



**Westside District Water Authority GSA**

5555 California Avenue, Suite 209  
Bakersfield, CA 93309

Phone: 661-633-9022

Email: [regulatory@westsidewa.org](mailto:regulatory@westsidewa.org)

**WESTSIDE DISTRICT WATER AUTHORITY GSA**

**Well Drilling Moratorium within Proximity to Critical Infrastructure Impacted by Subsidence**

**Purpose:**

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires Westside District Water Authority Groundwater Sustainability Agency (“WDWA GSA”) to implement measures to prevent significant and unreasonable impacts caused by subsidence related to groundwater extraction, particularly when such impacts threaten critical infrastructure. WDWA GSA identified the California Aqueduct (“Aqueduct”) as a regional piece of critical infrastructure that must be protected from subsidence impacts. Specifically, the area between Mileposts 195 to 215 of the California Aqueduct, has experienced impacts from subsidence since 2015, leading to a reduction in available freeboard—the vertical distance between the water surface and the top of the Aqueduct structure. This reduction directly compromises the Aqueduct’s operational capacity, affecting water conveyance efficiencies and potentially risking the integrity of this piece of critical infrastructure.

In consultation with the California Aqueduct Subsidence Program (“CASP”), WDWA GSA and the Kern Groundwater Authority (“KGA”) have completed six technical studies that lay the foundation for our current understanding of subsidence dynamics in the area between Mileposts 195 to 215 of the California Aqueduct. While these technical studies have not indicated that agricultural groundwater extraction is currently a factor contributing to this subsidence, WDWA GSA is committed to working in close consultation with CASP and adjacent GSAs to monitor and collect additional data to further refine our current understanding of the causes and rate of subsidence. In furtherance of this end and achieving overall groundwater sustainability within its boundaries, the WDWA GSA Board of Directors (“Board”) adopted the following Well Drilling Moratorium within Proximity to Critical Infrastructure Impacted by Subsidence Management Action (“Management Action”) on February 20, 2024.

## **1. Scope and Applicability**

This Policy shall apply to all owners of one or more groundwater extraction facility(ies) (i.e., a groundwater well) (“Owner”) within the area extending 2.5 miles outward from Mileposts 195 to 215 of the California Aqueduct (total width of 5 miles) (“CASP Buffer Zone”) depicted in Figure 1.

## **2. Moratorium on New Wells**

Effective February 20, 2024, the drilling of any new or replacement groundwater extraction facility(ies) within the CASP Buffer Zone shall be prohibited, unless otherwise approved by the WDWA GSA Board of Directors (“Board”), as set forth in this Policy.

## **3. Well Replacement and Abandonment**

To drill a new groundwater extraction facility within the CASP Buffer Zone, an Owner or landowner must submit an application for authorization and obtain express authority from WDWA GSA staff, prior to initiating any drilling activities. WDWA GSA staff shall only approve the drilling of a new groundwater extraction facility within the CASP Buffer Zone if the Owner or landowner demonstrates that an existing groundwater extraction facility will be or has been abandoned or otherwise replaced. To demonstrate such action, the Owner or landowner must (i) comply with any and all rules, regulations, and policies imposed by the Kern County Public Health Department; and (ii) provide a copy of the well destruction permit to WDWA GSA staff within 72 hours of receipt from the Kern County Public Health Department.

## **4. Well Modifications and Repairs**

This Policy shall not limit or otherwise restrict the ability of an Owner to make modifications or repairs to existing groundwater extraction facilities located within the CASP Buffer Zone, so long as such modifications do not result in increased groundwater extraction capabilities.

## **5. Unauthorized Well Drilling Penalties**

Any Owner who proceeds to drill a new groundwater extraction facility within the CASP Buffer Zone without complying with this Policy shall be subject to penalty, as authorized by SGMA and determined by the Board.

## **6. Exemptions and Special Considerations**

### *a. Groundwater Wells for Human Health and Safety*

Naturally degraded groundwater quality within WDWA GSA’s boundaries limits the use of groundwater for municipal/domestic drinking water beneficial use. However, the Board shall consider an exemption request for any groundwater extraction well being drilled for the sole purposes of human, health, and safety including, but not limited to fire suppression, sanitation, and *de minimis* domestic use.

*b. Non-Groundwater Extraction Wells*

Due to their inability to increase net extraction of groundwater, extraction facilities not used for groundwater extraction are exempt from this Policy. Examples of exempt extraction facilities include, but are not limited to, oil and gas extraction and injection wells, monitoring wells, and test borings.

