



PRESS RELEASE

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2022-2023 SAN JOAQUIN CIVIL GRAND JURY RELEASES REPORT ON THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

SUPERIOR COURT OF
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Stockton, CA — Today, the 2022-2023 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury released its report investigating the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority (ESJGWA). The ESJGWA is comprised of 16 Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) covering the entire Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin and is responsible for developing, adopting and implementing a legally sufficient Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that covers portions of the subbasin within the jurisdictional boundaries. Having received a citizen's complaint and subsequently reviewing concerns about public outreach and engagement by the ESJGWA in the course of its work, and because of the significance of water issues to San Joaquin County residents, the 2022-2023 Grand Jury elected to undertake an investigation.

In the course of the investigation, the Grand Jury conducted 12 interviews with the complainant, members of the ESJGWA Board of Directors (current and former), County staff, representatives of several stakeholder groups, and interested citizens. The Grand Jury also reviewed ESJGWA governance documents, meeting minutes, budgets, annual reports, initial and final GSPs, and public outreach materials; websites of the ESJGWA and its member GSAs; portions of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and related Department of Water Resources requirements, California Water Code, and other relevant government codes; stakeholder correspondence; news media stories on groundwater in the Central Valley; and many other pertinent documents.

The Grand Jury concluded that while the ESJGWA has successfully developed and is currently implementing its GSP, concerns exist about inadequate public engagement, a lack of transparency in the conduct of its business, and administrative issues. The Grand Jury's recommendations, include, but are not limited to:

- Develop, adopt, and implement a plan to improve public communications and outreach.
- Identify ways to better find and engage with members of disadvantaged communities (DACs), including non-English speakers, in the San Joaquin Subbasin.
- Update the website, esjgroundwater.org, to ensure full compliance with the provisions of SB 929, SB 272, Government Code Section 7405; identify members of the board, reflect the actual dates and times for Board meetings; and enable easier public access to ESJGWA financial information, meeting agendas, minutes and other official documents.
- Formalize the status of the TAC as a standing committee and bring it into compliance with the requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.
- Monitor the expiration dates for any relevant governance or contractual documents and GSP implementation deadlines to ensure the Board can act before any lapses occur.
- Ensure staff support is adequate for efficient, cost-effective operations.

The public is encouraged to read the complete report by visiting the [Grand Jury's website](#).

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