DECEMBER 2025

EAST KAWEAH GSA

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACHIEVES LANDMARK RETURN TO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, AVOIDING PROBATION

The Kaweah Subbasin now begins the transition back to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) after over two years fighting the risk of probation under the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board). The State Water Board adopted a resolution at its December 2, 2025 meeting, making the transition official.

"THIS IS THE FRUIT OF ALL OUR LABOR AFTER YEARS OF REVISING OUR GROUNDWATER PLANS, COORDINATING AS A SUBBASIN, AND CONTINUED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT," SAID EAST KAWEAH GSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MICHAEL HAGMAN. "IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT ALL HANDS ON DECK."

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was designed with local control at the forefront, meaning local agencies are empowered by the law to achieve sustainable groundwater supplies themselves, as opposed to being directed by a statewide one-size-fits all approach. But the State Water Board is the backstop – it can intervene to regulate groundwater directly by putting the subbasin on "probation" if it feels local management fails to adequately implement the law.

In 2023 when the Kaweah Subbasin received notice its Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs or Plans) were not approved, "State Intervention" was initiated, putting the subbasin under the State Water Board's jurisdiction and at risk of probation.

After this notice, the subbasin immediately initiated a regular meeting schedule across technical teams, ramped up subbasin coordination efforts, and started the GSP revision process to avoid probation. Probation triggers additional mandatory groundwater pumping reporting, administrative fees, potential well-metering requirements, and volumetric extraction fees that all go directly back to the State. With local groundwater management, GSAs use any locally assessed fees and reporting measures for local benefit, driving local projects and services that help drive sustainability forward.

The transition back to DWR means the subbasin's three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) can continue with local groundwater management, led by their Boards of Directors made up of growers and community leaders who live and have a stake in the success of the region's ability to address SGMA requirements, all while balancing the needs of the community.

"Getting here has taken tremendous work, investment, and perseverance. The journey has been challenging, and there are still hard days ahead as we correct groundwater overdraft. It will not be easy by any means. But protecting our ability to manage groundwater locally is absolutely worth it," said Hagman.

In the months following the notice that the GSPs were not approved, the subbasin was given a probationary hearing date, where GSAs hear from the State Water Board whether they will move to probation based on a more detailed review of their Plans.

GSAs that have been put on probation face challenges maintaining forward momentum on SGMA implementation, as working your way out of probation while still implementing and staying on track with sustainability targets is a heavy lift.

"Avoiding those consequences of State control created a powerful incentive to produce a technically sound, comprehensive, and timely revision to the subbasin's groundwater plans," said Kaitlin Palys, Senior Water Resources Scientist at INTERA who was hired by East Kaweah GSA to support and coordinate the revisions process.

With these stakes in mind, the Kaweah Subbasin began a two-year journey of GSP revisions and regular meetings with the State Water Board to understand how best to address deficiencies in the GSPs.

"The revision period was collaborative, intensive, highly iterative, and transparent," said Palys.

Palys said the revision schedule was largely driven by the State Water Board's deadlines, which set an ambitious pace. Conversations with stakeholders who would be directly affected by potential probation were a constant reminder that the long nights and fast turnaround were worth it.

"The whole premise of this is to have local control," said East Kaweah GSA Board Vice Chair Craig Hornung. He is also Technical Services Director at AC-Foods and Owner of Hornung Brothers Farming.

HORNUNG REMARKED THAT DECISIONS AS A BOARD MEMBER DURING THIS TIME WERE WEIGHTY. "TRYING TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS FOR THE SUBBASIN AND FOR YOUR GROWERS IS REALLY TOUGH SOMETIMES. THE BOARD IS DIRECTLY AFFECTED — A LOT OF US ARE GROWERS TOO, AND WE DON'T TAKE ANY OF THESE DECISIONS LIGHTLY," HORNUNG SAID. "BUT THESE DECISIONS WE MAKE ON WATER, INCLUDING THOSE ON ALLOCATIONS AND SUBSIDENCE, ARE NOT GOING TO BE MADE BY SOMEBODY OUT OF SACRAMENTO."

