



## TEHAMA COUNTY GROUNDWATER BASINS

### SGMA IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE PUBLIC MEETINGS SUMMARY

Wednesday, December 3 | Red Bluff Community Center  
Thursday, December 4 | Rodgers Theater in Corning

#### Meeting Materials

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- [Public Meetings Flyer](#)
- [Presentation Slides](#)
- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Meeting Recording](#)

#### Meeting Overview

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The Tehama County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) hosted two public meetings on December 3 in Red Bluff and 4 in Corning, 2025 to discuss the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The objectives for the meeting included the following:

- Educate the public on SGMA requirements and implementation, current groundwater conditions, and overdraft estimates.
- Present the comprehensive projects and management actions underway to help achieve long-term groundwater sustainability in Tehama County (i.e., increase groundwater supply, manage demand, and mitigate dry wells).
- Share an overview of past and future funding structures - including potential state grants and County fees.
- Highlight opportunities to stay involved and improve public engagement going forward.

#### Meeting Attendance

- Red Bluff: 34 attendees (including staff) in person; 8 online attendees
- Corning: 47 attendees (including staff) in person and 4 online attendees

#### Presentation-in-Brief

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District staff and technical consultants, Luhdorff & Scalmanini Consulting Engineers (LSCE), jointly presented at the two meetings, with additions from public engagement consultant the Consensus Building Institute (CBI). The full presentations and recordings of the meetings are linked above under "Meeting Materials." Justin Jenson, Deputy Director of Public Works at the District, opened the meetings describing the core components of the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and the status of its implementation as projects and programs are getting underway. Jacques DeBra at LSCE presented on the groundwater conditions in the Red Bluff and Corning subbasins. Both areas are currently experiencing overdraft, and to track these conditions over time, LSCE has established a monitoring network, recently adding several multi-completion wells funded by state grants. Both the District and LSCE noted that attaining groundwater sustainability will require a balance of demand management actions and recharge activities. In addition, the District introduced the forthcoming Dry

Well Mitigation Program, which aims to provide assistance to residents whose wells are impacted by declining water levels and who meet other specific criteria.

The District presented options for fee structures that the Tehama County Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Board of Directors is considering, to fund both administrative costs for SGMA implementation and projects and management actions. This transition to local funding will be necessary as state funding and grants are wrapping up. The options for administrative costs include usage-based fees in basins or county-wide per-parcel charges, while project costs are proposed to be funded through usage fees in the affected basins. The Board will vote on which method to use in their meeting on December 15.

The presentation content was identical at both meetings, except that the December 4 meeting included more detailed information about funding, which presenters added in response to questions in the December 3 meeting about grant spending and fee structures.

## Public Comments & Questions

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Participants were robustly engaged at both meetings, posing questions and sharing perspectives with staff and consultants. Attendees of both public meetings were critical of the proposal to charge landowners fees to fund groundwater sustainability. At the Red Bluff meeting, attendees primarily asked for clarity on fee structures and an overview of grant spending – what has been funded already and what costs are coming up. Participants also expressed concern that fees will gradually increase over time. In Corning, attendees expressed interest in the details of a dry well mitigation program. Attendees expressed a strong preference for the upcoming dry well mitigation program to retroactively cover wells that have gone dry within the last 2-3 years.

A summation of questions is provided in bold below, followed by presenter responses.

### Fees and Funding Structures

- **Will city residents be charged these fees in addition to their city water bills?** Yes, if the volumetric fee is applied, city residents who are landowners within the basin would pay the District fee on their tax bill in addition to their standard city water fees.
- **What is the expected total cost for property owners in the basin?** If the volumetric fee is applied, the combined proposed administrative fee (\$3.72/AF) and project fee (\$4.42/AF) would cost those in the basin approximately \$8.14 per acre-foot per year. If the Board selects the parcel fees, the administrative costs would be approximately \$26.78/parcel. Fees will also increase gradually over time.
- **How will small landowners who don't irrigate be impacted?** Under a usage-based volumetric structure, small landowners with lower water consumption will pay significantly less than large-scale irrigators. Under the per parcel fee, administrative costs will be spread evenly across all parcels, in acknowledgment that groundwater security will benefit all landowners.
- **How is water usage calculated for irrigators if meters are not required?** An assumed rate of pumping is applied based on crop types on a given acreage. The District encourages well owners to register their wells so they can accurately report their usage data themselves.

