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PVWMA to Become the Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Pajaro Valley Board Votes to Take on Responsibility

Watsonville, CA – California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) which was signed into law on September 16, 2014, requires that a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) be formed for all critical basins in the state. The GSA can be any local agency that has water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities within a groundwater basin. During their August board meeting the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PV Water) elected to become the GSA for the coastal Pajaro Valley basin. The Pajaro Valley is considered a high-priority basin by the state due to the extent of overdraft and groundwater levels below sea level over much of the basin, which further encourages seawater intrusion.

PV Water was formed by the state legislature in 1984 and is one of the few agencies statewide already managing groundwater in their basin. Through the 2014 Basin Management Plan Update, the Agency has identified a suite of projects and programs designed to bring the overdrafted basin into balance and stop the seawater intrusion that results from over pumping. The solution relies on a surface water project at College Lake, aggressive conservation, and enhancement of existing projects including the Recycled Water Facility which provides up to 4,000 acre feet of agricultural irrigation supply per year.

Under the new SGMA legislation, all high priority groundwater basins in the state must have adopted a groundwater sustainability plan by January 1, 2020, and achieve the plan’s sustainability goal by 2040, or risk state intervention that would likely mean pumping restrictions. In many basins around the State, counties, municipalities and water districts are scrambling to find consensus as to who will be deemed the GSA for their respective areas. PV Water is years ahead of these basins because large wells are already metered and pumping fees are collected to fund the work needed to achieve sustainability, such as, implementing the Basin Management Plan. Mary Bannister, General Manager of PV Water, explains “The legislation has empowered the agency to more aggressively address the basin overdraft, and having our boundaries set at least provides one certain border for the potential GSAs that will be formed to our north, east and south. Further, our election to be the GSA galvanizes our community to find solutions, and work together to support the vibrant agricultural economy of the valley.” Learn more about PV Water at pvwater.org

PV Water is a public agency whose mission is to protect and preserve the water resources within the agency’s jurisdiction, generally the greater coastal Pajaro Valley.