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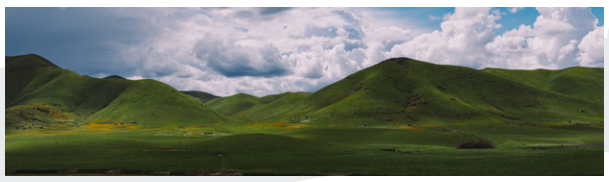
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Stakeholders, this year has been one of notable progress for local groundwater management after years of revising our Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). This progress would not be possible without our landowners' diligence and commitment adjusting to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). We have been blessed with significant rain in 2023, setting us up for improved groundwater levels in 2024 and 2025. As we transition into a new era of local groundwater management under the Department of Water Resources, we look ahead with confidence in the progress this new year will bring. Though the real work begins as we prioritize key issues noted in our Plan, East Kaweah GSA is committed to transparency and to working toward sustainability with the same diligence and determination that guided us through its development.

Sincerely,
Michael Hagman
Michael D. Hagman

MEETING YOU IN PERSON AND BEYOND

THE WATER TABLE WEBINAR:

Tools to Survive 2024 Invoicing

THE Water Table

75 ATTENDEES

STATE of the SUBBASIN

NEARLY 275 KAWEAH SUBBASIN ATTENDEES

Additional one-on-one meetings were held with Scott Maskell, Management Analyst, for Allocation Year 2024 invoicing support

STATE OF THE SUBBASIN HIGHLIGHT

Nearly 275 attendees joined the Kaweah Subbasin, where the East Kaweah, Mid-Kaweah, and Greater Kaweah GSA managers and their technical consultants presented on the subbasin's probationary status, Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation priorities, and growers' role in implementation.

The presentation was given by GSA managers, staff, and technical consultants.

- **Mike Hagman**, Executive Director, East Kaweah GSA
- **Mark Larsen**, General Manager, Greater Kaweah GSA
- **Aaron Fukuda**, Interim General Manager, Mid-Kaweah GSA
- **Diana Zegarra**, Assistant Water Resources Engineer, Tulare Irrigation District and Mid-Kaweah GSA
- **Trey Driscoll**, Principal Hydrogeologist, INTERA
- **Derrik Williams**, Principal Hydrogeologist, Montgomery & Associates
- **Matt Klinchuch**, Principal Engineer, Provost & Pritchard

CLICK HERE TO VIEW RESOURCES, EVENT HIGHLIGHTS, AND A VIDEO RECORDING.

CELEBRATING EAST KAWEAH GSA'S REVAMPED WEBSITE

East Kaweah GSA refreshed its website this year, providing better access to resources and easier navigation.

NEW FEATURES INCLUDE:

- **Easier navigation via search bar function**
- **Reorganized content for more streamlined navigation**
- **Latest announcements on the home page**
- **More simplified main menu**

East Kaweah GSA is committed to improving and investing in tools that benefit stakeholders, and the refreshed website is a tangible example. The GSA strives to be transparent, upfront, and clear through every communication channel.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE NEW WEBSITE

WEBSITE STATISTICS

9/1/2025 – 12/1/2025

1.6K ACTIVE USERS
Since September 1, 2025

117 PEAK USERS
On October 21, 2025

21.1% OF USERS
VISIT FROM A MOBILE DEVICE

78.4% OF USERS
VISIT FROM A DESKTOP OR LAPTOP

TOP VIEWED PAGES

/HOME	830
/RSVP For State of the Subbasin	507
/BOARD	209
/ALLOCATION	169
/2025-SUBBASIN-EVENT	149

