

**DRAFT**

**PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

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# Public Outreach and Engagement Plan

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### GLOSSARY OF TERMS/ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
SGMA	Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014
GSP	Groundwater Sustainability Plan
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
FCGMA	Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
Aquifer	An underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock, rock fractures or unconsolidated materials (gravel, sand, or silt) from which groundwater can be extracted using a water well.
Stakeholder	An individual with interest in the FCGMA GSP
Engagement	Efforts made to understand and involve stakeholders and their concerns in the activities and decision-making of the FCGMA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recognition that groundwater resources are a critical asset to the environmental, ecological, economic, and security of the state of California, the California Legislature passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014. In average years, California's 515 alluvial groundwater basins and subbasins provide about 38% of the total statewide water supply. In dry years and years of drought, these same basins provide upwards of 46% of the annual supply statewide. Moreover, many populations, municipalities, disadvantaged communities, agricultural areas, and rural communities depend on groundwater for 100% of their water needs. Current groundwater extraction throughout the state is in excess of the natural and managed recharge within many of the state's 515 alluvial basins and subbasins. SGMA addresses this by requiring the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and development of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to better manage these groundwater resources.

This Public Outreach and Engagement Plan (Plan) is being prepared by Dudek under authorization of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (FCGMA) in response to the passage of the SGMA. FCGMA is required under SGMA to prepare a GSP for each groundwater basin within its jurisdiction. These GSPs will guide future management decisions including the amount of water that can be pumped from each basin without causing undesirable results, and the development of new projects to enhance water resource management. SGMA, as well as the state agencies implementing SGMA, namely the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), have mandated public and stakeholder outreach and engagement as necessary in the development of GSPs.

The FCGMA has a longstanding commitment to transparency and public involvement. FCGMA recognizes that stakeholder driven engagement is the most effective, and that the mechanisms for engagement need to be adapted to meet the needs of the beneficial users in the basin as the GSPs are developed. This Plan is intended to be a guiding framework that will be updated as needed throughout the GSP process. This plan serves as an update to the FCGMA Communications Guide (May 24, 2016) and includes ongoing, current, and future planned opportunities for engagement.

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## 1 BACKGROUND ON FCGMA

The Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (FCGMA) is an independent Special Act District established by the California Legislature, separate from the County of Ventura or any city government. The FCGMA enabling legislation known as the FCGMA Act, Assembly Bill (AB) No. 2995, was passed on September 13, 1982, and became effective January 1, 1983. The FCGMA was created in response to declining groundwater levels and increasingly poor water quality from wells in the southern part of the Oxnard Plain, conditions that were first recognized in the 1950s. Prior to the creation of the FCGMA, the SWRCB issued a Seawater Intrusion Abatement Project grant to the County of Ventura and the United Water Conservation District (UWCD) to develop a Groundwater Management Plan. The initial Groundwater Management Plan was developed in 1985 to balance water supply and demand in both the Upper Aquifer System (UAS) and the Lower Aquifer System (LAS). The most recent FCGMA Groundwater Management Plan Update is dated May 2007 and is currently available on the FCGMA website.

The boundary of the FCGMA (Figure 1) was established by Resolution of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors on December 21, 1982. The boundary was defined to include all area overlying the Fox Canyon Aquifer and was revised in 1991 to reflect updated knowledge of the extent of the aquifer. Groundwater pumped from aquifers within the FCGMA jurisdictional boundaries accounts for more than half of the water demand of the 700,000 residents in the cities of Ventura, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Camarillo and Moorpark, and the unincorporated communities of Saticoy, El Rio, Somis, Moorpark Home Acres, Nyeland Acres, Point Mugu and Montalvo; and the majority of the water needs for the 58,649 acres of productive agriculture.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) maintains a catalog of groundwater basins known as Bulletin 118 that includes the status and boundaries of each groundwater basin in California. There are four groundwater basins or subbasins within the FCGMA service area: Las Posas, Oxnard, Pleasant Valley, and Arroyo Santa Rosa.

