

Steve Pennix,
Ridgecrest CA

3 Comments-

1. No detail on how the plan can and will be enforced:

Legal enforcement mechanisms of the GSP are not discussed, so therefore the plan has no "teeth". The plan should include a description of legally enforceable options that can be exercised in order to ensure all pumpers with water allocations remain in compliance, such as those using the Transient Pool allocation that is limited to no more than 51,000 AF total (how will this limit be tracked and enforced?), as well as enforcing pumping restrictions to those non-de minimis pumpers that do not have any legal allocation at all. Without an in-depth discussion on the enforcement options available to "monitor and enforce" the GSP, the GSP is meaningless. Without providing details on enforcement options that are legally defensible by the GSP and supported by State of California law, anyone who doesn't agree with the plan will not be compelled to take the GSP's requirements very seriously, and the document will simply be ignored. Since SGMA grants the IWWGA the legal authority to implement the GSP, suggest the GSP outline that authority in further detail as to what that enforcement could consist of, and why it is important for all pumpers to understand this plan should be taken seriously. Otherwise there will be those that will simply ignore the GSP because they will believe GSP pumping restrictions can't be enforced.

2. No clear indication for when the option of imported water should be no longer considered a viable sustainability element:

The Imported Water Project, should it even be feasible, is suggested to begin in 2023 with permitting and design, and end with construction completed in 2035 (a 12-year process). The plan states in Section 5.3.1.7 that "the implementation schedule and feasibility of the options will be examined on a regular schedule, and management actions and projects will be adjusted if needed." Please define the term "regular schedule". Annual? Bi-annual? How long will it take for the GSA to formally determine whether water importation will be feasible or not? No timeline or milestone is provided as to when the search for supplemental water is no longer a feasible option to continue pursuing because it will no longer meet the sustainability goal of the GSP. The clock will simply run out on the option of searching for, obtaining funding, getting permits, and completing the infrastructure necessary for importing water as it relates to the SGMA mandate for sustainability by 2040. Suggest acknowledging a final date for ending the search for imported water.

3. No discussion of a Management Action where the only option is basin-wide mandated (NOT voluntary) conservation, which is a very real possibility:

Considering the very high costs and the likelihood of not being able to afford imported water when all factors are considered (environmental permits & documentation, infrastructure capital costs, maintenance, costs of negotiating contracts with water suppliers, cost of actual water that may be available to import. etc.), the plan does not address what happens if imported/supplemental water is not obtained. While Section 5.3.3 attempts to address a basin-wide conservation approach, it does so only through "voluntary" coercing conservation. Section ES 5.0 states that reducing immediately to the sustainable yield is "not feasible". I do not agree with that assertion. Difficult yes, but not unrealistic or unfeasible. It can be done. What's missing in the GSP is a frank discussion that there is a very realistic possibility that water conservation may be the only option to get the basin down to an overall sustainable yield of 7,650 AFY . So, if that is the last option available, what does that option look like?

The plan is remiss if it does not at least address the potential for having to implement a non-voluntary conservation-only approach for ALL pumpers throughout the entire basin. Getting that option into the plan from the onset is important from a public discourse perspective, should that option be the only viable one remaining over the next few years. I would suggest a "Mandatory Water Conservation Management Action" be added to the plan so the public can at least understand that may be the only option left at some point in the future.