



AGENDA ITEM 8A

MEETING: November 18, 2015
TO: Humboldt LAFCo Commissioners
FROM: George Williamson, Executive Officer
SUBJECT: **Sustainable Groundwater Management**
The Commission will receive a report regarding the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Act), signed by Governor Brown in September 2014, provides groundwater management authority and responsibility to eliminate adverse overdraft effects. Key Act provisions include:

- Establishment of local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), or equivalent, for high and medium priority basins by June 30, 2017. GSAs can be single agencies or Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs). If, in a high/medium priority basin, another local agency does not decide to be a GSA, then the county is presumed to be the GSA for the area and must notify DWR of its decision to accept or decline responsibility. LAFCo would have a role only if GSA establishment involves special district formation, annexation, consolidation, or merger. There is no LAFCo jurisdiction over JPA formations.
- Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) for high/medium priority basins subject to critical overdraft conditions by January 31, 2020 and other high/medium priority basins by January 31, 2022, (DWR to determine "critical overdraft basins" this fall). Low priority basins are "encouraged" but not required to develop GSPs.
- Twenty years after GSP adoption, the basin must achieve sustainability through implementation of the GSP and use of the tools provided by the Act, including the authority to determine the sustainable yield of the basin, measure and limit extraction, impose fees for groundwater management, and enforce the terms of the GSP.
- The Act defines Sustainable groundwater management as groundwater use without causing undesirable results such as lowering groundwater levels, reducing storage, seawater intrusion, water quality degradation, land subsidence, or streamflow depletion.
- If local agencies fail to act, then the state will act to achieve groundwater sustainability.

DISCUSSION

As described above, the legislation applies to groundwater basins designated as high or medium priority by the California Department of Water Resources. Humboldt County has one medium priority basin (Eel River Valley) and no high priority basins. The

Groundwater Act requires formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eel River Valley groundwater basin by June 30, 2017, and preparation of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan by 2022.

Humboldt County Public Works has been working to coordinate a regional response to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. A workshop on groundwater in the Eel River Valley was held on April 27, 2015, and a Groundwater Working Group has been formed to address groundwater issues in the Eel River Valley. The decision on which public agency (or agencies) will serve as the Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eel River Valley will be made by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors with input from the Working Group and in consultation with other local agencies (cities, tribes, special districts) situated within the groundwater basin boundary. The following options have been identified for forming a GSA and preparing a GSP:

1. One GSA / One GSP
 - a) County
 - b) County with MOU (cities, districts, tribes)
 - c) Joint Powers Authority
 - d) New district
2. Multiple GSAs / One GSP
3. Multiple GSAs / Multiple GSPs, with coordination agreement

The first Groundwater Working Group meeting was held on October 21st. Meetings are open to the public and meeting materials can be accessed at humboldt.gov.org/1428/Water-Management (click Groundwater tab). The next Groundwater Working Group meeting will take place on Monday, December 14, 2015 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the University of California Cooperative Extension office located at 5630 South Broadway, Eureka.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission receive and file this report.

Attachments:

Preliminary Timeline and Activities for the Groundwater Working Group
Figures of Groundwater Basins and Priority Rankings



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 BUSINESS 445-7652
 ENGINEERING 445-7377
 FACILITY MAINTENANCE 445-7493

NATURAL RESOURCES 445-7741
 NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING 267-9540
 PARKS 445-7651
 ROADS & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE 445-7421

LAND USE 445-7205

**Preliminary Timeline for
 Eel River Valley Groundwater Working Group:
 2015-2017**

	2014	2015		2016	2017	Future (ongoing)
	July-Dec	Jan-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-June	
Phase	Pre-planning		Planning with Working Group (meetings once every two months)			Governance by GSA
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze state legislation - Initial stakeholder engagement - Compile readily available data 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to compile and evaluate data - Public input on key questions - Apply for Proposition 1 funds to support planning efforts and technical studies - Develop structure of GSA - Discuss elements of GSP 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare and implement GSP
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where does legislation apply? - What data exists? - What are the primary issues and concerns? - What are the key data gaps and technical questions? - Who are stakeholders? - How to engage with stakeholders? - How to organize response to legislation? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will serve as GSA? - How will GSA function? - What information is needed to make informed decisions? - How will GSA be funded? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined
Decisions	No decisions made		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency (or agencies) to serve as GSA - GSA governance structure - Role of Working Group (or other mechanism for stakeholder input) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation slides with maps and summary information 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolution establishing GSA - GSA policies and procedures - Technical reports 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined

