

Owens Valley Groundwater Authority Newsletter

September 2023



Note from Executive Manager

Hello, OVGA Board! As discussed at your March 2023 meeting, we are providing a mid-year written update on OVGA activities and happenings. The first half of the year was marked by staff transitions. Aaron Steinwand retired as of June 30, 2023, and I am now serving as the Inyo County Water Director and OVGA Executive Manager. Tim Moore, our new hydrogeologist, has been with the Water Department about six months and has taken over as your Groundwater Sustainability Plan Manager. Tim and I are both still getting up to speed on OVGA duties, but Aaron left us with good records and guidance. Please don't hesitate to reach out

to either of us at any time. Our contact information is below.

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GSP approval

The Owens Valley GSP is still under review by DWR. We learned recently from DWR that it is prioritizing reviewing and approving GSPs for basins that are medium- and high-priority (as a reminder,

Owens Valley is low-priority). Once DWR has completed those reviews, which are due by January 2024, it will turn to reviewing the half dozen or so “voluntary” GSPs that were produced for low- and very low-priority basins.

Data uploads – CASGEM, SGMA, & OVGA database

Currently CASGEM includes 37 wells in Owens Valley Groundwater Basin that are “required” to be reported to DWR twice per year (spring and fall). Four of these wells are reported by Mono County and TVGMD, and the remaining wells are reported by LADWP.

DWR has integrated water-level data reported through the SGMA Portal with the CASGEM database. The 62 monitoring wells designated in the OVGA GSP as Representative Monitoring Points (RMPs) are included in CASGEM with the collection status of “voluntary” since the basin is prioritized by DWR as low-priority. Water levels for these wells were originally uploaded via the SGMA portal as part of the GSP submittal process and are supposed to be uploaded twice per year thereafter. We are behind on these uploads due to staff changes but are actively working on getting caught up. Water level data for SGMA portal upload have been compiled, and we have worked with DWR to transfer SGMA portal administrative rights to Tim so that he can perform the uploads moving forward.

The OVGA database (<https://owens.gladata.com/>) is current

through September 2022 (annual uploads are by water year). In spring/early summer 2023, we requested and received water-level data from non-LADWP RMP wells. These data, along with additional data from LADWP wells in the vicinity of Owens Lake, were uploaded to the OVGA database in May 2023. The mid-year data gathering and update were needed for preparing the 2022 annual report (see the following section). We have requested but have not received Wheeler Crest water levels since Mono County exited the OVGA. Ongoing OVGA database maintenance is performed as needed, and the next upload is scheduled for this coming winter to align with the annual data transfer from LADWP.

GSP Annual reporting

The Department of Water Resources requires all GSAs with completed GSPs to provide annual reports on GSP implementation and a GSP update every five years. Annual reports are to provide information on groundwater conditions and implementation of the GSP for the prior water year. Reports are due April 1 of each year. Because of staffing changes, we have not yet submitted the report for OVGA that was due April 2023. We have enlisted Daniel B. Stephens and Associates to develop the first annual report and to provide a template for future reports that can be produced by OVGA staff. We have just executed a contract with DBS&A, and they anticipate having a preliminary draft for OVGA staff to review in November. Following an initial round of staff comments and DBS&A updates, the OVGA Board will receive the draft report for

comment this winter. We aim to get back on track with annual reporting in 2024.

Well registration

As you saw in our communication earlier this week, we have recently implemented the well registration process as prescribed in OVGA Ordinance 2022-01. All non-de minimus groundwater extractors (meaning anyone who pumps more than 2 acre-feet/year or is using water for other than domestic purposes) are expected to register their wells and report their pumping. There is a well registration and reporting form that was sent via email and U.S. mail to an extensive contact list. The form, along with a good deal of other information about the process, is available on the OVGA website: <https://ovga.us/well-registration/>. Pumpers are required to register their wells by April 1, 2024, and report their pumping every year thereafter. A program status update will be provided at the Board's annual meeting in March, and policy direction will be requested with respect to non-reporters and those wells not equipped with a water meter or dedicated electrical meter.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of your board is scheduled for March 2024, but we may need to hold a special meeting to consider the draft annual report. We will be in touch as we know more about the timing of the report.