### 1.1 FCGMA Decision Making Process

The FCGMA Board is defined by its enabling legislation and is comprised of five members representing the following interests:

1. County of Ventura,
2. United Water Conservation District,
3. the seven small water districts existing within the FCGMA at the time of its formation (Alta Mutual Water Company, Pleasant Valley County Water District, Berylwood Mutual Water Company, Calleguas Municipal Water District, Camrosa Water District, Zone Mutual Water Company, and Del Norte Mutual Water Company),

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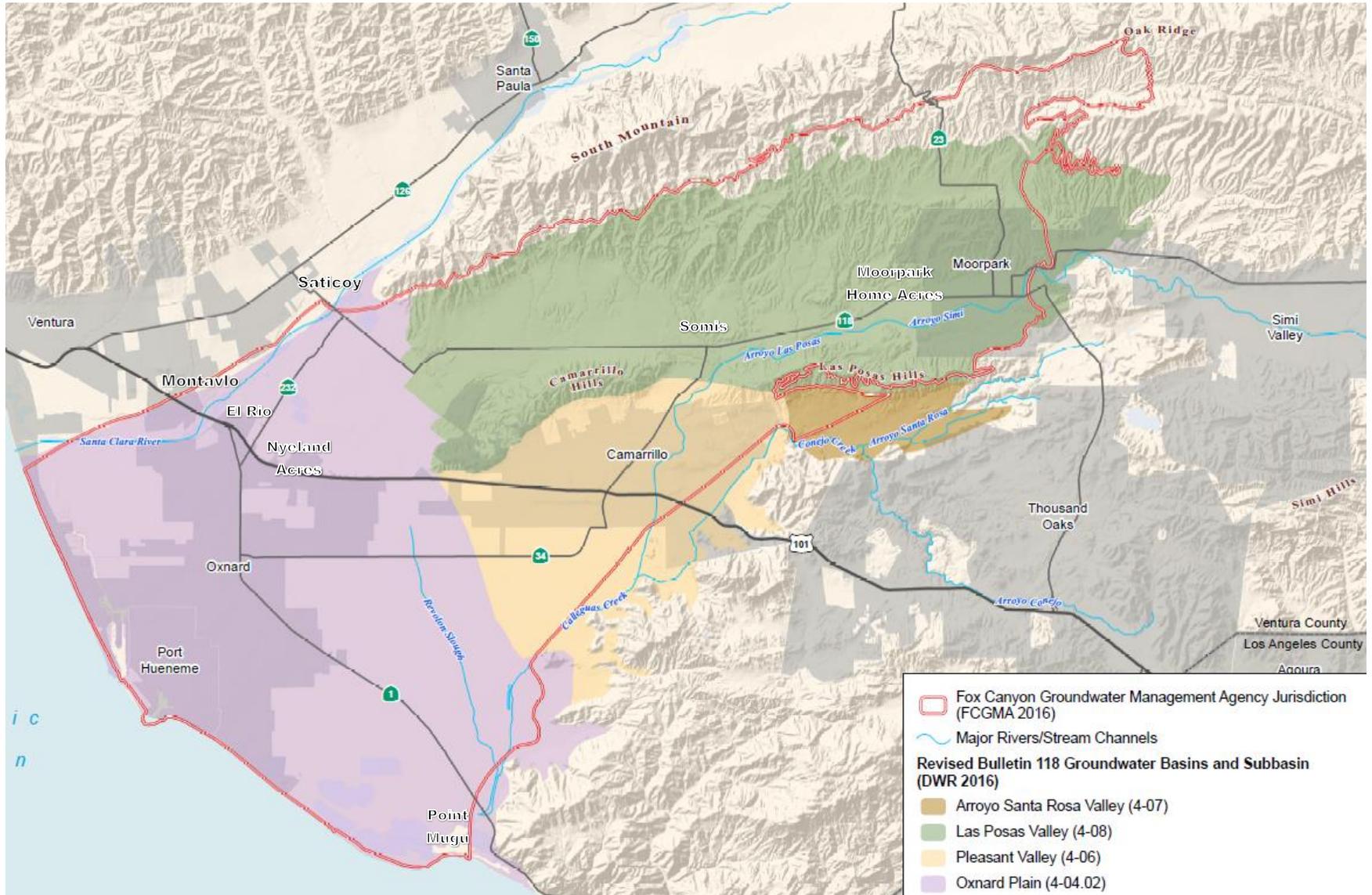
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4. the five incorporated cities whose territory at least in part overlies the territory of the FCGMA (Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Port Hueneme, and Moorpark), and
5. agriculture.

