

Senate Bill No. 6

CHAPTER 1

An act to add Part 2.11 (commencing with Section 10920) to Division 6 of, and to repeal and add Section 12924 of, the Water Code, relating to groundwater.

[Approved by Governor November 6, 2009. Filed with
Secretary of State November 6, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 6, Steinberg. Groundwater.

(1) Existing law authorizes a local agency whose service area includes a groundwater basin that is not subject to groundwater management to adopt and implement a groundwater management plan pursuant to certain provisions of law. Existing law requires a groundwater management plan to include certain components to qualify as a plan for the purposes of those provisions, including a provision that establishes funding requirements for the construction of certain groundwater projects.

This bill would establish a groundwater monitoring program pursuant to which specified entities, in accordance with prescribed procedures, may propose to be designated by the Department of Water Resources as groundwater monitoring entities, as defined, for the purposes of monitoring and reporting with regard to groundwater elevations in all or part of a basin or subbasin, as defined. The bill would require the department to work cooperatively with each monitoring entity to determine the manner in which groundwater elevation information should be reported to the department. The bill would authorize the department to make recommendations for improving an existing monitoring program, and to require additional monitoring wells under certain circumstances. Under certain circumstances, the department would be required to perform groundwater monitoring functions. In that event, prescribed entities with authority to assume groundwater monitoring functions with regard to a basin or subbasin for which the department has assumed those functions would not be eligible for a water grant or loan awarded or administered by the state.

(2) Existing law requires the department to conduct an investigation of the state's groundwater basins and to report its findings to the Governor and the Legislature not later than January 1, 1980.

This bill would repeal that provision. The department would be required to conduct an investigation of the state's groundwater basins and to report its findings to the Governor and the Legislature not later than January 1, 2012, and thereafter in years ending in 5 or 0.

(3) The bill would take effect only if SB 1 and SB 7 of the 2009–10 7th Extraordinary Session of the Legislature are enacted and become effective.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Part 2.11 (commencing with Section 10920) is added to Division 6 of the Water Code, to read:

PART 2.11. GROUNDWATER MONITORING

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

10920. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature that on or before January 1, 2012, groundwater elevations in all groundwater basins and subbasins be regularly and systematically monitored locally and that the resulting groundwater information be made readily and widely available.

(b) It is further the intent of the Legislature that the department continue to maintain its current network of monitoring wells, including groundwater elevation and groundwater quality monitoring wells, and that the department continue to coordinate monitoring with local entities.

10921. This part does not require the monitoring of groundwater elevations in an area that is not within a basin or subbasin.

10922. This part does not expand or otherwise affect the powers or duties of the department relating to groundwater beyond those expressly granted by this part.

CHAPTER 2. DEFINITIONS

10925. Unless the context otherwise requires, the definitions set forth in this section govern the construction of this part.

(a) “Basin” or “subbasin” means a groundwater basin or subbasin identified and defined in the department’s Bulletin No. 118.

(b) “Bulletin No. 118” means the department’s report entitled “California’s Groundwater: Bulletin 118” updated in 2003, or as it may be subsequently updated or revised in accordance with Section 12924.

(c) “Monitoring entity” means a party conducting or coordinating the monitoring of groundwater elevations pursuant to this part.

(d) “Monitoring functions” and “groundwater monitoring functions” means the monitoring of groundwater elevations, the reporting of those elevations to the department, and other related actions required by this part.

(e) “Monitoring groundwater elevations” means monitoring groundwater elevations, coordinating the monitoring of groundwater elevations, or both.

(f) “Voluntary cooperative groundwater monitoring association” means an association formed for the purposes of monitoring groundwater elevations pursuant to Section 10935.

CHAPTER 3. GROUNDWATER MONITORING PROGRAM

10927. Any of the following entities may assume responsibility for monitoring and reporting groundwater elevations in all or a part of a basin or subbasin in accordance with this part:

(a) A watermaster or water management engineer appointed by a court or pursuant to statute to administer a final judgment determining rights to groundwater.

(b) (1) A groundwater management agency with statutory authority to manage groundwater pursuant to its principal act that is monitoring groundwater elevations in all or a part of a groundwater basin or subbasin on or before January 1, 2010.

(2) A water replenishment district established pursuant to Division 18 (commencing with Section 60000). This part does not expand or otherwise affect the authority of a water replenishment district relating to monitoring groundwater elevations.

(c) A local agency that is managing all or part of a groundwater basin or subbasin pursuant to Part 2.75 (commencing with Section 10750) and that was monitoring groundwater elevations in all or a part of a groundwater basin or subbasin on or before January 1, 2010, or a local agency or county that is managing all or part of a groundwater basin or subbasin pursuant to any other legally enforceable groundwater management plan with provisions that are substantively similar to those described in that part and that was monitoring groundwater elevations in all or a part of a groundwater basin or subbasin on or before January 1, 2010.

(d) A local agency that is managing all or part of a groundwater basin or subbasin pursuant to an integrated regional water management plan prepared pursuant to Part 2.2 (commencing with Section 10530) that includes a groundwater management component that complies with the requirements of Section 10753.7.