PRINT MATERIALS AND DIRECT MAIL

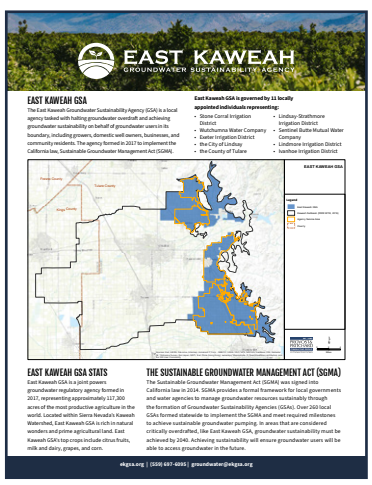
2 direct mail pieces
SENT TO OVER 2,000 LANDOWNERS

Topics included:

- **Allocation Year 2024 information**
- **State of the Subbasin invitation**
- **Well inventory and voluntary well registration information**

NEW! East Kaweah GSA 101 Handout

Created in fall 2025, the handout helps stakeholders understand East Kaweah GSA's foundation, purpose, and background on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.



VIDEO CONTENT

THE Water Table

East Kaweah GSA introduced "The Water Table," a multimedia communications avenue used to educate stakeholders on technical topics. In early 2025, the GSA produced a series of **5 YouTube videos** to update landowners on the invoicing season toolkit available.

SOCIAL MEDIA YEAR-END HIGHLIGHTS

East Kaweah GSA uses social media in conjunction with email, mail, and website updates to notify stakeholders of the latest groundwater news. Follow along on LinkedIn and Facebook to stay engaged. We also encourage signing up for email updates to be the first to hear about the latest groundwater updates.

LinkedIn

- 15 Posts
- 228 Followers
- 4,600+ Impressions
- 674 Content clicks
- 119 Content reactions

facebook

- 10 Posts
- 20 Followers
- 1,200 Content views
- Nearly 230 page views

YouTube

- 5 Videos posted
- 498 Video views
- 48.5 Hours watch time

CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE EKGSA 101 ONLINE

CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE YOUTUBE PLAYLIST

CLICK TO FOLLOW EKGSA:

THE TECHNICAL CORNER

East Kaweah GSA staff, technical consultants, partner non-government organizations, and landowners have each played a significant role in the transition back to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), but the real work continues as the GSA implements its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

FILLING DATA GAPS TO MEET SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Filling data gaps plays a key role in meeting groundwater sustainability goals under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Without the necessary information about groundwater conditions, it is difficult to manage progress toward sustainability.

Refining Data with Well Inventory

The GSA began filling data gaps with well inventory in July 2025. The process included cross-checking publicly available information to verify existing domestic, agricultural, and industrial well construction details, locations, and hydrogeologic information within the GSA. Taking well inventory helps the GSA understand and project groundwater conditions across the GSA.

Understanding the Area's Hydrogeology through Voluntary Well Registration

East Kaweah GSA starts its well registration in January 2026 to help understand aquifer conditions.

Without a registry the GSA's technical efforts are limited in long-term projections that inform short-term decision making. Less data means more assumptions must be made to fill in the gaps. Better data results in more accuracy and improves planning efforts.

Stanford Partnership Amps Up Streamflow Monitoring

East Kaweah GSA is partnering with Stanford to install streamflow monitoring devices, which helps identify where groundwater and surface water are interconnected in streams and rivers. Understanding where groundwater loss and gain occur is essential for managing depletions of interconnected surface water – a sustainability indicator under SGMA.

Groundwater Quality Monitoring Improved to Meet SGMA Standards

East Kaweah GSA, alongside Mid-Kaweah and Greater Kaweah GSAs, have begun implementing robust Groundwater Quality Monitoring practices — a new effort included in the revised and adopted GSPs.

The GSA participates in a subbasin-wide seasonal water sampling program at several monitoring sites. The sampling is a coordinated partnership with Kaweah Water Foundation, creating efficiency and increasing sampling compliance. By sharing the effort amongst the Subbasin and the foundation, this partnership eliminates duplication of efforts, saving money and time.

