities for Stakeholders & Interested Parties to provide comments on programs, plans, and proposals of the Agency. Public meetings and hearings are an important forum for Stakeholders & Interested Parties to share viewpoints and concerns. The Agency will use public hearings to ensure the public is actively engaged in the GSP development and discussions on rates. The Agency may also use less informal public workshops (described below) to solicit feedback and information throughout the GSP development process. The Agency will hold required public meetings and hearings, for example prior to the adoption of any fees and public or adoption of the final GSP.

■ Public Workshops

Public educational workshops provide more personal and less formal opportunities for Stakeholders & Interested Parties to learn about groundwater, SGMA, funding options, and GSP elements. Workshops can be organized in a variety of ways, such as open houses or traditional presentations with facilitated question-and-answer sessions. The format will be designed to maximize opportunities for public input. Workshops may also be held as GSP elements are being developed.

■ Tabling

Participation by Agency staff and Agency Board members in tabling at community events, and targeted tabling (presence in public venues) provide more personal and less formal opportunities for

Stakeholders & Interested Parties to learn about groundwater, SGMA, funding options, and GSP elements. These venues may be used to solicit feedback from Stakeholders & Interested Parties who may prefer more personal, less formal settings and/or feel more comfortable listening, learning, and expressing themselves in a one-on-one environment.

■ Presentations/Event Participation/ Agency Collaboration

The Agency has a number of established relationships in the community, and is actively seeking additional opportunities to productively engage with the public and stakeholders. Community organizations, entities, and all others may contact Agency staff by email at staff@montecitogsa.com, or by calling 805.969.2271. Agency staff is available to make presentations at meetings, table at events, and write for newsletters or community organizational publications. Contact Agency staff and let us know how we can work together.

■ Surveys

Online tools, such as Survey Monkey, will be used for stakeholder mapping, to ensure participation from diverse and balanced segments of the community. Surveys may also be used periodically to gather stakeholder ideas and to gather feedback on key issues.

Office & Mailing Address

You are always welcome to come meet with us in person at the Agency office: **583 San Ysidro Road, Santa Barbara, California 93108.**

Input in writing may be provided at the office or via email at any time.

6 / Implementation Timeline

The anticipated timeline for GSP development is 3 to 5 years. This CEP will be reviewed and updated periodically during that time. As the Agency gets closer to completion of the GSP, this document may be adapted to provide for community outreach and engagement through implementation.

Years One & Two

(January 2019–December 2021)

In Years One and Two, the Agency Board will hire legal counsel (pending/completed); hire rate/fee consultants (completed); apply for Proposition 1 Groundwater Sustainability Plan funding grant (completed); adopt various documents including bylaws and a CEP (completed/pending); begin development of the GSP; and determine the necessity for a short-term mechanism for funding the Agency.

Years Two–Five

(January 2020–December 2024)

In Years Two through Five, program-specific engagement activities will be focused on development of GSP elements. The GSP will be prepared iteratively and in a logical progression, building on previously developed technical and policy information. Throughout the process of preparing the GSP, background materials along with draft text, figures, and tables for each section will be provided to the Agency staff and Agency Board,

and made available for public comment through communication tools and engagement venues as described.

APPENDIX A provides the projected Groundwater Sustainability Plan Development Schedule as of the date this CEP was adopted. The most current version of this document will be maintained on the Agency website: www.montecitogsa.com.

APPENDIX B provides a sample table of engagement activities, including timeframes and key roles. Ongoing communication and engagement tasks and activities of the Agency revolve around the communication tools and venues for engagement, including website maintenance, emailing updates, issuing press releases, creating and disseminating informational materials, and planning and conducting public meetings. These engagement activities will support public outreach and facilitate public input throughout the development process. Project or program-specific engagement activities may be developed to meet the outreach goals of a specific project or program.

7 / Evaluation and Assessment



Formal and informal evaluation and assessment tools such as surveys, open forums, discussions and meetings, emails, phone calls, and workshops will be used to solicit ongoing public and stakeholder feedback on the Agency's process, methods, venues, and tools. The Agency will consider input and align outreach with public engagement needs and requirements throughout the GSP development process.

Communication and engagement will be a standing item for discussion on Committee agendas, and will be included on the Agency Board agenda at least annually for discussion, review, and action as appropriate.

This CEP will be reviewed annually by Agency staff, with Agency Board and Committee input, and updated as appropriate with a focus on incorporating tools and techniques that worked well in previous years and modifying or eliminating tools that failed to engage Stakeholders & Interested parties.

