



NEWSLETTER

SGMA UPDATES FOR KERN SUBBASIN RESIDENTS

SEPTEMBER 2026

2025 WATER YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

PROGRESS THROUGH A BELOW NORMAL YEAR

The 2025 Water Year (October 1, 2024–September 30, 2025) was classified as Below Normal, with less precipitation and surface water availability than average across California. Despite these conditions, the Kern Subbasin continued advancing groundwater sustainability through recharge, monitoring, water resource management, and other implementation efforts.

Throughout the year, local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) expanded recharge when water was available, monitored groundwater levels and water quality, and evaluated conditions using the latest monitoring and modeling data. Together, these efforts provide the information needed to track progress toward the sustainability goals established under California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

The 2025 Annual Report highlights groundwater conditions, water use, recharge, monitoring results, and other implementation activities across the Subbasin. It reflects the Kern Subbasin's continued investment in resilient water management and long-term groundwater sustainability, even during challenging water years.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in June for the 2025 Annual Report Workshop, hosted in partnership with the Water Association of Kern County. If you were unable to attend, the presentation and workshop materials are available on our website:

<https://kerngsp.com/stay-engaged/>



NO UNDERSIRABLE RESULTS

Groundwater levels, groundwater quality, and land subsidence remained within the sustainability thresholds established in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). No undesirable results were declared during the 2025 Water Year.



ACTIONABLE PROGRESS

Despite Below Normal hydrologic conditions, GSAs continued implementing groundwater sustainability projects and management actions, utilized recharge opportunities when surface water was available, and worked on expanding their comprehensive monitoring.

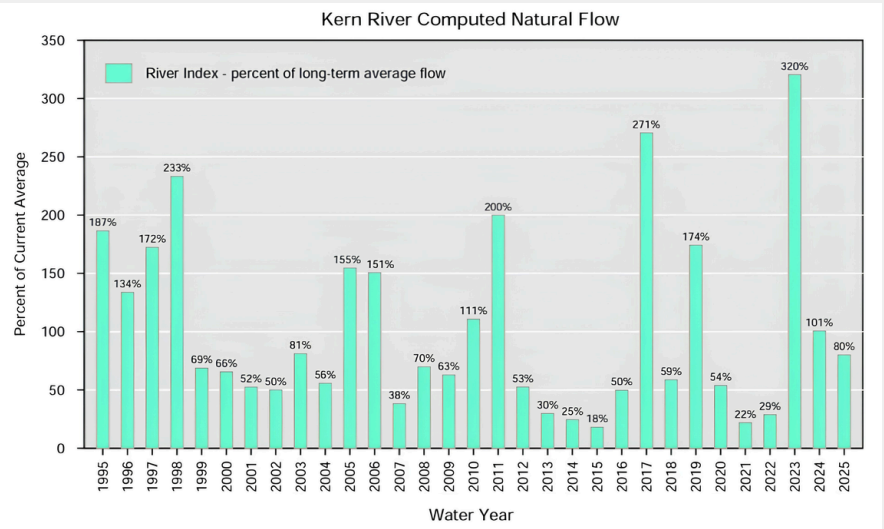
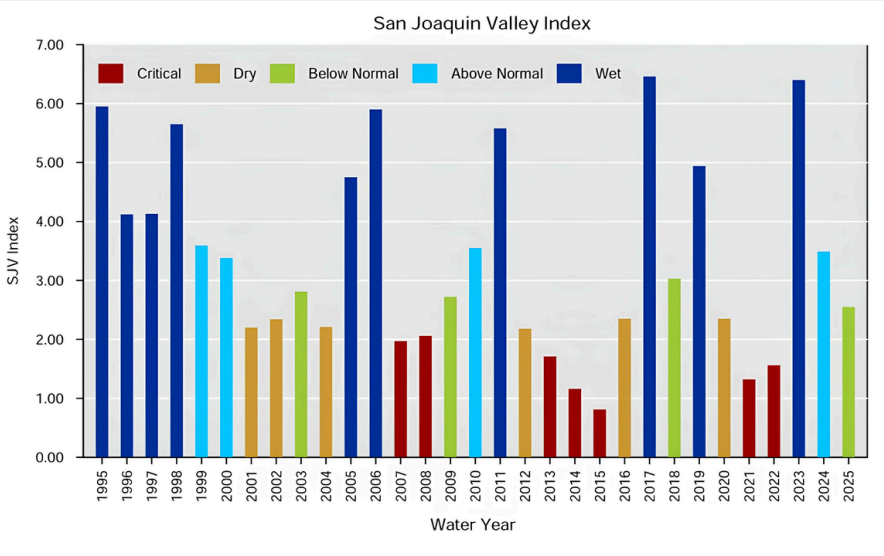


