

# ***San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency***

**DATE:** December 13, 2021

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Lance Eckhart, General Manager

**BY:** Lance Eckhart, General Manager

**SUBJECT: RECOMMEND APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF THE FINAL  
GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE SAN GORGONIO  
PASS SUBBASIN**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Board of Directors adopt Resolution 2021-23 and Resolution 2021-24, recommending approval of the Final Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin and authorize an Agency representative to vote to formally approve the Final San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin GSP on behalf of the Agency at the upcoming meetings of the San Gorgonio Pass GSA and Verbenia GSA.

## **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION**

- Board of Directors – Various: The Agency has been working on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan since 2019.

## **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

Provost & Pritchard was retained to develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the region. This work was funded by a \$1,000,000 grant via the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Proposition 1 Integrated Regional Water Management Plan program. Development of the GSP has been over a 2-year planning process that is associated with the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The GSP gives local resource managers a structure to cooperatively manage the groundwater basin(s) in the eastern portion of our service area.

As the primary regional entity and the GSP subbasin plan manager, the Agency has led planning efforts in the development of the GSP. It is expected the Agency will continue in this role during GSP implementation on an ongoing basis. A detailed summary/staff report discussing the GSP components was prepared by Provost & Pritchard and is attached. The public comment period for the Public Review Draft of the GSP recently ended (Oct. 1 through Nov. 23, 2021). Public comments to the GSP have been received and are being incorporated into the draft GSP. The comments do not materially change the plan. The GSP Public Review Draft and Public Notice documents can be found here (<https://www.sqpgsas.org/public-review-sqps-gsa/>).

A final version of the GSP is expected to be completed before the end of the year. Public hearings will be held virtually on January 11 & 12, 2022 to adopt the GSP. Two Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) fall within the GSP planning area (DWR San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin 7.021-04). An Agency representative will need to be selected and be present at the public hearings to adopt the GSP for the San Gorgonio Pass GSA and the Verbenia GSA. Resolutions detailing the adoption process for each GSA are attached. Once adopted, the GSP will be submitted to DWR for further public comment and review and will be found here (<https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/>).

