

Growers fear expected groundwater rules

Gene Haagenon, KFSN (Fresno television), 8-26-15

A big red blob on a Department of Water Resources map covers nearly all of the Central Valley, and indicates it is a critically over drafted water basin. That means too much water is being pumped out too fast.

The state Department of Water Resources is requiring water users in these critically over drafted basins all over the state to come up with a plan to use less of that underground water.

Mary Scruggs is the Supervising Engineering Geologist for the Agency. She told Action News there are a number of ways to solve the problem.

Scruggs explained, "You need to balance your demand so either you pump less, control demands or you have some sort of way to import or recharge, so it's down to how do you do that, how do you manage it."

The Department of Water Resources is holding public meetings around the state to try and explain the new state law known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act to local water users and how they need to get together and form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to figure how to save underground water. But Madera Almond grower Mark Turmon sees it all as an eventual move to state control.

"So really what it is in simple terms now the state starting to take over the management of our groundwater and my concern is managing our groundwater is going to be the same way they manage our surface water," said Turmon.

And Turmon and several other growers at a public meeting in Clovis fear that means their water use will be out of their control.

Turmon said, "Therefore at some point in time we are going to have to retire land, and by doing that there's going to be less demand, and therefore less farming in the Valley, less jobs a huge economic impact that's going to be a really sad situation for the Central Valley."

But there is a long time to figure out how to adjust, the Groundwater Management Act won't be fully implemented until 2042.