(e) A county that is not managing all or a part of a groundwater basin or subbasin pursuant to a legally enforceable groundwater management plan with provisions that are substantively similar to those described in Part 2.75 (commencing with Section 10750).

(f) A voluntary cooperative groundwater monitoring association formed pursuant to Section 10935.

10928. (a) Any entity described in subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 10927 that seeks to assume groundwater monitoring functions in accordance with this part shall notify the department, in writing, on or before January 1, 2011. The notification shall include all of the following information:

(1) The entity's name, address, telephone number, and any other relevant contact information.

(2) The specific authority described in Section 10927 pursuant to which the entity qualifies to assume the groundwater monitoring functions.

(3) A map showing the area for which the entity is requesting to perform the groundwater monitoring functions.

(4) A statement that the entity will comply with all of the requirements of this part.

(b) Any entity described in subdivision (c), (d), (e), or (f) of Section 10927 that seeks to assume groundwater monitoring functions in accordance with this part shall notify the department, in writing, by January 1, 2011. The information provided in the notification shall include all of the following:

(1) The entity's name, address, telephone number, and any other relevant contact information.

(2) The specific authority described in Section 10927 pursuant to which the entity qualifies to assume the groundwater monitoring functions.

(3) For entities that seek to qualify pursuant to subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 10927, the notification shall also include a copy of the current groundwater management plan or the groundwater component of the integrated regional water management plan, as appropriate.

(4) For entities that seek to qualify pursuant to subdivision (f) of Section 10927, the notification shall include a statement of intention to meet the requirements of Section 10935.

(5) A map showing the area for which the entity is proposing to perform the groundwater monitoring functions.

(6) A statement that the entity will comply with all of the requirements of this part.

(7) A statement describing the ability and qualifications of the entity to conduct the groundwater monitoring functions required by this part.

(c) The department may request additional information that it deems necessary for the purposes of determining the area that is proposed to be monitored or the qualifications of the entity to perform the groundwater monitoring functions.

10929. (a) (1) The department shall review all notifications received pursuant to Section 10928.

(2) Upon the receipt of a notification pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 10928, the department shall verify that the notifying entity has the appropriate authority under subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 10927.

(3) Upon the receipt of a notification pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 10928, the department shall do both of the following:

(A) Verify that each notification is complete.

(B) Assess the qualifications of the notifying party.

(b) If the department has questions about the completeness or accuracy of a notification, or the qualifications of a party, the department shall contact the party to resolve any deficiencies. If the department is unable to resolve the deficiencies, the department shall notify the party in writing that the notification will not be considered further until the deficiencies are corrected.

(c) If the department determines that more than one party seeks to become the monitoring entity for the same portion of a basin or subbasin, the department shall consult with the interested parties to determine which party will perform the monitoring functions. In determining which party will

perform the monitoring functions under this part, the department shall follow the order in which entities are identified in Section 10927.

(d) The department shall advise each party on the status of its notification within three months of receiving the notification.

10930. Upon completion of each review pursuant to Section 10929, the department shall do both of the following if it determines that a party will perform monitoring functions under this part:

(a) Notify the party in writing that it is a monitoring entity and the specific portion of the basin or subbasin for which it shall assume groundwater monitoring functions.

(b) Post on the department's Internet Web site information that identifies the monitoring entity and the portion of the basin or subbasin for which the monitoring entity will be responsible.

10931. (a) The department shall work cooperatively with each monitoring entity to determine the manner in which groundwater elevation information should be reported to the department pursuant to this part. In determining what information should be reported to the department, the department shall defer to existing monitoring programs if those programs result in information that demonstrates seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations. The department shall collaborate with the State Department of Public Health to ensure that the information reported to the department will not result in the inappropriate disclosure of the physical address or geographical location of drinking water sources, storage facilities, pumping operational data, or treatment facilities.

(b) (1) For the purposes of this part, the department may recommend improvements to an existing monitoring program, including recommendations for additional monitoring wells.

(2) The department may not require additional monitoring wells unless funds are provided for that purpose.

10932. Monitoring entities shall commence monitoring and reporting groundwater elevations pursuant to this part on or before January 1, 2012.

10933. (a) On or before January 1, 2012, the department shall commence to identify the extent of monitoring of groundwater elevations that is being undertaken within each basin and subbasin.

(b) The department shall prioritize groundwater basins and subbasins for the purpose of implementing this section. In prioritizing the basins and subbasins, the department shall, to the extent data are available, consider all of the following:

(1) The population overlying the basin or subbasin.

(2) The rate of current and projected growth of the population overlying the basin or subbasin.

(3) The number of public supply wells that draw from the basin or subbasin.

(4) The total number of wells that draw from the basin or subbasin.

(5) The irrigated acreage overlying the basin or subbasin.

(6) The degree to which persons overlying the basin or subbasin rely on groundwater as their primary source of water.