8 / Conclusion



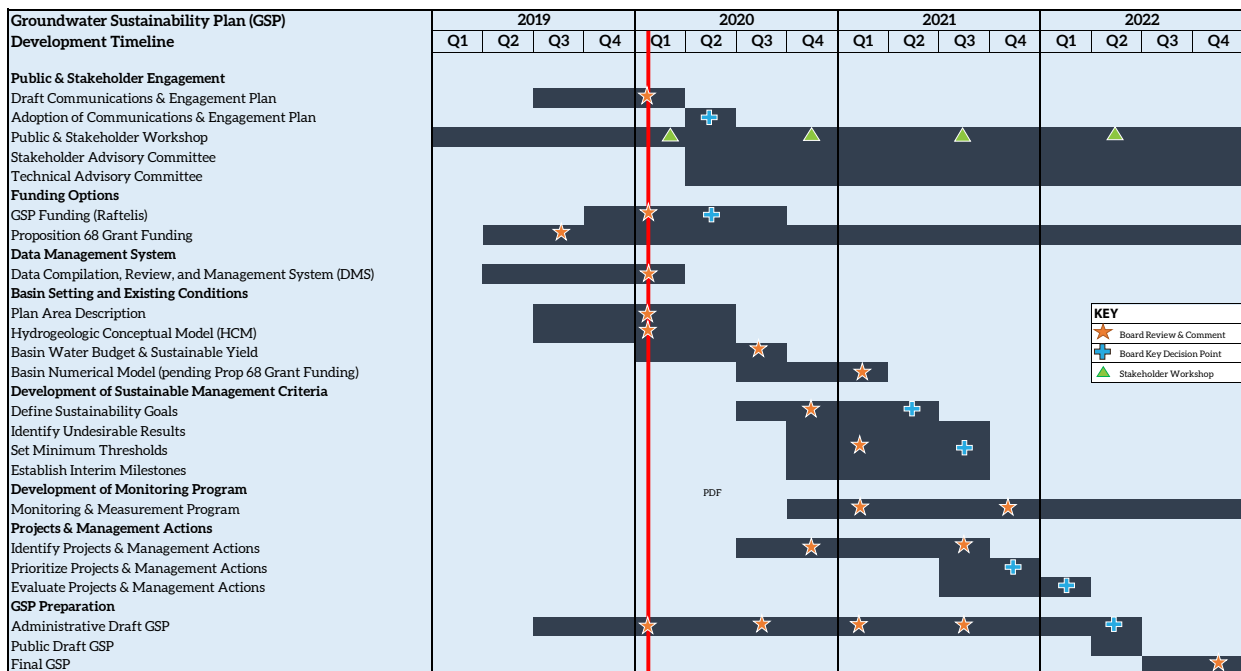
True engagement requires policymakers and the public not only to listen, but also to have a voice.

In keeping with its mission to ensure a reliable and sustainable groundwater supply for the community through effective local management pursuant to SGMA, the Agency will solicit engagement from Stakeholders & Interested Parties and consider that input in the final adopted GSP.

Appendix A

Groundwater Sustainability Plan Development Schedule

Example of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan Development Schedule to be easily accessible for the public. The most current version of this document will be maintained on the Montecito Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency website: www.montecitogsa.com.



KEY

- Board Review & Comment
- Board Key Decision Point
- Stakeholder Workshop



Appendix B

Communication & Engagement Activities Table

Sample table of engagement activities, including timeframes and key roles (subject to change).

Montecito Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency – Outreach Activities Overview (January 2020)

Activity	Description	Frequency/Timing	Who
Public Meetings (Board)	Public Comment & Attendance	Quarterly	GSA Staff, Board, Public
Public Meetings (Committee)	Public Comment & Attendance	Quarterly or more	GSA Staff, Board, Public
Public Meetings (Advisory Committee)	Public Comment & Attendance	Quarterly or more	GSA Staff, Board, Public
All Basin Postcard Mailing	Print notification / invitation	January, 2020	GSA Staff
Tabling / Community Events	Public Comment & Attendance	Ongoing / as needed	GSA Staff, Board, Public
Public Workshops	Public Comment & Attendance	4 per GSP schedule	GSA Staff, Board, Public
Email Updates	Ongoing Information Delivery	Monthly	GSA Staff
Website	Accessible 24/7	January, 2020	GSA Staff
Advertisements	Ongoing Information Delivery	Monthly / as needed	GSA Staff
Public Notifications	Compliant Information Delivery	Milestones	GSA Staff
Postcards / Mailings	Information Delivery	As needed / required	GSA Staff
Posting of Mailers / Postcards / Flyers	Information Delivery	Ongoing / as needed	GSA Staff
Community Organization Presentations (MA, other)	Information Delivery / Feedback	Ongoing / as needed	GSA Staff, Board, Public

