# San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin
# Kings Subbasin

- Groundwater Subbasin Number: 5-22.08
- County: Fresno, Kings, and Tulare
- Surface Area: 976,000 acres (1,530 square miles)

## Subbasin Boundaries and Hydrology

The San Joaquin Valley is surrounded on the west by the Coast Ranges, on the south by the San Emigdio and Tehachapi Mountains, on the east by the Sierra Nevada and on the north by the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Sacramento Valley. The northern portion of the San Joaquin Valley drains toward the Delta by the San Joaquin River and its tributaries, the Fresno, Merced, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus Rivers. The southern portion of the valley is internally drained by the Kings, Kaweah, Tule, and Kern Rivers that flow into the Tulare drainage basin including the beds of the former Tulare, Buena Vista, and Kern Lakes.

The Kings Subbasin is bounded on the north by the San Joaquin River. The northwest corner of the subbasin is formed by the intersection of the east line of the Farmers Water District with the San Joaquin River. The west boundary of the Kings Subbasin is the eastern boundaries of the Delta-Mendota and Westside Subbasins. The southern boundary runs easterly along the northern boundary of the Empire West Side Irrigation District, the southern fork of the Kings River, the southern boundary of Laguna Irrigation District, the northern boundary of the Kings County Water District, the southern boundaries of Consolidated and Alta Irrigation Districts, and the western boundary of Stone Corral Irrigation District. The eastern boundary of the subbasin is the alluvium-granitic rock interface of the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The San Joaquin and Kings Rivers are the two principal rivers within or bordering the subbasin. The Fresno Slough and James Bypass are along the western edge of the subbasin and connect the Kings River with the San Joaquin River. Average annual precipitation values range from seven to 10 inches, increasing eastward.

## Hydrogeologic Information

The San Joaquin Valley represents the southern portion of the Great Central Valley of California. The San Joaquin Valley is a structural trough up to 200 miles long and 70 miles wide. It is filled with up to 32,000 feet of marine and continental sediments deposited during periodic inundation by the Pacific Ocean and by erosion of the surrounding mountains, respectively. Continental deposits shed from the surrounding mountains form an alluvial wedge that thickens from the valley margins toward the axis of the structural trough. This depositional axis is below to slightly west of the series of rivers, lakes, sloughs, and marshes, which mark the current and historic axis of surface drainage in the San Joaquin Valley.

### Water Bearing Formations

The Kings Subbasin groundwater aquifer system consists of unconsolidated continental deposits. These deposits are an older series of Tertiary and Quaternary age overlain by a younger series of deposits of Quaternary age. The Quaternary age deposits are divided into older alluvium, lacustrine and marsh deposits, younger alluvium, and flood-basin deposits.

The older alluvium is an important aquifer in the subbasin. It consists of intercalated lenses of clay, silt, silty and sandy clay, clayey and silty sand, sand, gravel, cobbles, and boulders. It is, generally, fine grained near the trough of the valley. Lacustrine and marsh deposits are interbedded with the older alluvium in the western portion of the subbasin.

The younger alluvium is a sedimentary deposit of fluvial arkosic beds that overlies the older alluvium and is interbedded with the flood-basin deposits. Its lithology is similar to the underlying older alluvium. Beneath river channels, the younger alluvium is highly permeable. Beneath flood plains, it may be of poor permeability. The flood-basin deposits occur along the Fresno Slough and James Bypass. They consist of sand, silt, and clay.

The continental deposits of Tertiary and Quaternary age crop out beneath the extreme southeastern part of the subbasin and yield small amounts of water to wells. The deposits of Quaternary age are exposed over most of the area and yield more than 90 percent of the water pumped from wells (Page and LeBlanc 1969).

Page and LeBlanc (1969) indicate that the specific yields in the subbasin range from a low of 0.2 percent to 36 percent. To calculate storage capacity in the 10 to 200 foot depth range, Davis and others (1959) used a range of specific yields from approximately six percent to 18 percent. Williamson and others (1989) used an average specific yield of 11.3 percent in the area of the subbasin for computer modeling purposes.

### Restrictive Structures

The lacustrine and marsh deposits contain silts and clays and restrict the vertical movement of water. The Corcoran Clay (E-clay) member of the Tulare formation is the most extensive of these deposits and occupies the western one-quarter to one-third of the subbasin. Its depth ranges from about 250-550 feet (DWR 1981) although much of the information shown on the map is indicated as inferred. The A-clay and C-clay are less extensive and lie above the Corcoran Clay. These clay layers cause confined groundwater conditions beneath them.

### Recharge Areas

Groundwater recharge occurs from river and stream seepage, deep percolation of irrigation water, canal seepage, and intentional recharge. The Cities of Fresno and Clovis, Fresno Irrigation District, and Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District have a cooperative effort to utilize individually owned facilities to recharge water in the greater urban area. Fresno Irrigation District, Consolidated Irrigation District, and others have recharge efforts in the subbasin. The Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area uses a regional sewage treatment facility that disposes of water in percolation ponds southwest of Fresno.

