

# The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and the Role of Private Well Owners (De Minimis Pumpers)

Presented by Sierra Ryan  
Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency  
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# What is sustainable groundwater management?

Managing groundwater without causing:



Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a significant and unreasonable depletion of supply



Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage



Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion



Significant and unreasonable degraded water quality



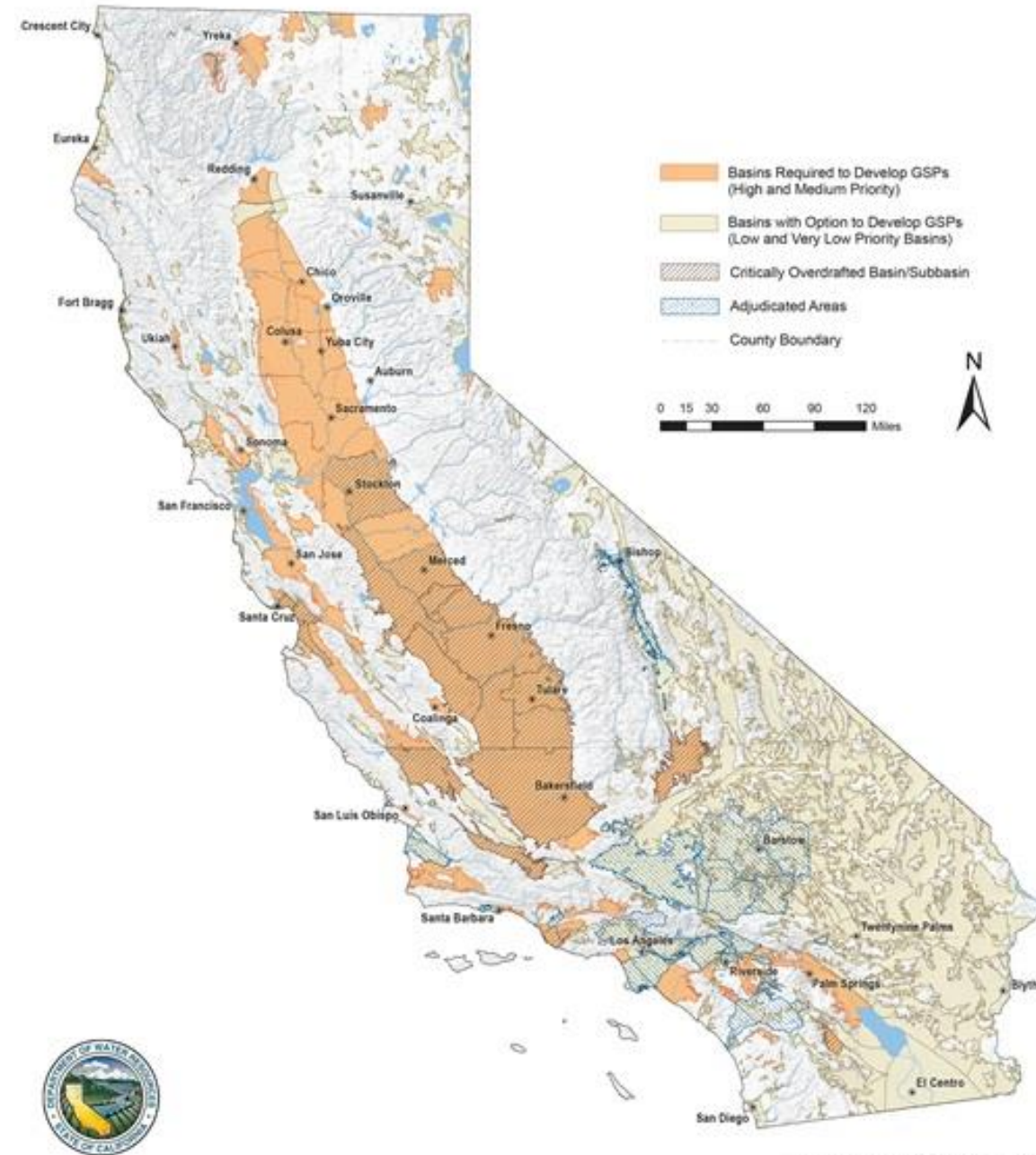
Significant and unreasonable land subsidence



Surface water depletions that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of the surface water

# How to Reach Sustainability

- ▶ High and Medium Priority basins (like ours!) are required to write a Groundwater Sustainability Plan.