Each Board member has an alternate and all members serve a two-year term. All Board Members are appointed by their respective organizations or groups, except for the agricultural representative. The agricultural representative is appointed by the other four seated members from a list of at least five candidates jointly supplied by the Ventura County Farm Bureau (VCFB) and the Ventura County Agricultural Association (VCAA). Board Members are not paid by the FCGMA. Each member has one equal vote on the Board. The Board adopts ordinances for the purpose of regulating, conserving, managing, and controlling the use and extraction of groundwater within the territory of the agency. Ordinances are adopted, after noticed public hearings, by a majority vote of the board.

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Figure 1. FCGMA Jurisdiction and Basin Boundaries



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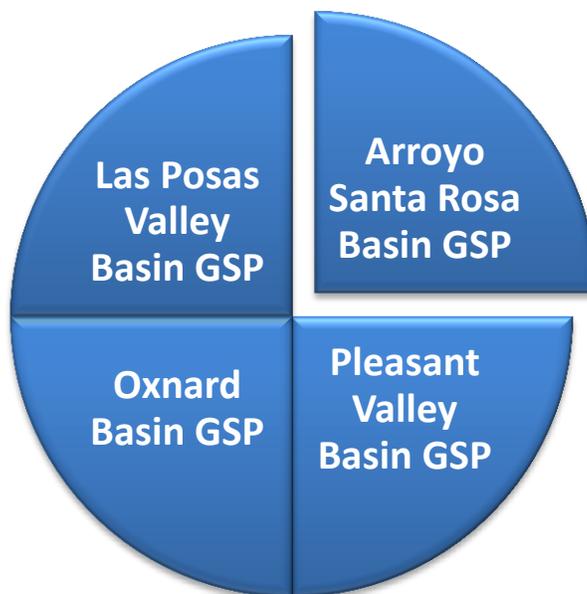
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## 2 BACKGROUND ON GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

The SGMA of 2014 requires the creation of GSAs and provides that they develop, adopt and implement GSPs by 2022 for basins that the DWR has designated as either high or medium priority and by 2020 for critically overdrafted basins. All four of the groundwater basins within the FCGMA have been designated high or medium priority by DWR. The Oxnard and Pleasant Valley Basins have additionally been designated by DWR as critically overdrafted.

SGMA requires local public agencies to define a course of action to achieve sustainable groundwater management within 20 years of plan adoption. GSPs must identify local undesirable results and identify management actions to minimize undesirable results as well as milestones to track progress. A groundwater monitoring program must be developed and used to demonstrate improved conditions within the basins leading to sustainable management.

On January 26, 2015, the FCGMA provided DWR with notification of its intent to become a GSA for four groundwater basins: Las Posas, Oxnard, Pleasant Valley, and Arroyo Santa Rosa. Preliminary work began to develop a specific GSP for each of the four basins within the purview of the FCGMA in late 2015. In early 2017, it was determined that the Santa Rosa Basin GSP will move forward separately from the other three GSPs due to the need for additional coordination with the newly formed Arroyo Santa Rosa Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, which has jurisdiction over the eastern two-thirds of that groundwater basin.



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### 3 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used to create a common understanding and transparency throughout the groundwater sustainability planning process. The FCGMA encourages active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population to ensure that all relevant and interested stakeholders and the public are involved throughout the GSP development.