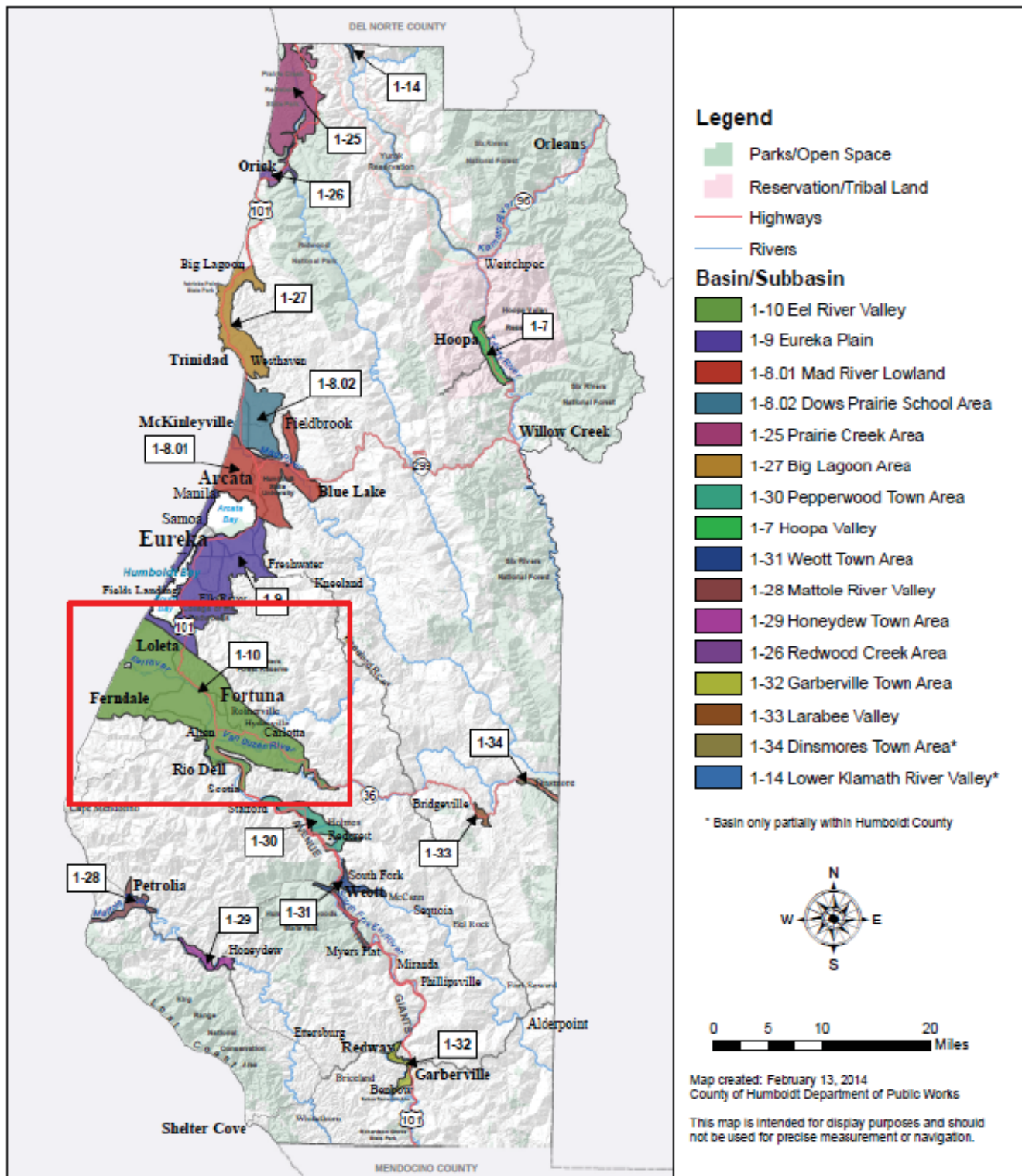
Milestones

- September 2014: Sustainable Groundwater Management Act signed by Governor Brown
- October 21, 2015: First Working Group Meeting
- October 2015: DWR to release final guidelines for Proposition 1 Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant Program
- December 2015 (estimated): Due date for Proposition 1 grant applications
- June 30, 2017: Deadline for establishment of GSA
- January 31, 2022: Deadline for adoption of GSP