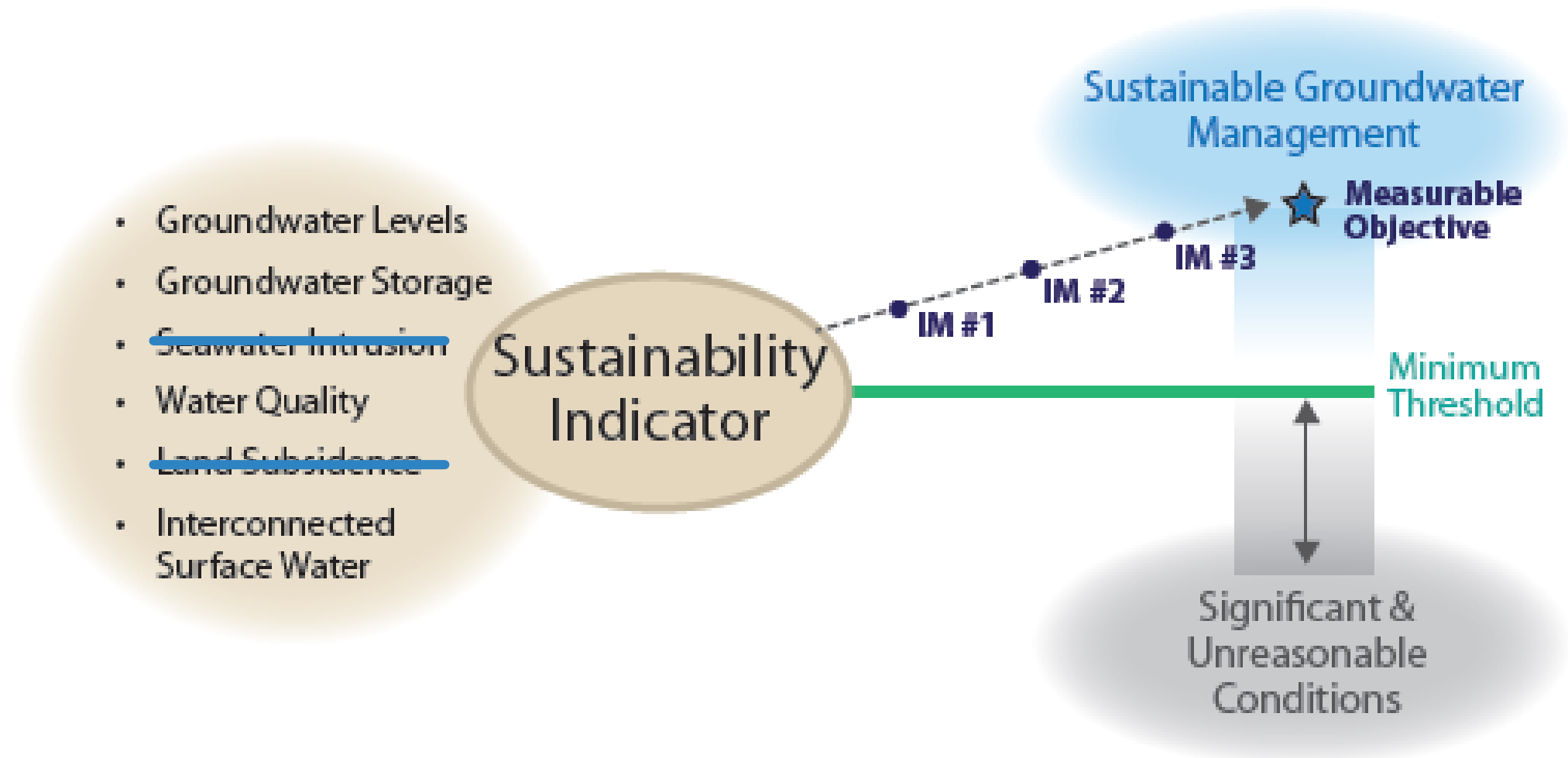




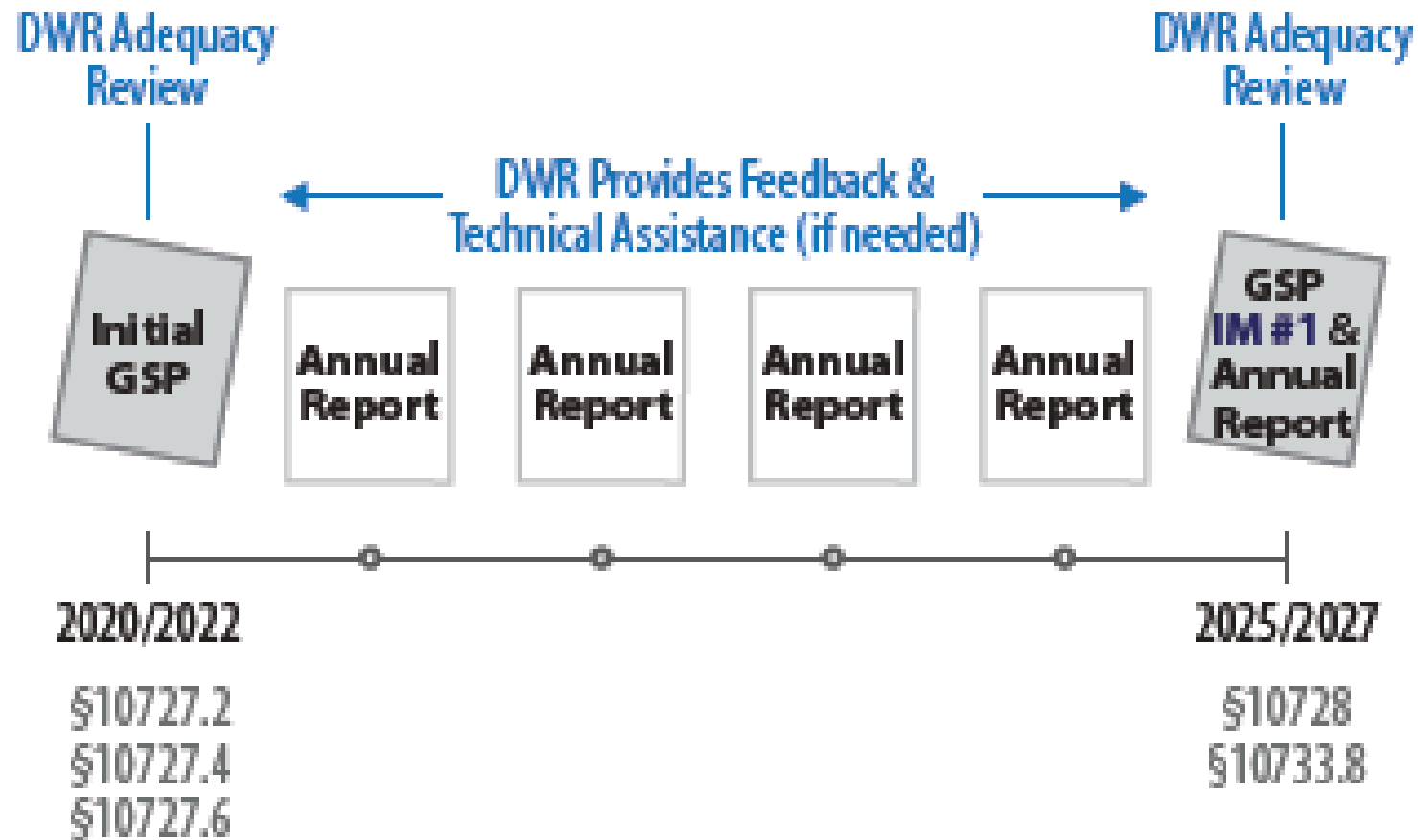
## Phases of GSP Development and Implementation