#### 3.1 The Importance of Public or Stakeholder Engagement

The FCGMA recognizes that stakeholder engagement can improve management of shared resources and has a track-record of successful stakeholder participation in FCGMA decision making.

##### 3.1.1 Why Public Engagement is Important

The basins within the FCGMA jurisdiction underlie a variety of land uses and communities with varying needs and interests relating to sustainable management of groundwater resources. Participation from a diverse group of stakeholders will allow the FCGMA to make management decisions that take into account the varying needs and interests in the Basin.

##### 3.1.2 SGMA Requirements

This document is designed to assist the public and FCGMA in developing a mutual understanding of how FCGMA will fulfill the requirements of SGMA as they relate to public engagement. Specifically, this plan addresses the following requirements of SGMA Section 354.10 (d).

Section 354.10(d) A communication section of the Plan that includes the following:

1. An explanation of the Agency's decision-making process.
2. Identification of opportunities for public engagement and a discussion of how public input and response will be used.
3. A description of how the Agency encourages the active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the basin.
4. The method the Agency shall follow to inform the public about progress implementing the Plan, including the status of projects and actions.

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### **4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

The FCGMA Board has a longstanding commitment to public involvement and engagement in decision-making. FCGMA encourages members of the public to communicate directly with staff during regular business hours, and provide public comments at meetings. FCGMA provides ample time for public consideration of policy decisions through advanced noticing of public meetings. The FCGMA is committed to continuing to provide opportunities for public involvement and engagement throughout the GSP development and implementation processes. FCGMA recognizes that adapting involvement strategies to the needs of the public throughout the process is critical to effective engagement. This plan serves to update to the FCGMA Communications Guide (May 24, 2016) with ongoing, current, and future planned opportunities for engagement.

#### **4.1 Meeting Opportunities**

Opportunities for public comment are provided at all FCGMA Board meetings, Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings, Board appointed Committee meetings, and workshops.

##### **4.1.1 Public Notices**

All FCGMA Board, TAG meetings, Board appointed Committee meetings, and Board special workshops are noticed in accordance with the Brown Act. FCGMA Board meeting agendas are generally posted on the FCGMA website 5-7 days prior to each meeting to allow for additional time for public review. TAG meeting agendas are also posted as soon as they are completed. All public meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the FCGMA website, and sent directly via email to individuals that have requested meeting notices.

##### **4.1.2 Board Meetings and Hearings**

FCGMA Board meetings are typically held from 1:30pm to 4:00pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month. There typically is not an August meeting, and the November and December meetings are typically combined into an early December meeting. A calendar of meeting dates is published each year at [www.FCGMA.org](http://www.FCGMA.org). Special Board meetings are scheduled by the Board as needed and generally fall on the second Wednesday or Friday of the month.

##### **4.1.3 Workshops**

The FCGMA held two GSP focused public workshops in November 2016 and September 2017. The workshops were well attended with over eighty-five participants representing individuals, municipalities, elected officials, water agencies, disadvantaged communities, mutual water companies, businesses, agriculture and environmental organizations.

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### 4.2 Collaborative Opportunities

Many people including farmers, businesspersons, attorneys, water company employees, and elected officials volunteer their time and energy to work with FCGMA staff to resolve the critical issues and policies that affect beneficial users within the FCGMA.

Well owners and operators play a key role in that they are responsible for “self-reporting” groundwater extractions to the FCGMA accurately and in a timely manner (e.g., twice per year, once in January and once in August).

Several agencies also have a critical partnering role including UWCD, Camrosa Water District and the County of Ventura. All three agencies exercise shared responsibility with the FCGMA for the stewardship of the groundwater basins within the FCGMA territory. The Calleguas Municipal Water District (CMWD) is also an important partner agency.