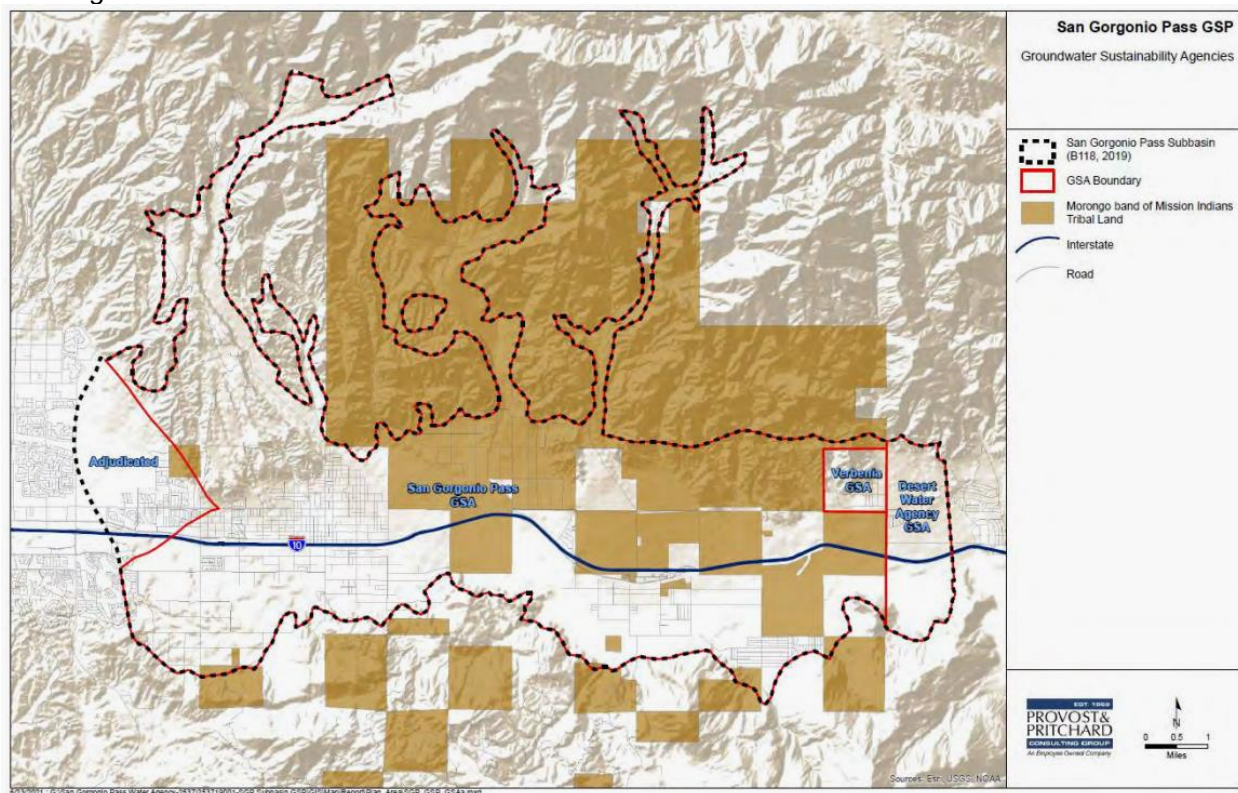
### **San Gorgonio Pass GSA Members**

- San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency
- City of Banning
- Cabazon Water District
- Banning Heights Mutual Water Company

### **Verbenia GSA Members**

- San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency
- Mission Springs Water District

*Planning area and GSA entities within GSP*



### **FISCAL IMPACT**

NONE

## **ACTION**

Motion to approve of the Final Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the San Geronio Pass Subbasin and authorize an Agency representative to vote to formally approve the Final San Geronio Pass Subbasin GSP on behalf of the Agency at the upcoming meetings of the San Geronio Pass GSA and Verbenia GSA.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- San Geronio Pass Groundwater Sustainability Plan Staff Report/Summary – Provost & Pritchard
- Resolution 2021-23 for Verbenia GSA
- Resolution 2021-24 for SGP GSA

# San Gorgonio Pass Groundwater Sustainability Plan

## Staff Report

**Date:** December 13, 2021

**Prepared by:** Provost & Pritchard







**Subject:** San Gorgonio Pass GSP Working Group Meeting

The San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin's (SGP Subbasin) respective Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) have prepared a single Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The GSAs include San Gorgonio Pass GSA, Verbenia GSA, and Desert Water Agency GSA. The following is a summary of the content and layout of the document by chapter.

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

On September 16, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a three-bill legislative package, collectively known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA). This legislation created a statutory framework for groundwater management in California that must be achieved during the planning and implementation horizon from 2022 to 2042 for medium priority basins (such as the San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin) and sustained into the future without causing undesirable results. SGMA requires that the six sustainability indicators (listed right) must be considered.

The sustainability goal will be met by maintaining a balance of water demand with available water supply. Implementation of this GSP is intended to achieve this goal while avoiding significant or unreasonable impacts to groundwater levels, groundwater storage, water quality, or interconnected surface water.

-  Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a significant and unreasonable depletion of supply
-  Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage
-  Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion
-  Significant and unreasonable degraded water quality
-  Significant and unreasonable land subsidence
-  Depletions of interconnected surface water that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of the surface water

### Chapter 2 - Plan Area

The San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin (SGP Subbasin) is located in Southern California between the San Bernardino Mountains to the north and the San Jacinto Mountains to the South, Coachella Valley to the East, and San Bernardino Valley to the west. The SGP Subbasin encompasses approximately 35,965 acres, which includes open land, urban, commercial, industrial, and municipal uses. There is a small portion of the Subbasin in the northern-canyon regions which are within the United States Forest Service's jurisdiction. Of the Subbasin's approximate 35,965 acres, approximately 13,211 acres are within MBMI jurisdiction.

The subbasin's three GSAs consist of various water agencies and municipalities that participate collaboratively to develop and implement the GSP to maintain sustainability in the SGP



Subbasin. The SGP Subbasin includes two areas that are not subjected to SGMA. These include the Beaumont Basin which is adjudicated and the Morongo Band of Mission Indians (MBMI) reservation and trust lands. **Figure 1** depicts the GSAs, adjudicated Beaumont Basin, and tribal lands within the SGP Subbasin.

