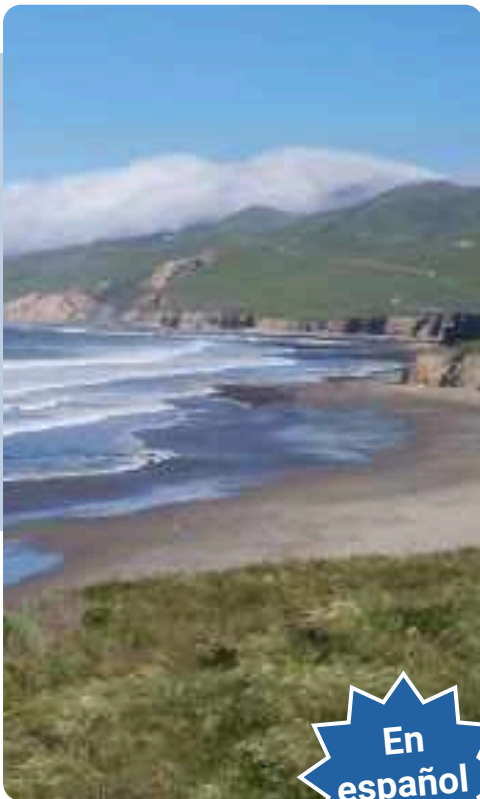


NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

To Consider a Proposed Groundwater Extraction Fee Within the Western Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency



Jalama Beach



Hearing Date:	Wednesday, June 25, 2025
Hearing Time:	9 a.m.
Location:	Vandenberg Village Community Services District 3745 Constellation Rd. Lompoc, CA 93436

This Notice is being provided to you by the **Western Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency** (WMA-GSA; WMA; Agency) in accordance with Article XIII D, Section 6 of the California Constitution (Proposition 218), which requires the Agency to notify property owners of record of a proposed groundwater extraction fee. This notice is being provided to inform property owners of the proposed property-related fee and their right to protest. ***This Notice is available on the website in English and Spanish.***

El Aviso está disponible en español en el sitio web www.WMA-SantaYnezWater.org. El aviso impreso está disponible en la biblioteca local.



NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNERS WHO EXTRACT GROUNDWATER

This serves as notice that the Western Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board of Directors will conduct a Public Hearing to consider a proposed groundwater extraction fee on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 9 a.m. at the Vandenberg Village Community Services District, 3745 Constellation Rd., Lompoc, CA 93436.

All those interested are invited to appear at the Public Hearing on June 25, 2025, to give oral or written testimony or to submit written protests regarding the proposed groundwater extraction fee. The WMA-GSA Board of Directors (Board) will hear and consider all oral testimony and written materials submitted regarding the proposed property-related groundwater fee at the Public Hearing. The Board has the authority to adjust the proposed groundwater fee in response to oral testimony and written materials submitted for consideration, provided fee adjustments do not increase beyond those proposed in this Notice. If adopted by the WMA-GSA Board of Directors, the proposed fee would take effect July 1, 2025, and each July 1 thereafter. Property owners would see the groundwater extraction fee on their next and future property tax bills.

BACKGROUND - California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

The California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), passed in 2014, created a statewide framework to help protect groundwater resources over the long-term. SGMA requires local agencies to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) for high and medium priority basins and develop and implement Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to avoid undesirable results and mitigate overdraft, ensuring sustainable conditions by 2042 for non-critically overdrafted basins.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) supports local SGMA implementation through regulatory oversight and the evaluation and assessment of GSPs. Prudent groundwater management will contribute to a reliable source of water supplies for future generations. A lack of proactive management could result in failure of public and/or private water wells and jeopardize supply.