# Sustainable Management Criteria



# Ongoing Reporting on Progress

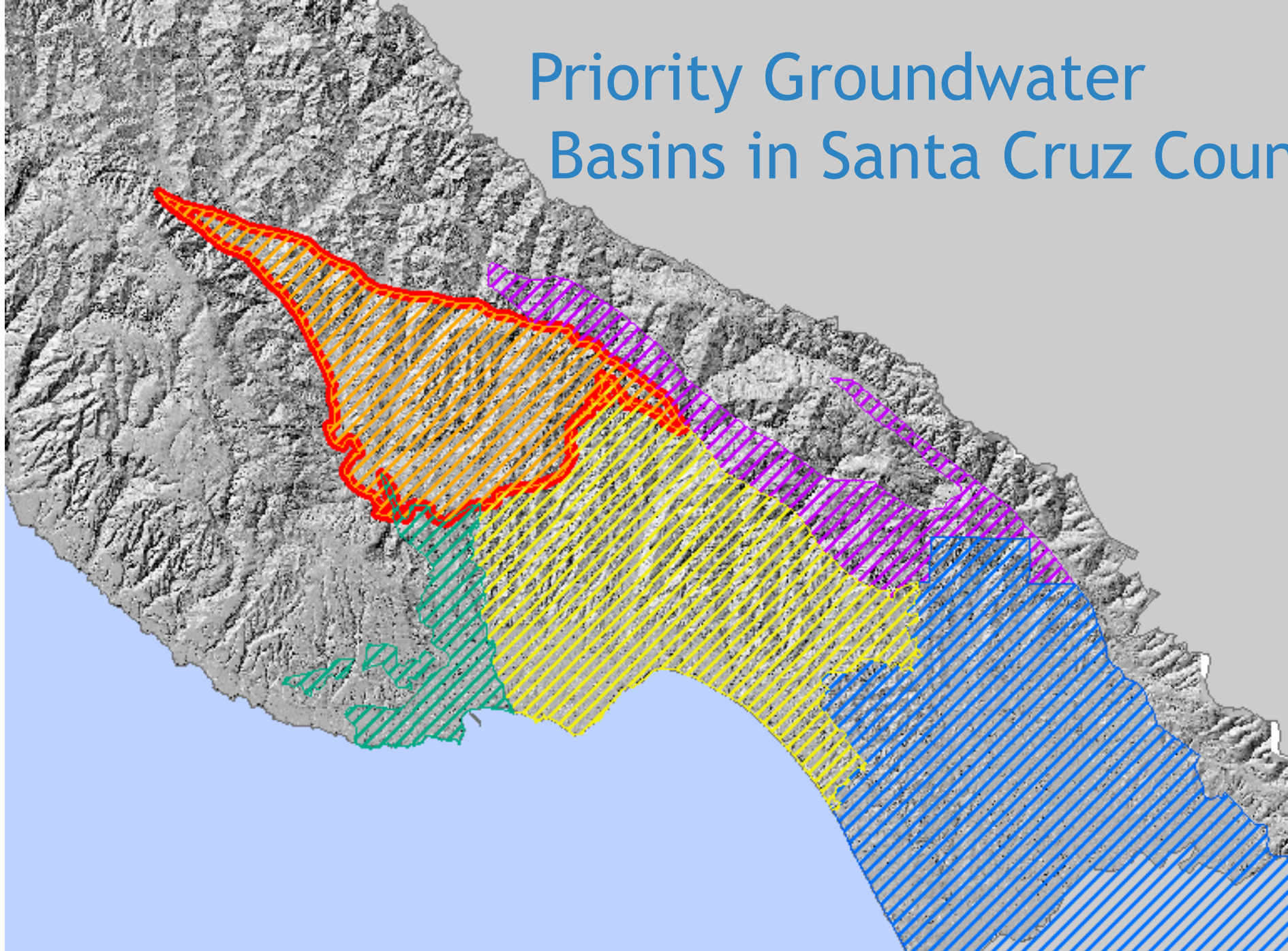


# State Intervention

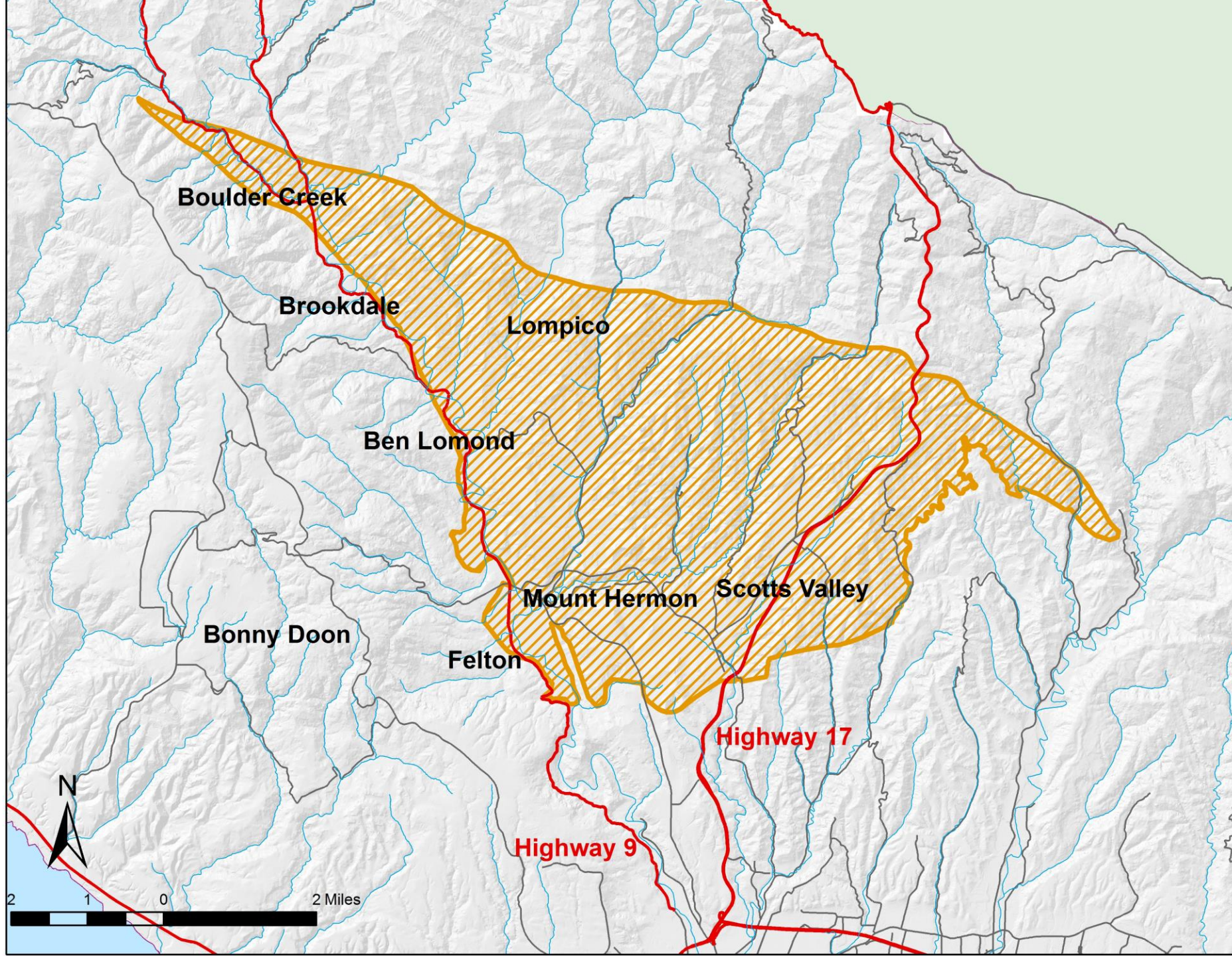




# Priority Groundwater Basins in Santa Cruz County









# Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency(SMGWA)

## Joint Powers Authority and Board

- ▶ San Lorenzo Valley Water District (JPA and 2 Board Seats)
- ▶ Scotts Valley Water District (JPA and 2 Board Seats)
- ▶ County of Santa Cruz (JPA and 2 Board Seats)
  
- ▶ Private Well Owner/Small Water System Representatives (2 Board Seats)
- ▶ City of Scotts Valley (1 Board Seat)
- ▶ Mount Hermon Association (1 Board Seat)
- ▶ City of Santa Cruz (1 Board Seat)

The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side and bottom of the slide, creating a modern, dynamic feel. The main text is centered on the left side of the slide against a plain white background.

Where do Private Well Owners fit in?



# What is de minimis?

- ▶ The SGMA definition of “de minimis” is a well that pumps 2 acre-feet per year or less for domestic purposes – that’s nearly 1800 gallons per day.
- ▶ SMGWA has broadly accepted the assumption that a well that serves 1-4 connections for household use is likely to be de minimis. **This is you!**