The agencies and entities within the SGP Subbasin are outlined below:

**Federal Lands**

- United States Forest Service

**Public Water Districts**

- Cabazon Water District (CWD)
- Mission Springs Water District (MSWD)
- Desert Water Agency (DWA) – State Water Project Contractor
- San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (SGPWA) – State Water Project Contractor

**Mutual Water Companies (Privately Held Water Stock Companies)**

- Banning Heights Mutual Water Company

**Municipalities**

- City of Banning

**Federally Recognized Tribes**

- Morongo Band of Mission Indians

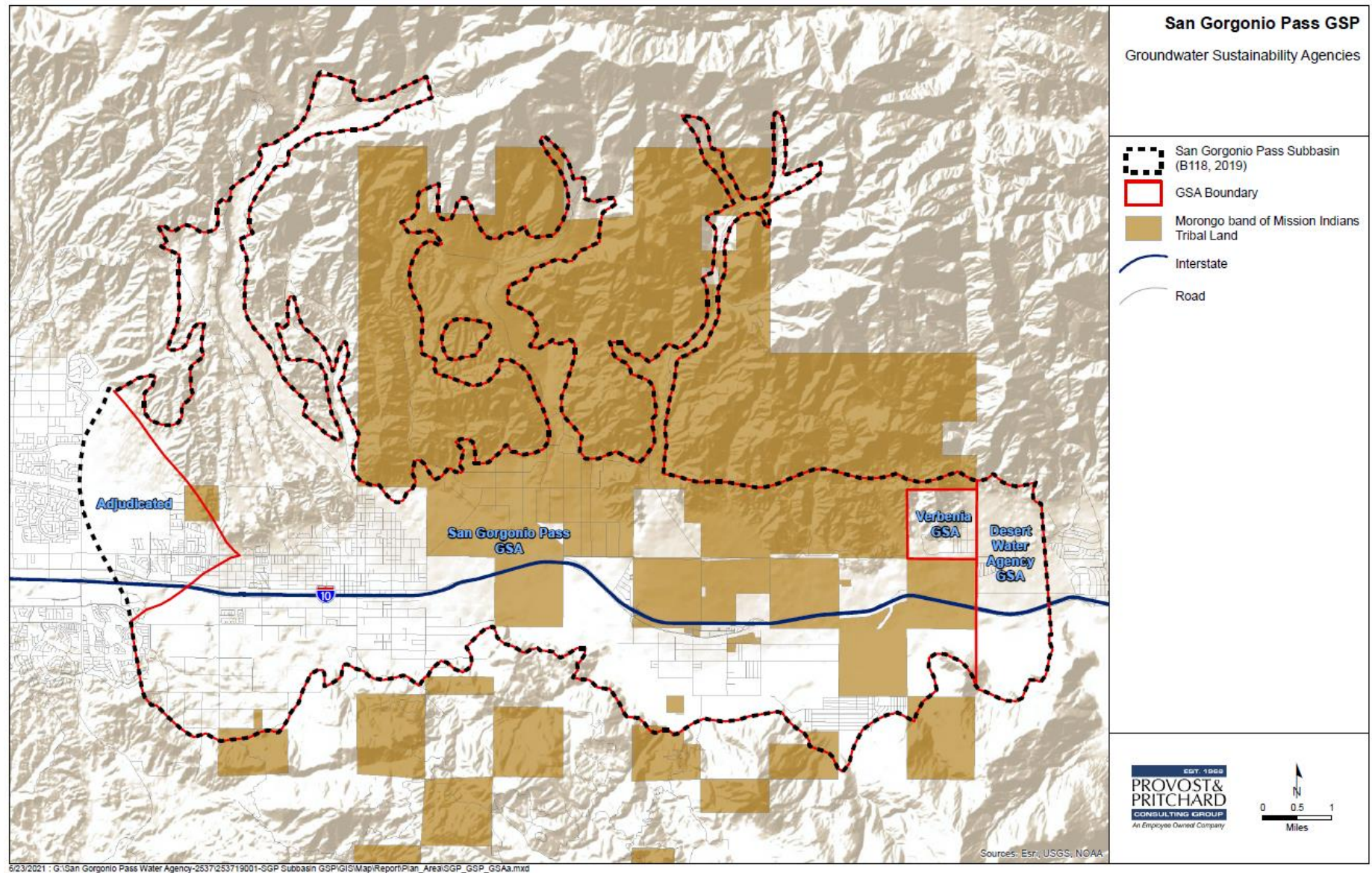


Figure 1 GSAs of the SGP Subbasin

### Chapter 3 - Basin Setting

Chapter 3 is organized in three primary sections: hydrogeological conceptual model, groundwater conditions, and water budget.