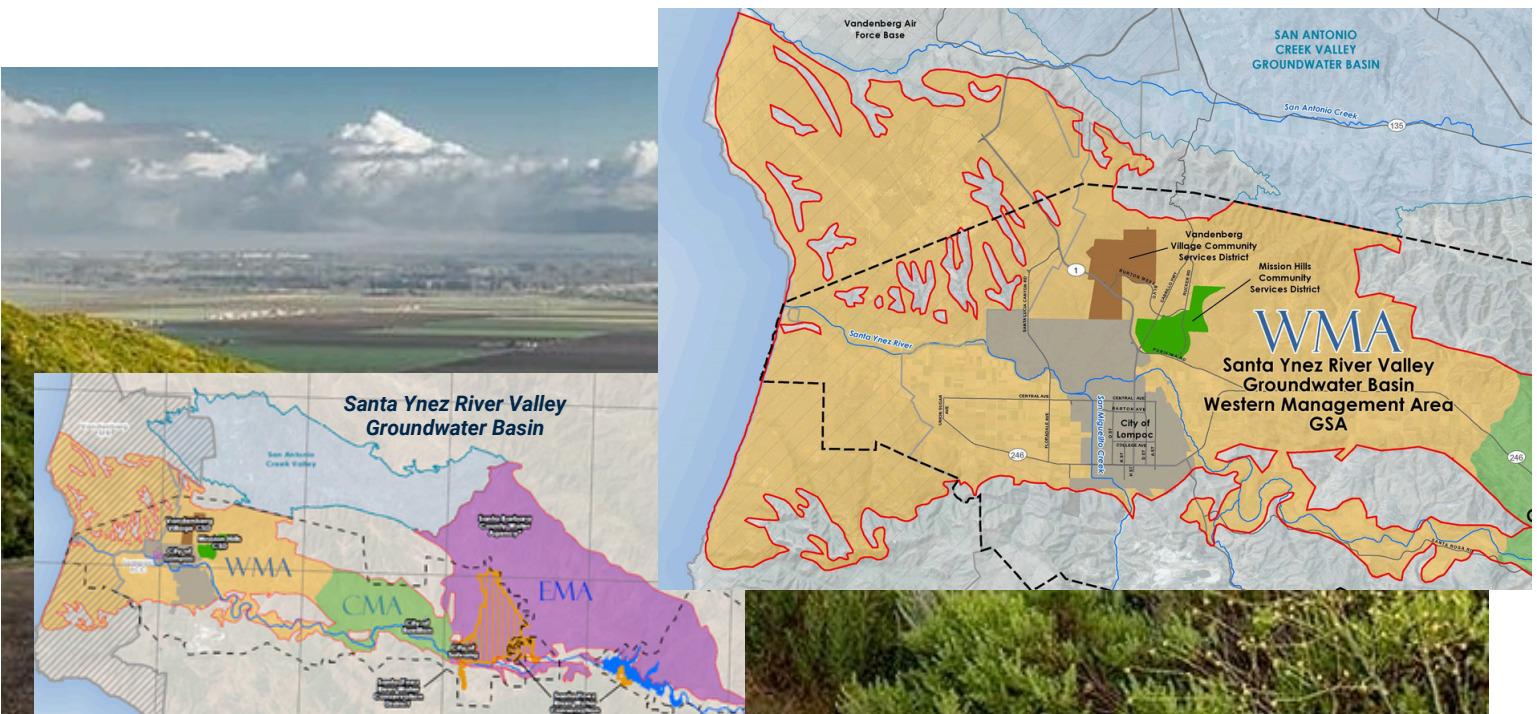
Sustainable Groundwater Management in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin

The WMA-GSA is one of three GSAs (Central, Eastern, and Western Management Areas) within the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin), as shown in the map below. The Basin encompasses approximately 317 square miles (203,100 acres). Each GSA is independent regarding management decisions and responsibility for collecting groundwater and related data within their respective areas.

The WMA-GSA covers 133.7 square miles including the Santa Ynez River alluvium west of Santa Rosa Park to the Lompoc Narrows; Lompoc Plain and Terrace; Burton Mesa; and the Lompoc and Santa Rita uplands.

WMA-GSA Board Member Agencies:

- City of Lompoc
- Vandenberg Village Community Services District
- Mission Hills Community Services District
- Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District
- Santa Barbara County Water Agency (non-voting member)



REASONS FOR PROPOSED GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION FEE

In January 2022, the WMA-GSA submitted its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), which was approved in 2024, marking a significant milestone for the Member Agencies and landowners by allowing the WMA-GSA to locally carry out sustainability efforts. The value of GSP approval cannot be overstated. It means the GSA can continue to be a locally run agency, managed with direct stakeholder input. Although GSP approval was received, funding is required to implement GSP activities and programs essential to keep the WMA-GSA's good standing with DWR. Failure to act locally will result in state intervention and additional fees.

The WMA-GSA is required by state law to manage its portion of the Basin and

must collect revenues sufficient to cover the costs of operating the GSA and fund the groundwater sustainability program and a prudent reserve.

Costs that must be recovered through rate or fee revenue include GSA and program administration, professional services, monitoring groundwater conditions in the WMA, preparing and adopting GSP updates and annual reports required by DWR, investigations, inspections, compliance assistance, and enforcement.

The fee proposed herein was developed through a comprehensive Fee Study that is available for review on the WMA-GSA website at www.wma-santaynezwater.org/.

Based upon the analysis in the WMA-GSA's Fee Study Report, the WMA-GSA is proposing to establish an annual groundwater extraction fee on each acre-foot of groundwater water extracted on the parcel(s) for which you are listed as the official property owner in the county property records.

As proposed, the fee would be collected through the County of Santa Barbara property tax roll to ensure ongoing local control and management of groundwater and prevent expensive and intrusive state intervention that may otherwise result.

This will be a new fee in addition to any other fees you may currently be paying.