- ▶ SGMA **exempts de minimis pumpers from metering** by the GSA
- ▶ SGMA does not exempt de minimis pumpers from addressing impacts they are having on the Basin (including cumulatively).

# Guiding Principles

▶ Guiding Principle #4: *Consistent with SGMA, groundwater users that extract two acre-feet of groundwater or less per year for domestic purposes are defined as “de minimis”. This classification limits the statutory financial and measurement responsibilities of these groundwater extractors and is a means through which some SGMA-related burdens are minimized. **The SMGWA is committed to the definition of de minimis and will explore opportunities to minimize SGMA-related impacts to all groundwater extractors.***

▶ Guiding Principle #12: *Actions to achieve sustainable outcomes, report outcomes to the State and maintain the daily activities of the SMGWA will require consistent funding. **Financial contributions to support this work will be proportionally distributed among the SMGWA membership and many Beneficial Users, based on impacts and benefits to groundwater and surface water resources.** Specific proportional contributions will be determined in the future.*

# Possible Use of Fees

- ▶ The law does not contain any restrictions on the ability of a GSA to charge a de minimis extractor fees
- ▶ Any fees the GSA Board would impose must be defensible in that they:
  - ▶ Reflect scientifically established impacts and benefits to the basin
  - ▶ Are proportional
- ▶ Fees would likely be subject to either Prop 218 or Prop 26
  - ▶ 218 does not allow for subsidizing benefits (i.e. exempting fees for certain users of services and charging other users more)

# Use of Model Outcomes

- We use a groundwater model to evaluate impacts and benefits
- The model is validated through ongoing monitoring
- The model helps us understand the science, the SMGWA Board then decides how that translates into policy.
- Modeling helps us to understand if any proposed actions/inactions by any pumpers could threaten the sustainability of the Basin for all users.



# Considerations

- ▶ Future conditions may necessitate a different approach, the GSP is a living document.
- ▶ By working collaboratively, the Groundwater Agency can ensure that all groundwater users have long-term access to a sustainable water supply.

# Questions?