

# MANAGING GROUNDWATER IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Groundwater supplies approximately 75% of Santa Cruz County's water. The other 25% comes from water you can see on the surface (in reservoirs, creeks, and rivers). Groundwater is rainwater that has infiltrated deep underground into saturated layers of sand and gravel. Wells are drilled into these layers where we pump the water up for our communities to use.

In 2015, California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) went into effect, because groundwater levels across the state have been declining for decades due to over pumping. This law requires that each basin create a plan to bring their basin into balance by 2040 and keep it balanced for 30 years into the future.

Santa Cruz County groundwater pumping is concentrated into three main groundwater basins (a collection of aquifers separated by mountains, layers of clay or geologic faults) and three agencies have formed to manage the groundwater in each:

Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin includes the eastside of Santa Cruz, Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, Capitola, and Seaside. The basin is designated by the State as being critically overdrafted, with seawater intrusion in wells near the coast and reduced water flows in streams. A partnership of the Santa Cruz County, City of Santa Cruz, Soquel Creek and Central Water Districts, and private well owners - together referred to as the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA). [www.midcountygroundwater.org](http://www.midcountygroundwater.org)

Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin includes Scotts Valley, Felton, Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, and Lompico. This basin is not designated as being in critical overdraft, but has had a significant decline in groundwater levels and stream flows. A partnership of the County, Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley Water Districts, and private well owners - together referred to as the Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency (SMGWA). [www.smgwa.org](http://www.smgwa.org)

Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin includes Watsonville, Freedom, Pajaro, Larkin Valley, Corralitos, and surrounding farmland. This basin is designated as being in critical overdraft, with large portions of the valley's groundwater levels below sea level and seawater intrusion extending inland to Highway 1. PV Water manages this basin and has a groundwater sustainability plan, (known locally as the Basin Management Plan) approved by the California Department of Water Resources. [pvwater.org](http://pvwater.org)

How we manage our groundwater will influence the quality of water we have, the cost, and how much will be available for our use in the future. Learn more by visiting the websites listed above or attend public meetings in your groundwater basin area.