#### 4.2.1 Stakeholder Groups

The importance of groundwater to local stakeholders, as well as the FCGMA’s commitment to work collaboratively with stakeholders, has catalyzed the establishment of several stakeholder groups that have come together to coordinate and articulate their positions on various issues to the FCGMA Board. Stakeholder groups in the Las Posas, Oxnard, and Pleasant Valley basins have organized themselves to form and make recommendations to the FCGMA Board regarding groundwater pumping in the basins. FCGMA staff is dedicated to working with organized groups of stakeholders and providing opportunities for their voices to be heard in open public forums before the FCGMA Board.

#### 4.2.2 Technical Advisory and Charter Groups

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was developed by FCGMA to provide technical guidance for development of basin sustainable yield estimates and review for the four GSPs. Each Board Member selected a TAG member and two additional TAG members were selected by the full Board to represent the public and nongovernmental/environmental interests. All TAG meetings are conducted in accordance with the Brown Act and agendas are posted on the FCGMA website and emailed to members of the public who have requested to receive notifications.

The FCGMA has also established formal roles for some groups participating in the GSP process through Charters. More information about each of the Charter groups is available on the GSP page of the FCGMA website including the point of contact for each group and a copy of the signed Charter.

One long-established stakeholder group, the Las Posas Basin User Group (LPUG), has been meeting to discuss localized groundwater issues specific to the Las Posas Valley Basin since before SGMA. The LPUG requested their advisory role to the FCGMA be formally recognized

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through a Charter, effective as of April 2016. The LPUG continues to meet regularly to discuss aspects of the GSP including recommended groundwater allocations.

Another stakeholder group that was established and operates within an FCGMA Charter is the Water Market Group. The Water Market Group is a diverse group of stakeholders that came together to explore the feasibility of water markets as a tool for improving groundwater management. The FCGMA has initiated a pilot study that combines the findings of this chartered group with the Advanced Metering Infrastructure pilot study to further explore the potential benefits and drawbacks of a water market.

### **4.2.3 Regional Water Management Groups**

FCGMA staff has actively engaged with broader regional water management groups since the initiation of the GSP process. Staff has given multiple presentations to the Santa Clara River Watershed Committee (Committee), a diverse group of stakeholders that collaborates on Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) through the countywide umbrella organization of Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC). FCGMA staff regularly communicates with WCVC staff regarding the GSP progress and outreach opportunities. Public workshop notices are distributed to the stakeholder lists for both WCVC and the Committee.

FCGMA staff has also given targeted presentations to other regional groups and individual water-management agency boards. FCGMA staff continues to be available to give presentations to regional water-management groups as requested.

### **4.3 Communication with the Fox Canyon GMA**

FCGMA is committed to an open and transparent process for GSP development including multiple mechanisms for ongoing broad communication as well as targeted outreach for feedback on specific GSP components. The FCGMA Board recognizes that the GSPs are highly technical documents moving forward on an ambitious schedule. The FCGMA Board is committed to moving the GSP process forward as quickly as reasonable in recognition that the completed GSPs will inform key groundwater management decisions that are time sensitive and important to stakeholders.

FCGMA Staff are available during regular business hours through email, phone, and in person communication. The FCGMA office is centrally located within the Ventura County Watershed Protection District office in the Ventura County Government Center Hall of Administration located at 800, South Victoria Ave, in Ventura California. The meetings of the FCGMA Board and TAG include opportunities for public comment on every agenda.

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The FCGMA has set up a dedicated GSP development page on the website and has established a GSP dedicated email address to increase response time for GSP specific questions and comments.

### 4.4 Opportunities for Tribal Communities

According to the US Bureau of Indian Affairs California Tribal Homelands and Trust Land Map, updated in 2011, and available from the Department of Water Resources website, the entire FCGMA boundary is within the Chumash Tribal/Cultural area. There are not currently any federally recognized tribes, Indian land currently or historically held in Trust by the United States Government or smaller Reservation or Rancheria areas.

FCGMA recognizes that the Chumash culture and associated cultural resources are important in Ventura County. Several active local groups and individuals representing the interests of tribal communities in Ventura County have been added to the list of interested parties including representatives from the Barbareno/Ventureno Band of Mission Indians (Chumash) and the Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation.