**7. Notice of Decision and Appeals**

*a. Notice of Decision*

WDWA GSA staff shall provide a written Notice of Decision to the Owner, including an explanation of staff's rationale and, if the application for authorization is denied, the following appeal process:

*b. Appeals Process*

In the event that WDWA GSA staff denies an application for authorization, the Owner may file an appeal, following the process set forth herein:

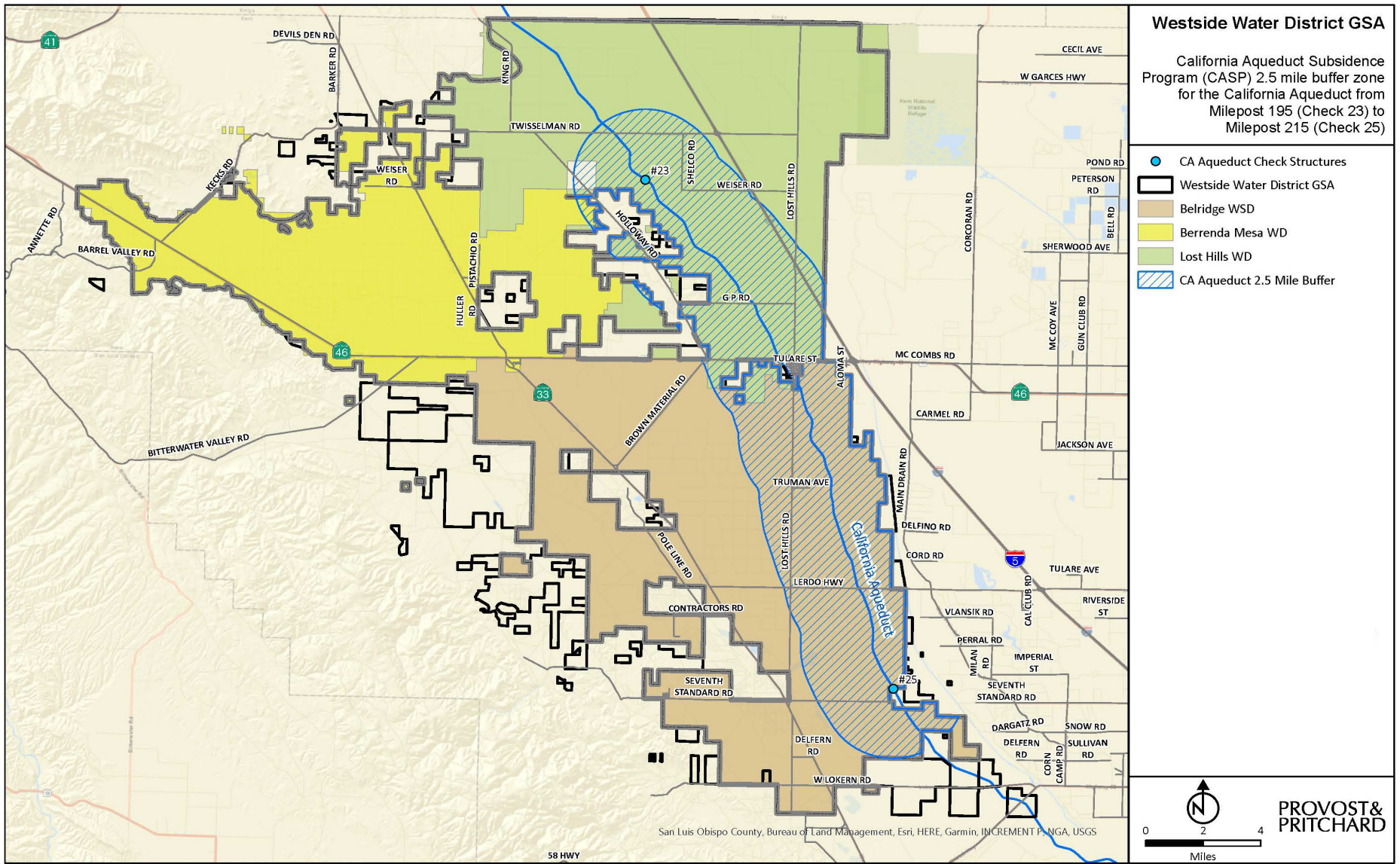
- i. The Owner must file an appeal with the Board in writing within thirty days of the date of the Notice of Decision.
- ii. The appeal must include: (1) a copy of the original application; and (2) a narrative describing any factual rationale for disputing the WDWA GSA's staff decision.
- iii. The Board shall consider the appeal at its next Board meeting provided that the appeal is filed with WDWA GSA at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. The Board hereby reserves the right to call a special meeting to address one or more submitted appeals.
- iv. The Board may request additional information from the Owner prior to making their final determination and delay such final determination until the next Board meeting.
- iv. An Owner is limited to one appeal per well. The Board's appeal decision is final within WDWA GSA's consideration process.

**8. Compliance with WDWA GSA's Well Registration Management Action**

In addition to the requirements set forth in this Policy, Owners shall also comply with WDWA GSA's "*Well Extraction Volume Reporting within Proximity to Critical Infrastructure Management Action*" adopted on February 20, 2024.

**9. Amendment of this Policy**

The Board reserves the right to amend this Policy, including the boundaries of the CASP Buffer Zone, at any duly noticed meeting of the WDWA GSA Board of Directors.



2/13/2024 : G:\Westside Water Auth-3789\On-Going\GIS\Map\SGMA Monitoring\Monitoring\Wells.aprx

Figure 1. California Aqueduct Subsidence Program (CASP) 2.5 Mile Buffer Zone for Milepost 195 (~Check 23) to Milepost 215 (~Check 25)