- **What is the status of the lawsuit regarding the well registration fee?** In November 2024, the Tehama County Superior Court deemed the GSA's \$0.29 cent per acre well registration fee as illegal. The case is currently in the California Appeals Court; the District will follow the court's ultimate decision once reached.
- **Who is involved with generating the fee schedules for demand management?** The GSA is responsible for determining the final fee structure (volumetric or per parcel-based), which will be informed by a fee study by an independent consultant in spring 2026.

### Groundwater Recharge Projects

- **Is water used for recharge considered a "genuine beneficial use" by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)?** Water used for recharge is not considered a "beneficial use" in and of itself. SWRCB classifies groundwater recharge as a method of diversion and storage.
- **How many recharge projects are currently active in Tehama County?** There are currently no projects fully online; they are all in the design and construction phases. Roughly 300 acre-feet have been recharged in pilot tests.
- **Why haven't these projects been brought online yet?** The delay is primarily due to complex state permitting timelines, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, and the need to prove water availability. For this reason, SWRCB recently introduced temporary permits, which can be processed between 90 to 180 days to expedite the process of bringing recharge projects online. With these temporary permits, projects in Corning are expected to come online by December 2026.
- **How much diverted water actually reaches the aquifer?** It's hard to determine the amount of successful recharge due to evaporation and other environmental factors that may vary site-to-site.

### Dry Well Mitigation and Monitoring

- **How many dry wells currently exist in Tehama County?** The exact number is unconfirmed because reporting is voluntary and older well data in the county is often poor.
- **When will the Dry Well Mitigation program begin?** The program will begin in 2026. The District anticipates a six-month timeframe to finalize the necessary ordinances once the Dry Well Mitigation program is approved in late 2025.
- **What will the timeframe be for residents to receive assistance with dry well replacement?** The Dry Well Mitigation will support well replacement for wells that run dry after the program begins and that meet all other eligibility criteria.
- **How does the voluntary Domestic Well Monitoring Program work?** Participants get free monitoring equipment (funded by state grants) installed on their wells. The device collects data on groundwater levels every four hours, which owners can access via a private dashboard. Data is represented as generalized to a location for other users, so individual well locations and usage are not identifiable.

## Next Steps and Upcoming Project Milestones

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### Next Steps for Funding and Fee Structure

- February 2026: Independent Legal Review of Data and Fee Study. Present
- March 2026: Begin the Process of Public Hearings / Any Required Voting
- July 2026: Have Completed Fee Amounts for 2027 Tax Roll

### Next Steps for Programs/Projects & Actions for Groundwater Users to Help Improve Sustainability

- **Dry Well Mitigation Program:** Details about the Dry Well Mitigation Program will be determined in the early part of 2026.
- **Well Registration:** Register your well to help the County maintain accurate information and correctly assess fees. [Link to well registration form.](#)
- **Water District Connection:** If you're within a water district and not connected, get connected. Email: [TehamaGSA@tcpw.ca.gov](mailto:TehamaGSA@tcpw.ca.gov).
- **Volunteer Domestic Well Monitoring Program:** Volunteer your well to monitor groundwater levels, provide valuable anonymized information for the county and gain insight into your own well operations. [Link to learn more or sign up.](#)
- **Groundwater Recharge:** Construction of initial recharge projects in the Corning Subbasin is anticipated by December 2026. The Tehama GSA is always looking for ideas for recharge projects and landowners who want to help. [Link to submit recharge ideas.](#)

### Upcoming Meetings

Meeting dates and materials are accessible at <https://tehamacountywater.org/meetings/>.

- December 10: Groundwater Commission at 8:30am in the Red Bluff Board Chambers Room (727 Oak Street)
- December 11: Corning Subbasin Advisory Board (CSAB)
- December 15: Flood Control Board of Directors meeting at 10am in the Red Bluff Board Chambers Room (727 Oak Street)
- January 28: North Sacramento River Interbasin Coordination Webinar
- Early February (date TBD): Corning Subbasin GSA – Glenn County Public Meeting
- Mid-February to Early March (*this date has been updated since the public meeting*): Landowner Recharge Workshop