SUBBASIN COORDINATION

Twenty Groundwater Sustainability Agencies continued working together to implement the Groundwater Sustainability Plan and manage groundwater resources across the Kern Subbasin.

WHY WATER YEARS MATTER

When we talk about groundwater conditions in the Kern Subbasin, we often refer to the water year rather than the calendar year. A water year runs from October 1 through September 30, capturing a full cycle of precipitation, snowpack, runoff, and water use. Using a water year helps put groundwater changes into context.



WHAT MAKES A WATER YEAR ‘WET’ OR ‘DRY’?

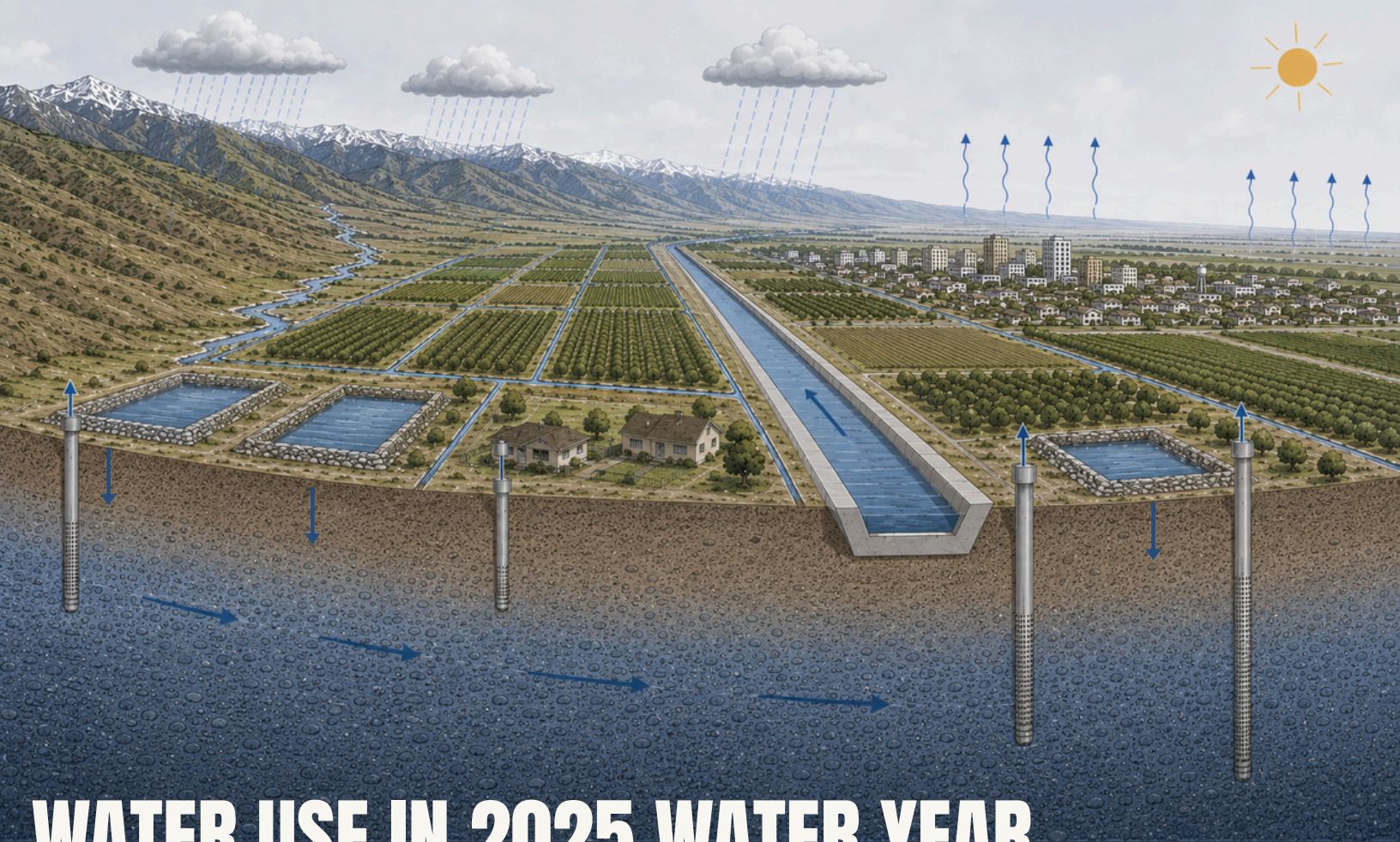
A water year type is not based on precipitation alone. In California, water year types are based on river runoff and water supply indices, which provide context for overall water availability, including local supplies and imported water delivered through canals into the Kern Subbasin.

