

**BUTTE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

Basin Management Objectives Frequently Asked Questions

Butte County currently has an ordinance in place to protect the County's valuable groundwater resource. Implemented as Chapter 33A of the Butte County Code, Basin Management Objectives (BMOs) are defined in this ordinance as a means to ensure the continued sustainability of groundwater quality and quantity by management at the local level. The overall process includes the collection of sound scientific data, evaluation of that data, and a process to make sound management decisions based on that data. The goal of groundwater management is to preserve the County's groundwater resource now, and into the future.

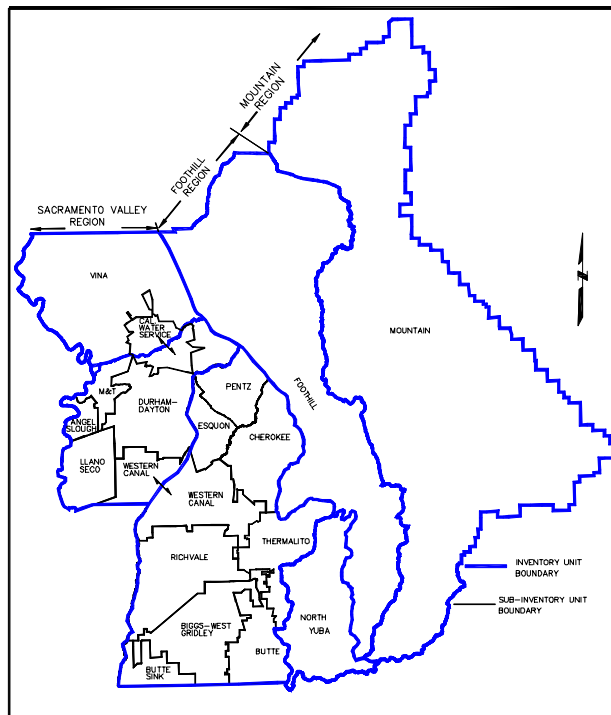
The underlying theme of Chapter 33A is that local management decisions in one sub-inventory unit do not adversely impact the local groundwater management decisions in another area.

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Sub-inventory units defined in the March 2001 Butte County Inventory Analysis

The 18 sub-inventory units included in the ordinance are:

- Vna
- Chico Urban Area
- Pentz
- Esquon
- Cherokee
- Durham-Dayton
- M&T
- Angle Slough
- Llano Seco
- Western Canal
- Richvale
- Biggs-West Gridley
- Butte
- Butte Sink
- Thermalito
- North Yuba
- Foothill
- Mountain

What are Basin Management Objectives? The Board of Supervisors (Board) finds that the protection of the groundwater resource for beneficial use within the County is of major concern to the residents of the County for the protection of their health, welfare and safety. Basin Management Objectives (BMOs) are a flexible, locally controlled approach to groundwater management.

How does it work? This approach allows local communities within a sub-inventory unit to establish acceptable ranges of groundwater level change, changes in groundwater quality, and the amount of land subsidence that will be allowed to occur in each sub-inventory unit.

How many sub-inventory units are there? The ordinance defines 18 sub-inventory units of the Sacramento Valley

Groundwater Basin in Butte County. These sub-inventory units are identified in the Butte County Inventory Analysis Report (March 2001), and represent regions within the County that have similar sources of irrigation water, applied water usage, and cropping patterns, in addition to the larger urban areas. BMOs have been developed in each of the defined sub-inventory units. The Foothill and Mountain regions participate in the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) process but do not develop BMOs.

Why doesn't this approach work in the foothill or mountain regions of the County?

Groundwater contained in a fractured hard-rock aquifer system does not lend itself well to this type of management approach.

Has this management approach been tried in other areas of the Sacramento Valley?

Yes. In 2000 Glenn County adopted a similar groundwater management ordinance and both Tehama and Colusa Counties are in the process of creating and adopting BMOs.

What is the Water Advisory Committee (WAC)?

Locals from each sub-inventory unit nominate a representative to the WAC. This person, if appointed by the Board of Supervisors, becomes responsible for the public outreach in their respective sub-inventory unit, establishment of the management objectives, and participates in WAC activities. This person shall be the liaison between their community and the WAC.

How are BMOs established?

First, a network of wells is selected by the residents of the sub-inventory unit for monitoring water levels and water quality. Next threshold values and monitoring frequency intervals are determined for each well. Subsidence thresholds are then estimated from a network of survey monuments or extensometers. Comparing water level, water quality, and subsidence data collected from these points is the sole basis for determining if an area has exceeded their BMOs.

What happens if BMO levels are exceeded?

The ordinance establishes that if an exceedance or non-compliance occurs, it will set into motion a fact-finding process to investigate the causes of the problem. The Techni-

cal Advisory Committee (TAC) shall work with all impacted parties during their investigation, then make technical recommendations on how to correct the problem to the Water Commission, the WAC and the Department. If the cause is water management practices, the TAC, WAC representatives and staff may work cooperatively with stakeholders to change their practices to correct the situation.

How might water management practices be changed to correct a problem?

Depending on the cause of the problem, a sub-inventory unit may be requested to change their water management practices in order to rectify the problem. This could include altering the timing, rate, concentration, and location of groundwater extraction or possibly changing to an alternate water source.

Who is the ultimate authority?

The Butte County Board of Supervisors. The WAC and TAC have no statutory authority and can only act as an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors through the Water Commission. If a non-compliance cannot be remedied through a collaborative process at the stakeholder level, the WAC may work with the TAC to recommend action plans to the Water Commission in order to remedy the non-compliance. If the Board takes action it is through their general police powers.

Is the process flexible?

Yes. The monitoring network, measurement frequency, sub-inventory unit boundaries, and BMOs are re-evaluated annually and adjusted, as needed, to reflect changes in knowledge of the basin or basin hydrology.

What do we do if we find this process does not work?

The ordinance could be deleted from the County Code through a majority vote of the Board of Supervisors.

Where can I get more information?

Additional information can be obtained from Vickie Newlin or Kristen Hard at the Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation (530) 538-4343 or by visiting the Water and Resource Conservation website at www.buttecounty.net/waterandresource/bmo1.htm