There is an expanded network of over 70 contaminants, or "constituents of concerns," tested. The new Exceedance Policy also helps identify which monitoring result exceedances fall within the scope of SGMA. From this Exceedance Policy, the Subbasin will prepare an annual Groundwater Quality Report, with the first completed this past year. In the future, the Subbasin has plans to mail shorter letters to households near monitoring sites that alert them of elevated contaminant levels.

IN MOTION

Multiple grant-funded projects are ready for construction – a major milestone toward new groundwater recharge efforts. These recharge projects will increase groundwater recharge in East Kaweah GSA, helping address groundwater level decline, prevent further subsidence, and support groundwater sustainability by 2040.

Flying Dragon Groundwater Recharge Basin

Design plans and environmental review have been completed, and basin grading starts in December 2025.

In-Channel Recharge

Designs for recharge projects in Cottonwood, Yokohl, and Upper Lewis Creeks are at or near completion, with construction to start in 2026.

Sentinel Butte Flood Basin

Construction starts in December 2025 for Sentinel Butte Flood Basin, which will create additional flood flow recharge capacity near Woodlake.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW MORE EKGSA PRJECTS

CONTINUED From page 1

There will be continued effort to bring all stakeholders along as East Kaweah GSA pursues sustainability. As the GSA continues to address key priorities like declining groundwater levels, groundwater quality, and land subsidence, growers will face tough decisions for their farming operations. But East Kaweah GSA strives to provide stability after many years of change and harsh correction of groundwater overdraft.

Chris Hunter, Program Manager for East Kaweah GSA, said that throughout this process he has witnessed landowners adopt new strategies for the benefit of future farming.

"It's not just East Kaweah GSA demanding change; it's landowners understanding they need a sustainable water supply for their own operations now and in future generations," said Hunter.

"Many landowners have embraced the goal of sustainability and are proactive in their approach through irrigation efficiency, land repurposing, and even fallowing," Hunter continued. **"We know it's difficult, and I witness our board members grappling with the reality of their decisions and making tough calls on their own farms. But we're talking about the future of farming in our region."**

During the summer of 2024, the Subbasin held "State of the Subbasin" to educate stakeholders on the probationary status of the subbasin ahead of its first scheduled probationary hearing in November 2024. The probationary hearing was rescheduled to January 2025 minutes before the event started.

The Kaweah Subbasin submitted the Plans in November 2024 ahead of the rescheduled January 2025 probationary date, which was ultimately canceled so the State could more extensively review the GSP revisions.

"This felt like great news; the State had briefly reviewed the Plans, which prompted the hearing cancellation and signaled to us that our efforts were headed in the right direction. But still the waiting period continued until we heard the final word on whether the GSPs satisfied SGMA requirements," said Hagman.

In October 2025, State Water Board staff released its recommendation to move the Kaweah Subbasin back under DWR – a a promising win after over two years of hanging in the balance between local control and probation.

Hunter said the State Water Board staff has been instrumental in the revision process, spending time with the Kaweah Subbasin technical teams to work through deficiencies.

"One of the more important results of this intervention process has been our strengthened relationships with non-government organizations," said Hunter. "Several years ago, East Kaweah GSA set out to dedicate more time and effort to stakeholder engagement, and partnering with organizations to meet more stakeholders' needs has been fulfilling."

One of the revisions to the GSP included the Mitigation Plan for domestic well owners — something Hagman says was pivotal to satisfying SGMA requirements.

"We fought for local groundwater management with our stakeholders in mind. Landowners have done an incredible job of adjusting to SGMA. It's not easy. There is work to be done as we continue to implement our Plan, but we are proud that groundwater management is staying local," said Hagman.

East Kaweah GSA is committed to standing with its stakeholders on the journey toward sustainability. The leadership team is committed to making this as successful as possible for the landowners who live, work, and are part of this community. As always the GSA will continue communicating with transparency and timeliness so landowners can make the best decisions possible. East Kaweah GSA celebrates the milestone of achieving local control, and are committed to the same diligence and subbasin coordination that got us here until we reach sustainability — both now and for the future.