A wet or dry water year reflects how much water is ultimately available to the Kern Subbasin, not simply how much rain falls locally. Much of the surface water supply originates in the mountains, where precipitation accumulates as snowpack and is released as snowmelt into rivers and reservoirs which can be imported through canals.

The San Joaquin Valley (SJV) Index classifies water years as Wet, Above Normal, Below Normal, Dry, or Critically Dry based largely on river runoff. It helps indicate the availability of surface water supplies across the Valley, including imported supplies.

The Kern River Index provides a more local perspective, measuring runoff from the Kern River watershed relative to the long-term average. It helps describe hydrologic conditions affecting local surface water availability in the Kern Subbasin.



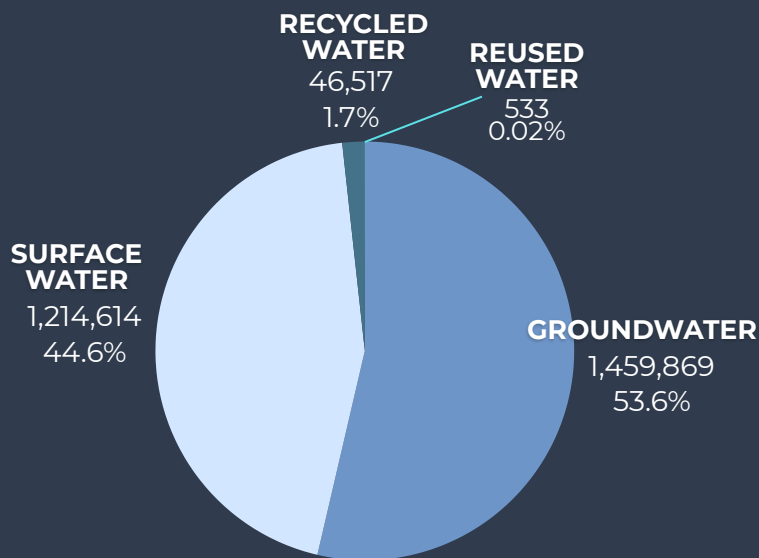


WATER USE IN 2025 WATER YEAR

2025 was a below-normal water year, with less rain and snow than average and reduced surface water supplies. As a result, groundwater supplies were relied upon more heavily, underscoring the importance of sustainable groundwater management. The charts below summarize water supplies by source and water use by service sector for Water Year 2025 (October 1, 2024–September 30, 2025).