(7) Any documented impacts on the groundwater within the basin or subbasin, including overdraft, subsidence, saline intrusion, and other water quality degradation.

(8) Any other information determined to be relevant by the department.

(c) If the department determines that all or part of a basin or subbasin is not being monitored pursuant to this part, the department shall do all of the following:

(1) Attempt to contact all well owners within the area not being monitored.

(2) Determine if there is an interest in establishing any of the following:

(A) A groundwater management plan pursuant to Part 2.75 (commencing with Section 10750).

(B) An integrated regional water management plan pursuant to Part 2.2 (commencing with Section 10530) that includes a groundwater management component that complies with the requirements of Section 10753.7.

(C) A voluntary groundwater monitoring association pursuant to Section 10935.

(d) If the department determines that there is sufficient interest in establishing a plan or association described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c), or if the county agrees to perform the groundwater monitoring functions in accordance with this part, the department shall work cooperatively with the interested parties to comply with the requirements of this part within two years.

(e) If the department determines, with regard to a basin or subbasin, that there is insufficient interest in establishing a plan or association described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c), and if the county decides not to perform the groundwater monitoring and reporting functions of this part, the department shall do all of the following:

(1) Identify any existing monitoring wells that overlie the basin or subbasin that are owned or operated by the department or any other state or federal agency.

(2) Determine whether the monitoring wells identified pursuant to paragraph (1) provide sufficient information to demonstrate seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations.

(3) If the department determines that the monitoring wells identified pursuant to paragraph (1) provide sufficient information to demonstrate seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations, the department shall not perform groundwater monitoring functions pursuant to Section 10934.

(4) If the department determines that the monitoring wells identified pursuant to paragraph (1) provide insufficient information to demonstrate seasonal and long-term trends in groundwater elevations, and the State Mining and Geology Board concurs with that determination, the department shall perform groundwater monitoring functions pursuant to Section 10934.

10933.5. (a) Consistent with Section 10933, the department shall perform the groundwater monitoring functions for those portions of a basin or

subbasin for which no monitoring entity has agreed to perform the groundwater monitoring functions.

(b) Upon determining that it is required to perform groundwater monitoring functions, the department shall notify both of the following entities that it is forming the groundwater monitoring district:

- (1) Each well owner within the affected area.
- (2) Each county that contains all or a part of the affected area.

(c) The department shall not assess a fee or charge to recover the costs for carrying out its power and duties under this part.

(d) The department may establish regulations to implement this section.

10933.7. (a) If the department is required to perform groundwater monitoring functions pursuant to Section 10933.5, the county and the entities described in subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 10927 shall not be eligible for a water grant or loan awarded or administered by the state.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), the department shall determine that an entity described in subdivision (a) is eligible for a water grant or loan under the circumstances described in subdivision (a) if the entity has submitted to the department for approval documentation demonstrating that its entire service area qualifies as a disadvantaged community.

10934. (a) For purposes of this part, neither any entity described in Section 10927, nor the department, shall have the authority to do either of the following:

- (1) To enter private property without the consent of the property owner.
- (2) To require a private property owner to submit groundwater monitoring information to the entity.

(b) This section does not apply to a county or an entity described in subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 10927 that assumed responsibility for monitoring and reporting groundwater elevations prior to the effective date of this part.

10935. (a) A voluntary cooperative groundwater monitoring association may be formed for the purposes of monitoring groundwater elevations in accordance with this part. The association may be established by contract, a joint powers agreement, a memorandum of agreement, or other form of agreement deemed acceptable by the department.

(b) Upon notification to the department by one or more entities that seek to form a voluntary cooperative groundwater monitoring association, the department shall work cooperatively with the interested parties to facilitate the formation of the association.

(c) The contract or agreement shall include all of the following:

- (1) The names of the participants.
- (2) The boundaries of the area covered by the agreement.
- (3) The name or names of the parties responsible for meeting the requirements of this part.

(4) The method of recovering the costs associated with meeting the requirements of this part.

(5) Other provisions that may be required by the department.

10936. Costs incurred by the department pursuant to this chapter may be funded from unallocated bond revenues pursuant to paragraph (12) of subdivision (a) of Section 75027 of the Public Resources Code, to the extent those funds are available for those purposes.

SEC. 2. Section 12924 of the Water Code is repealed.

SEC. 3. Section 12924 is added to the Water Code, to read:

12924. (a) The department, in conjunction with other public agencies, shall conduct an investigation of the state's groundwater basins. The department shall identify the state's groundwater basins on the basis of geological and hydrological conditions and consideration of political boundary lines whenever practical. The department shall also investigate existing general patterns of groundwater pumping and groundwater recharge within those basins to the extent necessary to identify basins that are subject to critical conditions of overdraft.

(b) The department shall report its findings to the Governor and the Legislature not later than January 1, 2012, and thereafter in years ending in 5 or 0.

SEC. 4. This act shall take effect only if Senate Bill 1 and Senate Bill 7 of the 2009–10 Seventh Extraordinary Session of the Legislature are enacted and become effective.