#### Hydrogeological Conceptual Model/Groundwater Conditions

The Hydrogeological Conceptual Model (HCM) provides a description, based on readily available information, of the general physical characteristics of the regional hydrology, geology, geologic structure, water quality, principal aquifers, and principal aquitards in the basin setting

#### Groundwater Conditions

The Groundwater Conditions section provides a historic, average, and current description of subsurface hydrology, water quality, and subsidence. The HCM and the Groundwater Conditions lay the foundation for development of water budgets, monitoring networks, and identification of data gaps. The SGP Subbasin is divided into Storage Units generally defined by faults. The storage units include the adjudicated Beaumont, and Banning, Banning Bench, Banning Canyon and the Cabazon which includes Potrero and Millard Canyons. Groundwater conditions vary considerably within the storage units.

#### Water Budgets

A water budget is an account of all the water that flows into and out of a specified area and describes the various components of the hydrologic cycle. A water budget includes all the water supplies, demands, modes of groundwater recharge, and non-recoverable losses, making it possible to identify how much water is stored in a system and changes in groundwater storage during a given period.

Water budgets were prepared for a historical period (1998-2019), current period (2019), and future periods (2022-2072). The historical water budget covers a hydrologic period based on SGP Subbasin's multi-decade trends; however, the recent historic trends are drier than long-term historic conditions. The future water budgets are based on numerous assumptions related to climate change, population growth, water use, and in one scenario, future project implementation.

**Because of the very dry conditions during the historical period, the groundwater storage decline in this period is not representative of average water supply conditions and does not by itself indicate that overdraft conditions are occurring.**

### Chapter 4 - Sustainable Management Criteria

SGMA defines sustainable groundwater management as the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results. The avoidance of undesirable results is important to the success of the GSP. Several requirements from GSP regulations have been grouped together under the heading of Sustainable Management Criteria, including a Sustainability Goal, Undesirable Results, Interim Milestones, Operational Flexibility, Minimum Thresholds, and Measurable Objectives for the various sustainability indicators listed on Page 1. Development of these Sustainable Management Criteria is dependent on basin information developed and presented in HCM, groundwater conditions, and the water budget.

The three GSAs have been coordinating for several years on how to maintain sustainability and have assigned quantitative and qualitative sustainable management criteria in alignment with historic conditions and projected conditions, without the influence of project benefits.



### Chapter 5 - Monitoring Network

This chapter describes previously existing monitoring programs and resources and the representative monitoring network, defined by the GSAs that will collect sufficient data to determine short-term, seasonal, and long-term trends in groundwater conditions.

The GSAs within the SGP Subbasin have established two representative monitoring networks:

**Representative Groundwater Levels Monitoring Network:** This network serves to monitor conditions related to groundwater levels, groundwater storage, and interconnected surface water in the Subbasin's Banning Canyon.

**Representative Groundwater Quality Monitoring Network:** This network facilitates analysis of groundwater quality related to the identified constituents of focus, TDS and nitrates.

The data from this representative monitoring network will be reported to DWR and used to support the implementation of the GSP, evaluate the effectiveness of the GSP, monitor for compliance with sustainable management criteria, and aid in decision-making by the GSA and local water agencies.

### Chapter 6 - Projects and Management Actions

Projects and management actions may be implemented to avoid undesirable results and maintain groundwater sustainability in the SGP Subbasin. The possibility of project implementation is contingent on funding support and management actions will be explored as needed.

Six projects have been identified that would improve groundwater conditions in the SGP Subbasin. Phases indicated in the project title correspond with their respective phase in the project development lifetime.

- Project #1: Municipal Water Conservation (Phase 1)
- Project #2: Stormwater Capture (Phase 2)
- Project #3: Additional Imported Water Spreading at Noble Creek Spreading Basins (Phase 2)
- Project #4: New Pipeline with Additional Imported Water Spreading in the Cabazon Storage Unit (Phase 2)
- Project #5: New Pipeline with Additional Imported Water Spreading in the Banning Storage Unit (Phase 2)
- Project #6: New Imported Colorado River Aqueduct Spreading in the Cabazon Storage Unit (Phase 2)

Several management actions have been identified for the SGP Subbasin that may support GSP implementation efforts. The identified management actions include the following:

- Management Action #1: Implement Action Plan if Groundwater Levels Fall Below Minimum Thresholds
- Management Action #2: Well Head Requirements
- Management Action #3: Investigate Issues Promptly Regarding Water Quality and Unexpected Water Pumping
- Management Action #4: Impose SGMA or Other Available Fees on Pumpers to Encourage Reduced Pumping and Conservation
- Management Action #5: Groundwater Pumping Allocation
- Management Action #6: Groundwater Basin Adjudication



### Chapter 7 - Plan Implementation

The adoption of the GSP will be the official start of the Plan Implementation. The GSAs will continue their efforts to secure necessary funding to successfully monitor and manage groundwater resources within the SGP Subbasin in a sustainable manner. While the GSP is being reviewed by DWR, the GSA will coordinate with various stakeholders and beneficial users to begin implementing the GSP and identify ways to improve the future GSP Updates.

