



Salinas Valley Basin

Groundwater Sustainability Agency

View the full storymap online:
svbgsa.org/subbasins/overview

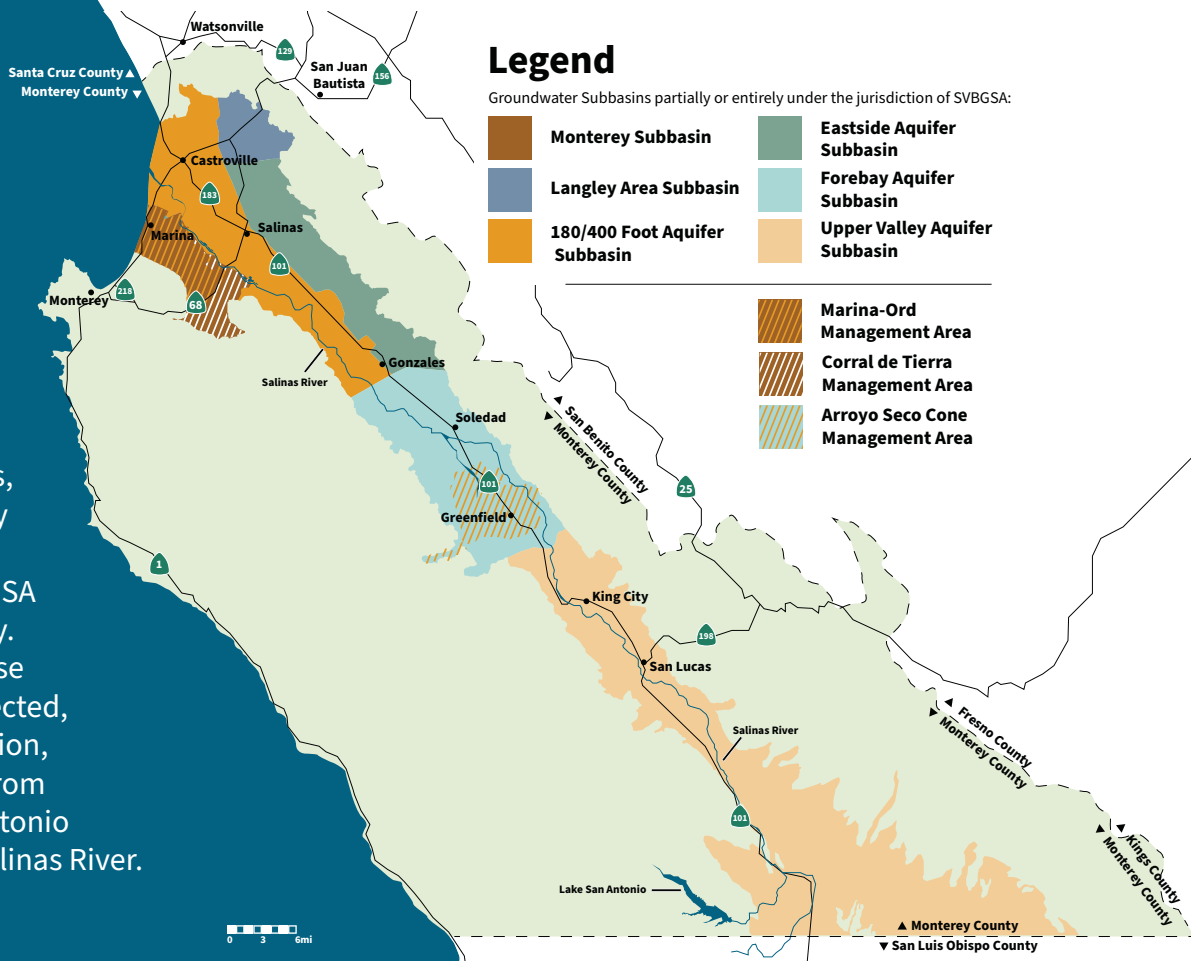


Overview

Groundwater has enabled communities and agricultural industry to flourish in the Salinas Valley. Referred to as the “Salad Bowl” of the US, it provides over 50% of US leaf lettuce and broccoli, 30% of strawberries, and a large percentage of spinach, celery, cauliflower, and many other fruits and vegetables. Both agriculture and people depend on groundwater for 96% of their water needs. However, groundwater use has also led to declining groundwater levels, seawater intrusion, and other challenges that threaten the security and resilience of this water supply if not addressed.

Overview of Subbasins

The Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin includes nine subbasins, six of which fall partially or entirely within the jurisdiction of the SVBGSA within Monterey County. The aquifers within these six subbasins are connected, recharged by precipitation, streams, and releases from Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs along the Salinas River.