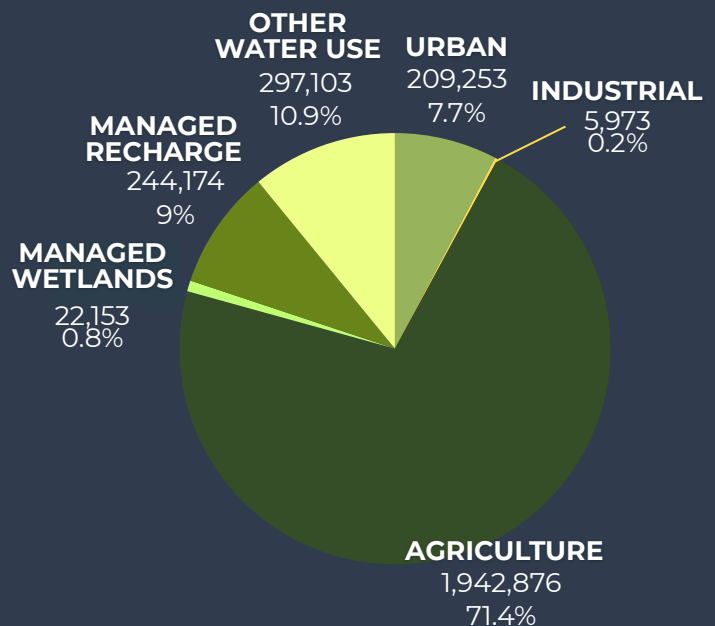
WATER SUPPLIES

Acre-Feet Supplied in Water Year 2025



WATER USE

Acre-Feet Used in Water Year 2025





CHANGE IN GROUNDWATER STORAGE

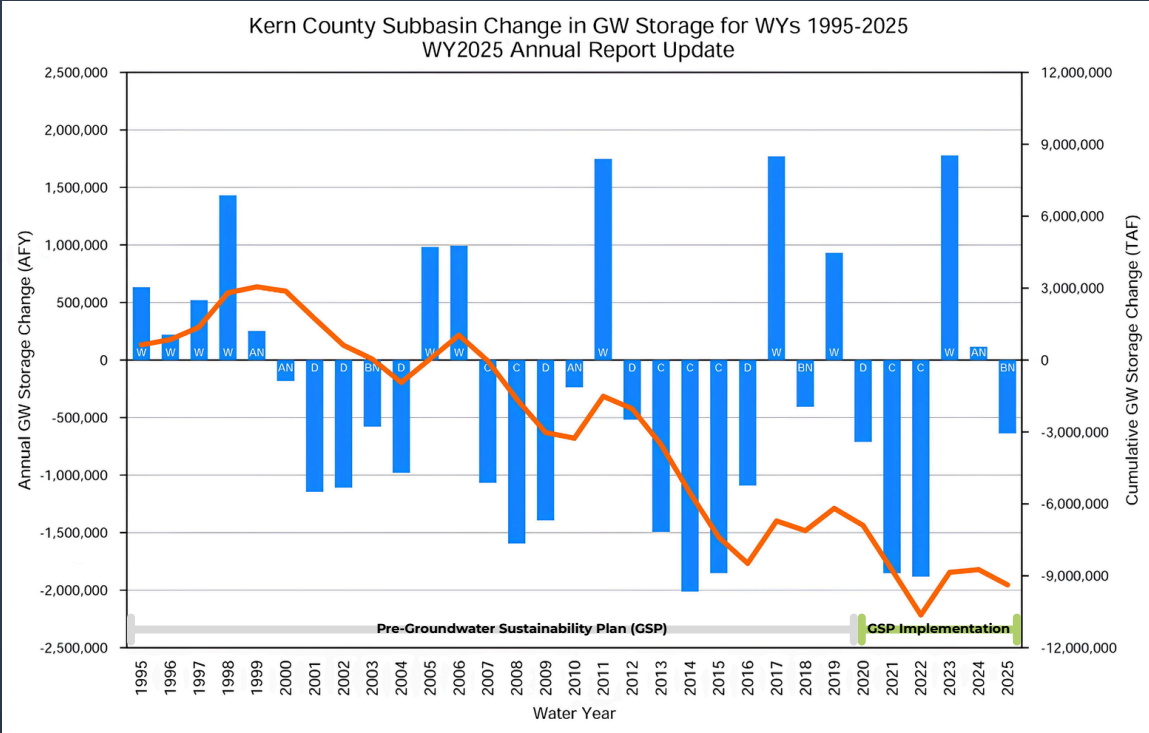
Inflows to Groundwater - Outflows from Groundwater = Groundwater Storage