FCGMA has reached out to the Department of Water Resources Southern Region Office Tribal Liaison, Jennifer Wong, and added her to the list of interested parties. The San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians has also shown an interest in the groundwater sustainability planning process and has been added to the list of interested parties.

### 4.5 Opportunities for DAC Communities

The majority of the Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) within the FCGMA jurisdictional boundary receive water from cities, special districts, or mutual water companies. The FCGMA works closely with these water agencies and mutual that represent the interests of the DACs. The Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) has established a DAC Involvement Committee to discuss DAC Community needs and project opportunities related to Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM). FCGMA staff participates in the DAC Committee. The DAC Committee will oversee work conducted through a Proposition 1 IRWM grant to involve DAC members in water resources decision making and identify water resource needs in DAC communities. There are several DACs within the FCGMA jurisdiction, and representatives of those communities will have the opportunity to participate in this process. As part of the grant-funded DAC involvement, process participants will identify their needs and potential projects to improve water resource management in these areas. Some of those projects could be incorporated into the GSPs. Proposition 1 includes grant funding for projects that benefit DACs and these funds may be a resource in implementing key projects identified in the GSPs. FCGMA staff will continue to participate in the WCVC DAC Committee throughout the GSP process.

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Other members of the WCVC DAC Committee participated in the first FCGMA public stakeholder workshops and subscribe to the stakeholder list.

### 4.6 Stakeholder Email List

The FCGMA maintains a list of stakeholders interested in the GSP process, known as the *List of Interested Parties (List)*. A monthly newsletter, meeting notices, and notices of GSP documents available for review are sent electronically to the List. There are currently over 400 individuals subscribed to the List representing a wide range of interests including agriculture, fisheries, municipalities, water agencies, tribal interest, and individual property owners. The List is continuously updated with individuals that request in writing to be placed on the list of interested parties. Written requests and questions can be sent via email to [fcgma-gsp@ventura.org](mailto:fcgma-gsp@ventura.org). Subscribers to the List can choose to unsubscribe at any time.

### 4.7 Online Resources

The FCGMA has a longstanding commitment to transparency of information and decision-making. All FCGMA Board meetings are broadcasted live online and available for later viewing at [www.FCGMA.org](http://www.FCGMA.org). Meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes are posted on the website as soon as they are available for all FCGMA Board meetings, TAG meetings, and Board appointed Committee meetings. As draft documents are created for each of the GSPs, they are posted on the FCGMA website. A monthly newsletter, meeting notices, and notices of GSP documents available for review are sent electronically to the List.