### Groundwater Level Trends

Groundwater flow is generally to the southwest. Two notable groundwater depressions exist. One is centered in Fresno-Clovis urban area. The other is centered approximately 20 miles southwest of Fresno (DWR 2000) in the Raisin City Water District.

Most well water levels indicated a response to the 1976-77 drought. After the 1987-92 drought, wells in the northeast showed water levels from 10 to 40 feet below pre-1976-77 drought water levels. Water levels in the western subbasin experienced declines of 10 to 50 feet during the 1987-92 drought and are in various stages of recovery to mid-1980s levels. Water levels in the southeast have, generally, recovered to mid-1980s levels.

### Groundwater Storage

Groundwater in Storage.
Williamson (1989) indicates that the groundwater in storage was 93,000,000 af in 1961. This estimate was to a depth of 1,000 feet or less.

### Groundwater Budget (Type C)

The potential for subsurface flows south and westward exists. Depending upon groundwater conditions in the Westside Subbasin, subsurface flows may occur in that direction. The potential for groundwater flow in either direction along the southern boundary exists. Groundwater depressions on either side of the boundary and groundwater mounding from recharge along the Kings River complicate flow patterns in the area.

### Groundwater Quality

**Characterization.** The groundwater is predominantly of bicarbonate type. The major cations are calcium, magnesium, and sodium. Sodium appears higher in the western portion of the subbasin where some chloride waters are also found (Page and LeBlanc 1969).

Page and LeBlanc (1969) noted that the TDS of groundwater in the Fresno area seldom exceeds 600 mg/L although at greater depths, 2,000 mg/L groundwater has been encountered. A typical range of groundwater quality in the basin is 200 to 700 mg/L.

DHS data indicates an average TDS of 240 mg/L from 414 samples from Title 22 water supply wells. These samples ranged from 40 to 570 mg/L.

**Impairments.** Dibromochloropropane (DBCP), a soil fumigant nematicide, and nitrates can be found in groundwater along the eastern side of the subbasin. Shallow brackish groundwater can be found along the western portion of the subbasin. Elevated concentrations of fluoride, boron, and sodium can be found in localized areas of the subbasin.

## Water Quality in Public Supply Wells

| Constituent Group[1] | Number of wells sampled[2] | Number of wells with a concentration above an MCL[3] |
|---|---|---|
| Inorganics – Primary | 457 | 8 |
| Radiological | 443 | 24 |
| Nitrates | 463 | 23 |
| Pesticides | 495 | 105 |
| VOCs and SVOCs | 468 | 17 |
| Inorganics – Secondary | 457 | 41 |

[1] A description of each member in the constituent groups and a generalized discussion of the relevance of these groups are included in *California's Groundwater – Bulletin 118* by DWR (2003).
[2] Represents distinct number of wells sampled as required under DHS Title 22 program from 1994 through 2000.
[3] Each well reported with a concentration above an MCL was confirmed with a second detection above an MCL. This information is intended as an indicator of the types of activities that cause contamination in a given basin. It represents the water quality at the sample location. It does not indicate the water quality delivered to the consumer. More detailed drinking water quality information can be obtained from the local water purveyor and its annual Consumer Confidence Report.

## Well Characteristics

| | Well yields (gal/min) | |
|---|---|---|
| Municipal/Irrigation | Range: – 20-3,000 (Page And LeBlanc 1969) | Average: 500-1,500 |
| | **Total depths (ft)** | |
| Domestic | Range: - Not determined | Average: Not determined |
| Municipal/Irrigation | Range: - 100-500 (Page and LeBlanc 1969 Table 14) | Average: 210 |

## Active Monitoring Data

| Agency | Parameter | Number of wells /measurement frequency |
|---|---|---|
| DWR and Cooperating Agencies | Groundwater levels | 909 Semi-annually |
| Local Agencies | Miscellaneous water quality | Varies |
| Department of Health Services and Cooperators | Title 22 Water quality | 722 Varies |

## Basin Management

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|---|---|
| Groundwater management: | The County of Fresno has an adopted groundwater management ordinance. The following entities have adopted AB3030 management plans: Alta Irrigation District, Consolidated Irrigation District, County of Fresno, Fresno Irrigation District, James Irrigation District, Kings River Conservation District, Kings River Water District, Liberty Canal Company, Liberty Water District, Liberty Mill Race Company, Mid Valley Water District, Orange Cove Irrigation District, Raisin City Water District, and Riverdale Irrigation District. |
| Water agencies | |
| Public | City of Fresno, City of Clovis, Alta I.D., Consolidated I.D., Fresno I.D., Hills Valley I.D., James I.D., Kings River Conservation District, Kings River Water District, Laguna I.D., Liberty Water District, Mid-Valley W.D., Orange Cove I.D., Raisin City W.D., Riverdale I.D., and Tri-Valley I.D. |
| Private | California Water Service Co., Bakman Water Company |

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## Errata

Updated groundwater management information and added hotlinks to applicable websites. (1/20/06)