Change in groundwater storage tells us whether the amount of water stored in the groundwater system increased or decreased over a given period. Annual changes are useful for understanding how the groundwater system responded to conditions in a particular water year, but one year does not tell the whole story.

Groundwater storage is influenced by many factors, including water year type, surface water availability, recharge, groundwater pumping, and conditions carried over from previous years. In dry years, reduced surface water supplies can increase reliance on groundwater and contribute to storage declines. In wetter years, increased surface water availability and recharge can provide opportunities to recover some of that storage through natural and managed recharge.

Looking at longer-term trends across multiple wet and dry years provides a better understanding of whether groundwater storage is generally stable, declining, or recovering. This longer-term perspective helps distinguish short-term fluctuations from broader trends in groundwater conditions and provides a more meaningful measure of progress toward groundwater sustainability.

**2025 WATER YEAR
CHANGE IN STORAGE:
-637,000 ACRE-FEET**



AFY: Acre-Feet per Year
TAF: Thousand Acre-Feet
GW: Groundwater
AN: Above Normal Water Year Type
BN: Below Normal Water Year Type
C: Critically Dry Water Year Type
D: Dry Water Year Type
W: Wet Water Year Type
WY: Water Year



LOOKING AHEAD - PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER FUTURE

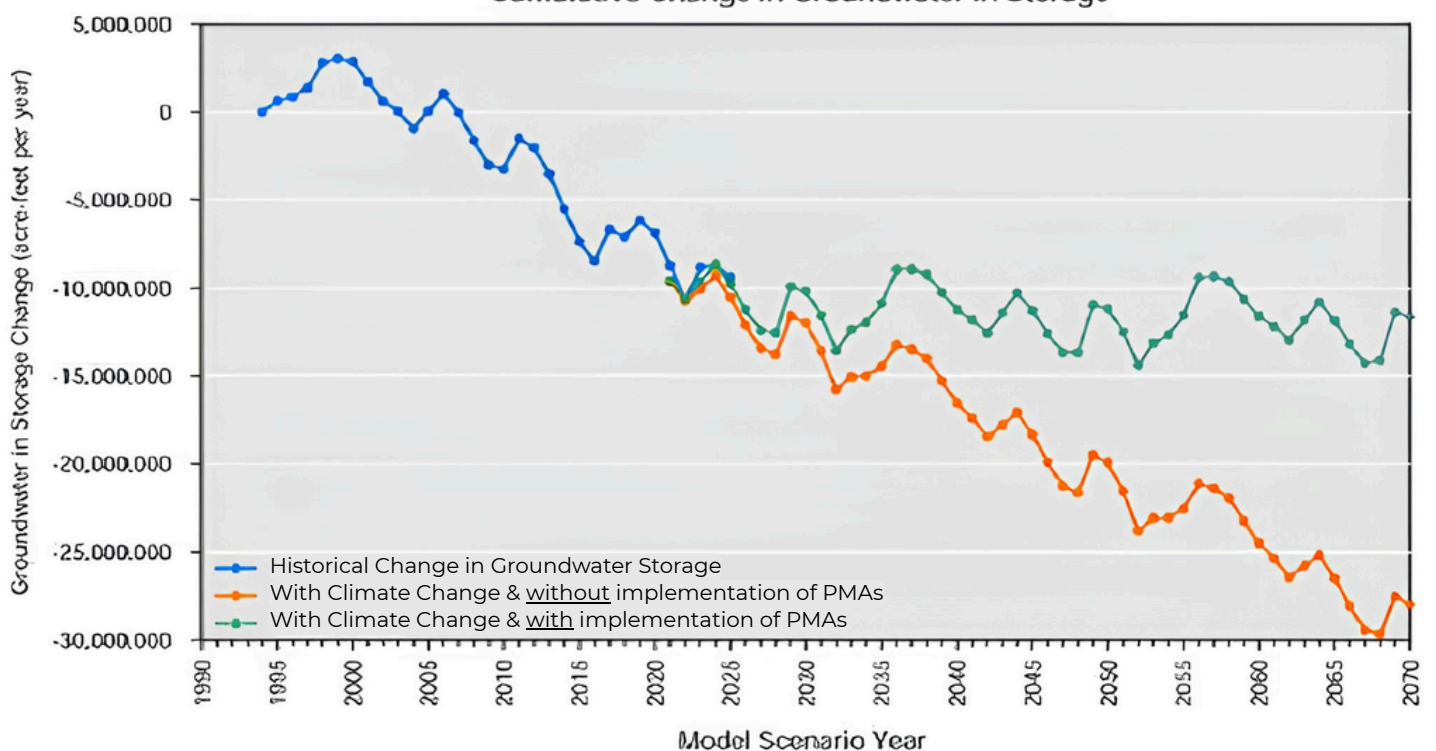
EVALUATING FUTURE CHANGE IN STORAGE WITH CLIMATE CHANGE AND PROJECTS AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

While the Annual Report looks back at the past water year, the Kern Subbasin GSAs are also looking ahead, evaluating how projects that increase groundwater supplies and management actions that reduce groundwater demand can help address long-term groundwater level declines and the potential impacts of climate change.

