

Corning Sub-basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Frequently Asked Questions

The Corning Sub-basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CSGSA) has determined that Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) implementation costs (not including projects and management actions) can be funded through the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) long-term fee setting process. This will ensure that the GSA has adequate revenues to cover the costs of GSA administration, GSP implementation and SGMA compliance.

Why is the GSA going through this process?

Maintaining local control over our groundwater resources is a top priority for the CSGSA. Implementing the GSP and complying with SGMA will keep the State from intervening in the local groundwater management and decision-making processes and keep fees as local as possible.

Does State funding exist to help with SGMA and GSP planning and implementation?

The Corning Subbasin received a planning grant to assist with covering the costs to develop the initial Corning Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The CSGSA prepared the GSP, which was submitted to the State by the January 31, 2022 deadline. The CSGSA is responsible for covering costs relating to GSA administration and its share of costs for GSP implementation and Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) compliance. A Corning Subbasin implementation grant application was submitted in December 2022. The Department of Water Resources has announced draft funding awards, which include funding for the Corning Subbasin. If these funds are awarded, they will be considered during the budget and fee-setting processes each year. The CSGSA will continue to evaluate and pursue other grant funding sources as they become available.

How will the GSAs fund implementation activities?

GSAs are managing at a local level, with the goal of keeping costs down. The CSGSA has determined that GSP implementation costs (not including projects and management actions) can be funded through the GSA fee-setting process. This will ensure that all GSA administration, GSP implementation, and SGMA compliance costs are covered, and landowners pay their share of total costs. Localized projects will likely need their own sources of funding, such as funding from grants, partner agencies, or a separate fee process.

How will fees for landowners be determined?

All landowners in the CSGSA service areas are subject to fees to support GSA operations, GSP implementation, and SGMA compliance. Fees will be based on acreage subject to the fee and other parcel-level data that is available to classify each parcel into a specific user class. Under the SGMA, Federal, and Tribal lands are exempt from fees. State lands can be included but are generally considered uncollectible.

What are the User Classes?

There are three user classes based on if the parcel is considered non-irrigated, irrigated-surface water if the parcel uses surface water primarily, or irrigated-groundwater if a parcel uses groundwater primarily to meet its ongoing water needs. Non-irrigated includes open space, vacant, natural habitat, dryland farming, and rangeland. Urban and residential parcels are considered irrigated (water-using parcels). The CSGSA Irrigated-Non-irrigated Fee Policy, which will include user class definitions, will be finalized in August 2023.

How much will the fee be?

There are three proposed maximum fee rates (one for each user class) as follows: \$0.93 per non-irrigated acre per year, \$6.14 per irrigated-surface water acre per year, and \$14.60 per irrigated-groundwater acre per year. The fees are in 2023 dollars, including inflation for the subsequent four years. The actual amount of the fee will be set by Resolution of the CSGSA each year but cannot exceed the maximum per acre fee specified above, including the inflation factor.

What happens if my parcel is classified incorrectly?

Parcels may be reclassified based on updated information and consistency with the CSGSA policy. If a landowner believes its parcel classification is incorrect, please contact the CSGSA at 530.934.6540.

Why is my house classified as irrigated?

An irrigated classification is given because your property uses groundwater and/or surface water as a primary water source to meet parcel water needs.

Why did I get multiple Notices per parcel?

Typically, if there is more than one owner for a parcel, the CSGSA's Proposition 218 Notice was sent to each parcel owner by address on record to ensure that all landowners receive a copy of the Notice. You may also have received multiple notices for the same parcel if the parcel is split into multiple pieces in the available data or during the analysis process. By adding the acreages from all the notices together, you can determine the total acreage per parcel subject to the fee.

Why are the acres different than on my tax bill?

The parcel acreage was calculated using different information sources to verify acreage within the CSGSA. This can sometimes result in a difference between your tax bill and the acreage shown on the Proposition 218 notice coversheet. Also, parcels were only calculated for the acreage within the CSGSA service area boundary. If a parcel is on the boundary, the acreage within the CSGSA boundary is calculated and not the acreage outside the boundary.

When will landowner fees be put in place?

The CSGSA is proposing GSP implementation charges through a fee-setting process in accordance with Water Code Section 10730. The proposed fee, if approved, will be effective for the 2023-2024 fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2023), with the first payment due in December 2023 through the Glenn County property tax bill.

Why would landowners be responsible for groundwater fees?

SGMA requires a GSP to be prepared and implemented for the entire basin and for a GSA to be established and operational. The State has recognized that groundwater management is most effective at a local level. GSAs are local agencies working on behalf of the landowners within the basin to comply with SGMA. Local funds are necessary to support this work, including local groundwater management, sustainability, SGMA compliance, GSA administration and operations, and GSP development and implementation.

Will urban areas help pay for the GSP implementation and SGMA compliance costs?

Yes. All landowners in the CSGSA service area (except the Federal and Tribal lands exempted by SGMA), including urban and rural residential areas, will pay for their share of GSP implementation and SGMA compliance costs. The proposed fees are included in the Fee Report and will be available on the CSGSA website.

Why can't grants cover the costs?

While grants are being sought to cover many of the costs of SGMA compliance, it is unlikely that all costs can be covered since subbasins throughout California are applying for the same limited pool of grant dollars. As a result, the CSGSA has initiated the funding process to ensure SGMA compliance. Future grant opportunities are expected to provide funding for project-related costs meaning GSA and SGMA compliance costs must be locally funded.

How will GSA Fees be managed in the future?

Once GSA fees are in place, the CSGSA will annually review and approve fees based on the maximum fee allowed and projected costs for a given year. The CSGSA will strive to keep fees as low as possible based on actual expenses associated with CSGSA operations and GSP implementation activities as required to maintain compliance with SGMA requirements.

How do I keep track of GSA Fees?

The CSGSA will annually review proposed GSA fees at a noticed public meeting and consider action on fees not to exceed the maximum allowable fee. The public can attend and provide comments before action is taken.

What is the Fee Report?

The Fee Report is a document that justifies any proposed fees or charges for a specified purpose. It considers the revenue projections over the planning period, evaluates fee options, considers cost allocation for those subject to the fee, and provides and communicates the rationale for the recommended fees the CSGSA may approve that provides a nexus between fees paid and benefits received. The Fee Report is submitted to the CSGSA for review and approval prior to the establishment of any fees being implemented and will be available on the CSGSA website.

How do I benefit from the fee?

Implementing the GSP and complying with SGMA will help ensure that the Subbasin has a sustainable groundwater resource for the benefit of all landowners within the Subbasin. The CSGSA is responsible for GSP implementation and SGMA compliance. Ensuring that all landowners in the Subbasin are in compliance with SGMA not only ensures future groundwater sustainability but will also keep the State from intervening in local groundwater management and decision-making processes.