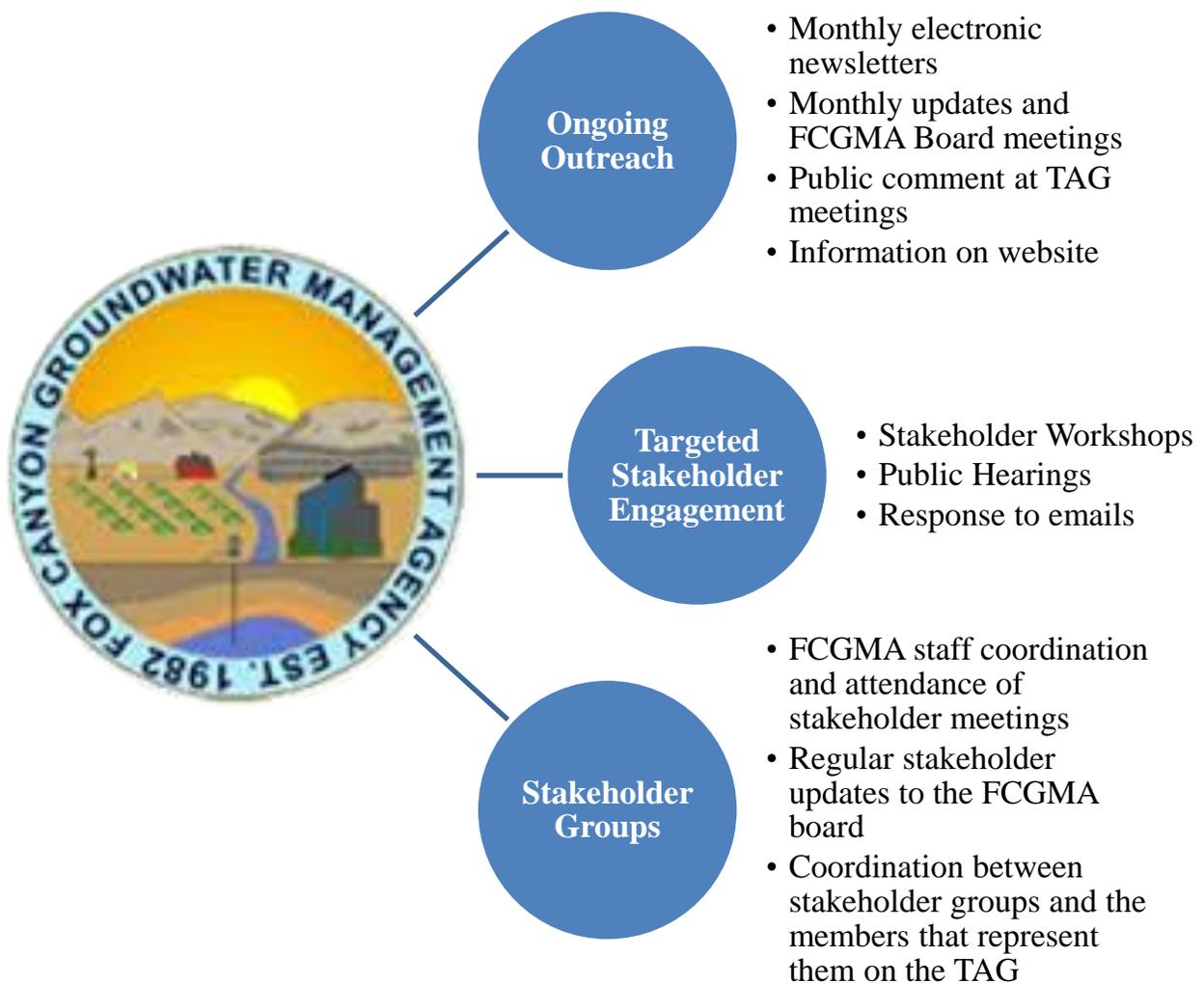
### 4.8 Characterization of Current Communication

The FCGMA currently communicates with the public and interested stakeholders through ongoing outreach, targeted stakeholder engagement, and stakeholder group meetings (Figure 2). Ongoing outreach is used to continually update stakeholders regarding the progress of GSP development and is carried out through monthly electronic newsletters, monthly updates at FCGMA Board meetings, public comment opportunities at TAG meetings, and information made available on the FCGMA website. Targeted stakeholder engagement is when the FCGMA solicits feedback from the public or responds to specific comments or concerns that are raised through public workshops, public hearings and emails. Stakeholder group meetings are meetings that are initiated by interested parties outside of the FCGMA process; however, FCGMA staff is available to coordinate as appropriate with these groups to help them understand the GSP development process.

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Figure 2. Diagram of Communication Structure