PROPOSED GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION FEE

The proposed five-year schedule of an annual per-acre foot groundwater extraction fee charged on all groundwater extraction within the WMA (excluding extractions from the alluvial aquifer, which is not "groundwater" as defined in SGMA) is based on an average of historical reported groundwater extraction data for fiscal years 2020 through 2024. If adopted, the fee will be billed to landowners on their Santa Barbara County tax bill beginning on July 1, 2025, except for fees applicable to municipalities, community services districts, mutual water companies and other entities, including but not limited to, entities that own property tax exempt parcels, which will be directly billed as determined appropriate by the GSA.

In the first year, the fee will be based on the total acre-foot of groundwater production in Fiscal Year End (FYE) 2024 for each parcel. In the second year, it will be the average of production in FYE 2024 and FYE 2025. This will continue until there is a five-year running average. After that time, the fee will be calculated using a rolling five-year running average.

Table 1. Proposed Five-Year Schedule of an Annual Groundwater Extraction Fee by Acre Feet

	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	FY 2029-30
Proposed Groundwater Extraction Fee (\$/AF)	\$15.68	\$16.31	\$16.96	\$17.64	\$18.35

Santa Ynez River Valley GSAs Awarded \$5.5 Million Grant from DWR in 2024

In January 2024, representatives of the three Santa Ynez River Valley Management Area GSAs (Central, Western, Eastern) accepted an award of \$5.5 million from DWR's SGMA Grant Program. The \$5.5 million grant will be used to implement projects and management actions outlined in the Groundwater Sustainability Plans approved for each GSA. The projects and actions include:



- Well extraction measurement and reporting.
- Infrastructure and monitoring improvements to fill gaps in the available data.
- Identify strategies and performance tracking procedures that improve water utilization and save groundwater.
- Recycled Water Feasibility Study to investigate potential uses and users of surplus recycled water and reduce the demand for groundwater.
- Capture rainfall runoff from urban areas and creek and river flows to provide aquifer recharge.
- Fee studies to identify revenue needs and rate alternatives.
- Annual reporting to DWR and periodic update of the three GSPs as required by the State of California.

HOW TO SUBMIT A PROTEST OR OBJECTION

Any objection OR protest must: (1) be in writing identifying the name of the property owner and the street address or other clear identification of the property subject to the fee; (2) be signed by the property owner; and (3) comply with the relevant requirements for a written objection or written protest (as outlined below).

The main differences between an objection and a protest: a) the deadline for timely submission; b) the additional information required; and c) a timely written objection is required to subsequently bring a legal challenge to the proposed fees.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS: Timely Written PROTEST

A written protest must clearly state that the property owner opposes the proposed GSA groundwater extraction fee. To be considered timely, a written protest must be received by the WMA-GSA via a "SUBMITTAL LOCATION" listed herein, **prior to the close of the public testimony portion of the Public Hearing on June 25**. Any timely written objection submitted will also be considered to be a timely written protest.

Only one protest will be counted per parcel. Owners of multiple parcels may file one protest for each parcel owned within the WMA-GSA jurisdictional area. If timely written protests are received from owners of a majority of parcels (50%+1) within the WMA-GSA's jurisdictional area, the proposed fee will not be implemented.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS: Timely Written OBJECTION

Under Government Code section 53759.1, a timely written objection must specify the grounds for alleging that the proposed groundwater extraction fees does not comply with Proposition 218. The Western Management Area GSA has documented how the proposed fee complies with Proposition 218 in the Groundwater Fee Setting Procedures Resolution posted at www.wma-santaynezwater.org/. **The deadline for written objections is 5 p.m. on June 16**. To be considered timely, such objection must be received by the WMA-GSA via a "SUBMITTAL LOCATION" listed herein prior to the deadline.

Failure to submit a timely written objection bars any right to challenge the proposed fee through a legal proceeding. (Gov. Code, § 53759.1, subd. (c).)



SUBMITTAL LOCATIONS:

Mail: P.O. BOX 719, SANTA YNEZ, CA 93460

Email: WMA@SantaYnezWater.org

In Person: 3669 Sagunto St., Suite 101, Santa Ynez

Property owners are invited to attend the Public Hearing and provide comments. Written objections are due by 5 p.m. on June 16. Written protests may be submitted in person at the Public Hearing before the close of the Hearing on June 25.

If adopted, the proposed fee will take effect beginning July 1, 2025.

The reasons for the fee, the basis upon which it was calculated, and the amount of the proposed fee are described in more detail in the Fee Study Report posted at www.wma-santaynezwater.org/.



Scan this code to be taken directly to the webpage.

Statute of Limitations for Challenging the Proposed Fee:

Please note that pursuant to California Government Code section 53759, there is a 120-day statute of limitations for judicially challenging all fees and charges set forth in this Notice that runs from the effective date of or the date of the final passage, adoption, or approval of the Resolution approving the fee, whichever is later.