To support this forward-looking planning, the GSAs use a groundwater model, an analytical tool that simulates groundwater inflows and outflows across the Subbasin over time. The model allows the GSAs to evaluate how changing conditions, including increased evapotranspiration and more frequent or intense droughts, may affect future groundwater conditions.

The model also provides a way to evaluate how the timing and implementation of projects and management actions could improve groundwater conditions over time. This information helps the GSAs identify strategies to achieve groundwater sustainability by SGMA's 2040 deadline, and support a sustainable groundwater future beyond 2040.

Historical, 2030 Climate Change and 2030 Climate Change+PMAs Model Scenario Results
Cumulative Change in Groundwater in Storage



PMAs: Projects and Management Actions

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



Get notified of upcoming milestones by signing up for our email list at the KernGSP.com homepage and following us on social media @KernCountySubbasin on Instagram and Kern County Subbasin on Facebook.



Regional Subsidence Coordination

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has met with subbasins facing subsidence challenges to assess progress and alignment with its January 2026 Best Management Practices. DWR is now planning a regional meeting with San Joaquin subbasins to discuss interbasin coordination and subsidence planning and management approaches.



Kern Water Day Pop-Up Event

Mark your calendars for Thursday, September 24! The Kern Subbasin GSAs are teaming up with the Water Association of Kern County for Kern Water Day at the Kern County Fair. Stop by to ask questions, learn more about your groundwater, and have some fun at the fair! We hope to see you there.



WELL MITIGATION PLAN VERSION 3.0

The Kern Subbasin GSAs are developing an amended Well Mitigation Plan (Version 3.0), with adoption anticipated in 2026. Version 3.0 will provide clarity on mitigation options for state small water systems. A public workshop focused on the updated plan will be scheduled—stay tuned for details.



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