

IWVWD: Two Sacramento bills threaten groundwater rights

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Two bills currently moving through the Legislature, AB 1413 by Assemblymember Papan and AB 1466 by Assemblymember Hart, pose serious risks to groundwater rights, due process, and local oversight.

AB 1413 would require courts to give significant legal weight to approved Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) during groundwater adjudication processes, limiting judicial review and locking in flawed or unvalidated data. AB 1466 increases the burden to overturn a GSP, making it more difficult and costly.

These bills arose from a dispute local to the Indian Wells Valley, but their impact would be statewide. As written, they would threaten good-faith attempts to address groundwater sustainability using the most recent scientific data and up-to-date techniques. That's why a broad range of water, agriculture, and business groups across the State of California, including the Indian Wells Valley Water District, oppose these bills unless they are amended.

Addressing a challenge faced by only 5 of 86 groundwater basins with broad legislation risks creating new problems rather than solving old ones. Groundwater policy must prioritize fairness and due process. The Indian Wells Valley Water District urges lawmakers to amend AB 1413 and AB 1466.

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