

March 13, 2023  
DRAFT STATEMENT OF EQUITY  
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For your consideration, here is a draft of an expanded statement regarding equity:

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Groundwater in the Paso Robles Subbasin is a shared resource that the GSAs that are party to this GSP seek to manage for the benefit of all Subbasin users, consistent with their rights under the California Constitution and state statutes. The management framework established by SGMA and this GSP is inherently focused on assuring both sustainable and equitable access to and use of this shared resource.

The concept of equity is explicit in state statute. As noted on the State Water Resources Control Board website, in Water Code Section 106.3 “the state statutorily recognizes that ‘every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.’ The human right to water extends to all Californians, including disadvantaged individuals and groups and communities in rural and urban areas.”

Achieving equitable access to Subbasin groundwater faces several challenges:

- Users are located in diverse settings relative to the Subbasin’s hydrogeology.
- Users’ water supplies are managed in diverse jurisdictional settings (a city, a community services district, a county service area, a small mutual water supply system and individual wells in unincorporated rural areas).
- The Subbasin includes diverse land use patterns, including highly urbanized areas, rural residential lots, and both small and large irrigated agricultural operations, some of which include commercial facilities such as wineries, tasting rooms and lodging.
- Within irrigated agricultural operations – which collectively use the vast majority of groundwater – there is currently wide variation in the amount of irrigation water applied (acft/acre), depending on crop type and cultural practice.
- The economic resources of individual Subbasin users vary widely.

The central premise of SGMA is that the Subbasin’s groundwater is sustainably managed and accessible to all users. Equity in achieving these goals requires that no user is precluded from access to the groundwater because they lack financial resources.

For example, the management objectives and minimum thresholds outlined in this GSP (Chapter 8) admit the possibility of shallow wells going dry. Such wells often serve residential users who may be challenged to pay for improvements like deepening the well or drilling a new one. Subbasin mitigation programs for this undesirable result should account for the economic resources available to affected users.

Other issues of equity should also be addressed, such as the disparity in the amount of irrigation applied to different crop production sites. Even with supply projects increasing Subbasin safe yield, it is apparent that reductions in agricultural pumping will be required for sustainability.

Management of the Subbasin should establish agricultural water use that could be equitably available to all potential growers, with mechanisms such as fallowing programs (MILR) fairly constructed to facilitate transfer of water use to desired growing sites.

All GSAs that are responsible for the development and administration of this GSP commit to equity in the sustainable management of the Paso Robles Subbasin.

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