Costs to implement, report annually, monitor, and update the GSP were estimated conservatively. Funding for projects and management actions will be through assessments and grant funds when available. Most of the projects are conceptual. As projects are developed during the implementation period, costs will be refined. The schedules and estimates presented in the GSP are initial estimates and will likely change as the plan is implemented and periodically evaluated.

Successful implementation of this GSP over the planning and implementation horizon (2022-2042) will require ongoing efforts to engage stakeholders and the general public in the sustainability process, communicating the statutory requirement, the objectives of the GSP, and progress in maintaining the sustainability goal. The GSAs will report the result of sustainable management criteria analysis through results of representative monitoring including annual groundwater levels, extraction volume, surface water use, total water use, groundwater storage change, and progress of GSP implementation to the public and DWR on an annual basis. The GSAs have developed a Data Management System to help store and evaluate groundwater-related data. In addition, the GSAs will continue to update information and have the opportunity to amend the GSP at least every five years. The update will include the results of the Subbasin operations and progress in achieving sustainability including current groundwater conditions, the status of projects or management actions, evaluation of undesirable results relating to measurable objectives and minimum thresholds, changes in monitoring networks, a summary of enforcement or legal actions, and agency coordination efforts to the public and DWR.

## **RESOLUTION 2021-23**

### **A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SAN GORGONIO PASS WATER AGENCY RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF THE GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE SAN GORGONIO PASS SUBBASIN**

**WHEREAS**, the California Legislature passed a statewide framework for sustainable groundwater management, known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (California Water Code Section 10720 *et seq.*), pursuant to Senate Bill 1168, Senate Bill 1319, and Assembly Bill 1739, which was approved by the Governor and Chaptered by the Secretary of State on September 16, 2014; and

**WHEREAS**, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) went into effect on January 1, 2015; and

**WHEREAS**, SGMA requires all high and medium-priority basins, as designated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118 to be managed by one or more Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA's); and

**WHEREAS**, the San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin has been designated by DWR as a medium-priority basin (Bulletin 118 Groundwater Basin: 7-021.04); and

**WHEREAS**, the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency (Agency) and the Mission Springs Water District (District) (participating by Memorandum of Agreement) formed the Verbenia GSA and chose, on May 15, 2017, to become the Verbenia Groundwater Sustainability Agency, along with two other GSA: the San Gorgonio Pass GSA and the Desert Water Agency GSA; and

**WHEREAS**, the Agency has appointed \_\_\_\_\_ (Representative) to serve as the Agency representative to the Verbenia GSA ; and

**WHEREAS**, SGMA requires, pursuant to Water Code Sections 10720.7 and 10727, that a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) or multiple GSP's be developed and implemented by January 31, 2022 for each medium-priority basin; and

**WHEREAS**, the San Gorgonio Pass GSA, in concert with the Verbenia GSA and the Desert Water Agency GSA, has prepared a GSP for the San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin in accordance with Water Code Section 10727.2, as required by SGMA; and

**WHEREAS**, the Agency Board of Directors has had the opportunity to review the most current version of the GSP; and

**WHEREAS**, the San Gorgonio Pass GSA, the Verbenia GSA, and the Desert Water Agency GSA gave notice on September 17, 2021, pursuant to Water Code Section 10728.4, to the County of Riverside and the City of Banning regarding its intent to adopt a GSP;

**WHEREAS**, the Agency Board of Directors desires to authorize its Representative to vote to formally approve the final GSP as part of an upcoming meeting of the GSA expected to take place on or about January 11, 2022.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Directors of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency as follows:

1. The foregoing is true and correct and incorporated herein by this reference.
2. The San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency does hereby recommend approval and adoption of the Final Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin, as presented or with minor, non-substantive revisions to the GSP approved by its Representative between today's date and the date the GSP is submitted to DWR.
3. The San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency does hereby authorize its Representative to vote to formally approve the Final San Gorgonio Pass Subbasin GSP on behalf of the Agency at the upcoming meeting of the GSA expected to take place on or about January 11, 2022.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency, this 13<sup>TH</sup> day of December 2021, by the following vote:

AYES

NAYS

ABSENT

ABSTAIN

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Board President