Acronyms GSA = Groundwater Sustainability Agency
 GSP = Groundwater Sustainability Plan

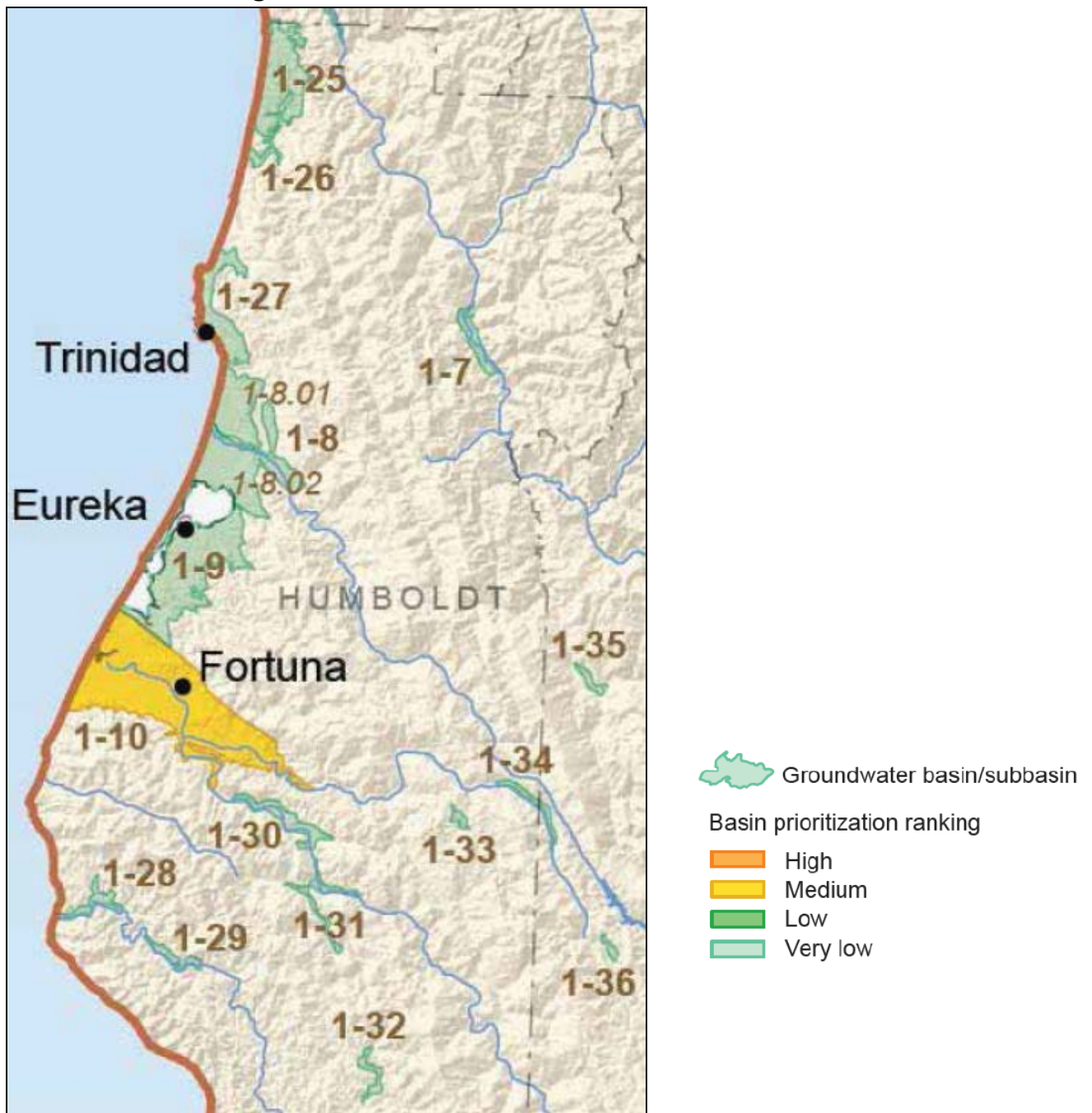
Date updated: September 25, 2015

Designated Alluvial Groundwater Basins and Sub-basins