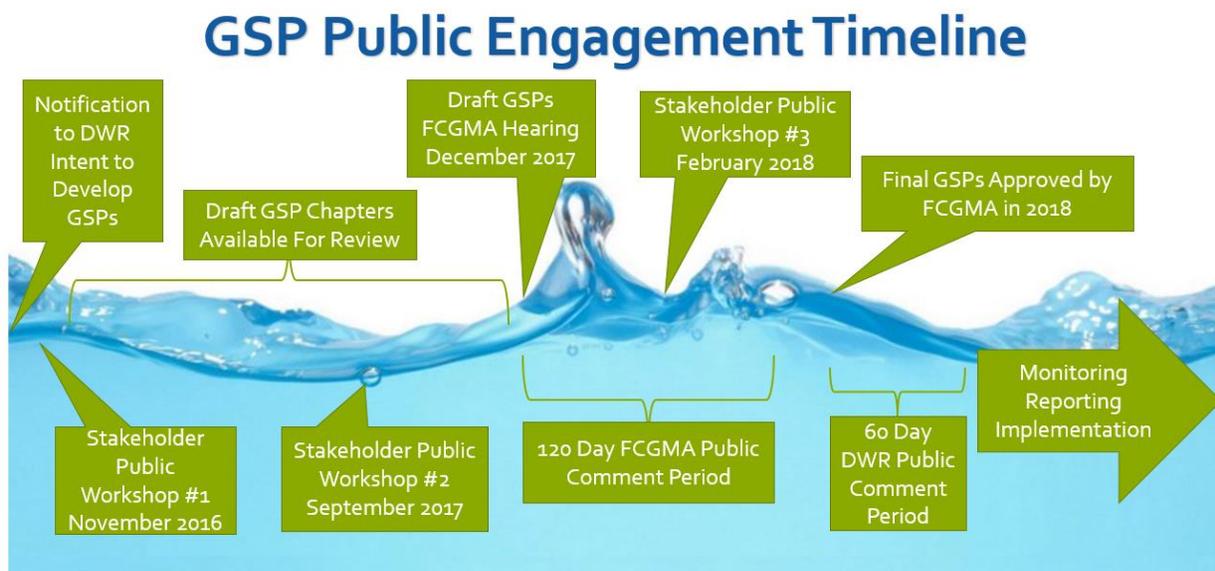


## 5 STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

The initial Stakeholder Workshop #1 was held in November 2016 to give an introduction to the FCGMA, an overview of the SGMA, the GSPs and process. The primary objective of this meeting was to introduce the process and solicit public comments. A second set of Stakeholder Workshops were held to present preliminary results and provide an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and provide comments. The workshops were held in September 2017 and focused on the identification of undesirable results, including discussions of what is significant and unreasonable, measurable objectives and sustainable yield. Ongoing stakeholder engagement has continued through regular FCGMA Board meeting updates, newsletters, TAG meetings, and draft documents made available on the FCGMA website.

The draft GSPs will be brought before the FCGMA Board in December 2017. The Board will consider opening a 120-day public comment period. The draft GSPs will be updated based on comments with subsequent adoption of the final GSPs by the FCGMA Board. After the final GSPs are adopted by the FCGMA Board, DWR will accept public comments in another 60-day public comment period. After the final GSPs are adopted by the FCGMA Board, regular monitoring and reporting will be conducted as required by DWR and outlined in the GSPs. A detailed schedule of the GSP process including stakeholder review opportunities can be found on the FCGMA website and is updated as needed. Below is a summary table of key GSP engagement opportunities for the public (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. GSP Public Engagement Timeline**



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### 6 CONCLUSION

This document serves as a tool for facilitating public engagement in the GSP development process. It is designed to be a living document that is updated as needed to reflect current mechanism of engagement. The GSP Implementation notification and communication phase will begin once the FCGMA submits the final GSP to DWR. This phase will include engagement with the public and beneficial users regarding the progress of monitoring and report, establishment of fees, and the development and implementation of management strategies including projects and actions as needed. FCGMA will continue to use the communication tools outlined in this document as necessary through the implementation phase of the GSP.

For additional information regarding the FCGMA and the GSP, Please Contact:

Jeff Pratt, P.E., Executive Officer of the FCGMA.

**Phone:** 805.654.2073

**Email:** Jeff.Pratt@ventura.org

Or

Keely Royas, Clerk of the FCGMA Board

**Phone:** 805.654.2014

**Email:** keely.royas@ventura.org

**Mailing Address:**

Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency

800 South Victoria Avenue

Ventura, California 93009-1610

**Website:** [www.FCGMA.org](http://www.FCGMA.org)

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