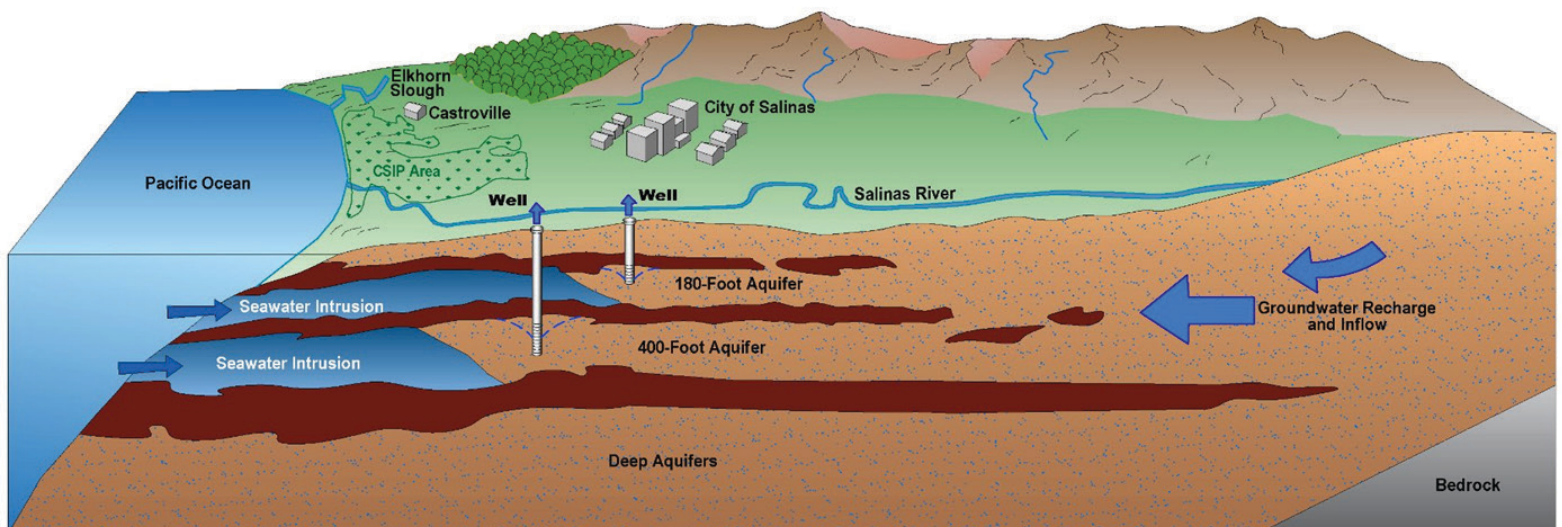
Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin

Understanding of the Salinas Valley groundwater basin has improved over time.

The Monterey County Water Resource Agency collects and stores water from the coastal mountains and Los Padres National Forest in the Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs, then releases water into the Salinas River. The Salinas River flows from San Luis Obispo County north to the ocean at Monterey Bay. Tributaries that collect runoff and rainwater also flow into the Salinas River and help recharge the groundwater basin.

Surface water infiltrates into the ground and moves downward into small spaces between the grains of soils and sediments. It may be used by plants, reach a clay layer where it can't travel down easily, or recharge the water table, where all the spaces are filled with water. The coarser the sediments are (like gravels), the easier it is for the water to move, whereas in finer sediments (like clays), it is harder it is for the water to move.

Salinas Valley aquifers and aquitards formed over millions of years. Aquifers generally consist of sandy or gravelly sediments that are more coarse and allow faster movement of water. The clays that form aquitards are smaller particles that slow down or restrict groundwater movement. Clay-rich aquitards by the coast separate the basin into distinct aquifers from a single, connected aquifer further south.



Groundwater Challenges



Groundwater pumping from wells reduces the amount of groundwater available and has caused long-term declines in groundwater levels – particularly in areas where natural recharge hasn't kept pace. In parts of the Valley, aquitards (low-permeability clay layers) near the ground surface limit the ability of surface water to replenish groundwater. In addition, some areas face water quality issues.

Declining groundwater levels can lead to several problems:

- **Dry wells**, especially shallower ones
- **Reduced groundwater in storage**, which threatens available long-term water supplies
- **Seawater intrusion**, which makes water salty and unusable

Looking forward:

What Is the GSA Doing to Reach Groundwater Sustainability?

Planning for Projects and Management Actions:

SVBGSA is considering a range of types of projects for groundwater management and sustainability. These projects include creating a barrier to seawater intrusion and treatment of brackish water along the coast, injecting treated water to replenish the aquifers, expanding the areas where recycled water is available, and diverting additional surface and river water when it is available.

Ongoing Monitoring, Reporting & Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

To meet the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, SVBGSA has Groundwater Sustainability Plans for its 6 subbasin. SVBGSA prepares annual reports on groundwater conditions and reviews its plans every 5 years. SVBGSA has ongoing engagement with the public and interested parties through the Board and a number of committees. SVBGSA also coordinates with other local water agencies and organizations.