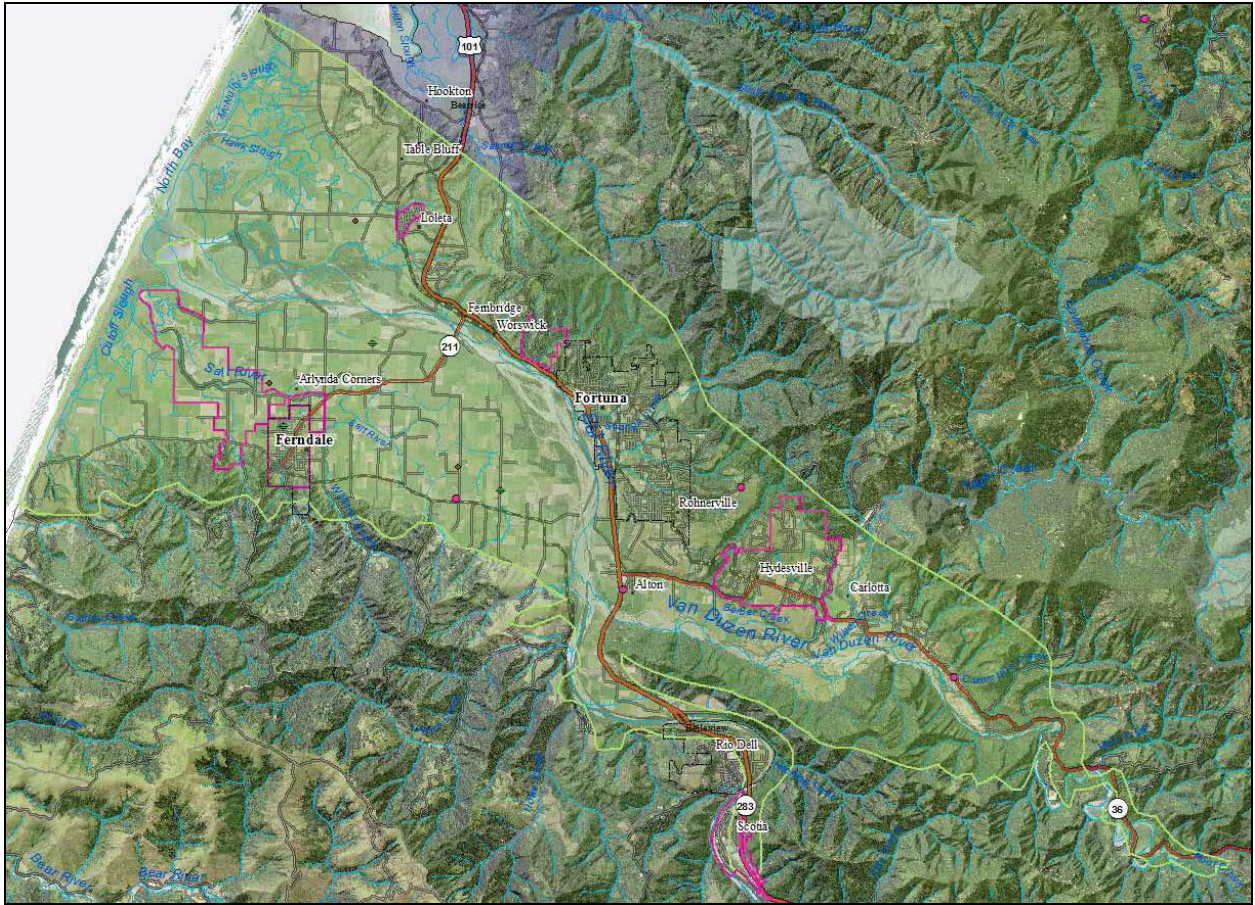
Source: DWR Bulletin 118

Prioritization Ranking of Groundwater Basins



Source: DWR Bulletin 118

Eel River Valley Groundwater Basin



DWR Monitoring Wells in the Eel River Basin

