



Groundwater is a vital resource, together let's protect it.

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Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency Communication & Engagement Plan

Background

Santa Cruz Mid-County's main drinking water supply is groundwater. As a result of decades of past over-pumping, streams do not always have enough water to support fish and wildlife, we have seawater contamination in some private coastal production wells, and the danger of seawater contamination spreading inland to contaminate more water supply wells. We need to work together to ensure a sustainable water supply now and for the future. The Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) is developing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to ensure a sustainable water supply supporting environmental and human needs, in compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA).

Communication Goals

1. Public understanding of the challenges facing groundwater supplies.
2. Public support for practical water supply solutions.
3. Engaged stakeholders who provide input and guidance to develop the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).
4. Increase public awareness of the need to protect local groundwater resources and increase groundwater levels.

Objectives

Through public meetings, workshops, events, online engagement, and print materials the public will understand:

1. Where we get our water in the Mid-County basin.
2. The nature of groundwater and its relationship to water supply and environmental values.
3. The problems that threaten our groundwater supplies.
4. Possible solutions to managing our groundwater supplies.
5. The state's mandate for a plan to ensure groundwater sustainability by 2020, and attainment by 2040 (SGMA).
6. The role of Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency to prepare and implement the GSP.

Audiences/stakeholders

- Basin water users/rate payers.
- Basin landowners/taxpayers.
- Land and ecosystem managers.

Audiences/stakeholders contact strategies:

- 1) Basin Water Users
 - a. City of Santa Cruz Water customers (small portion of total supply)
How to contact: Bill inserts, presentations to community groups, social media, e-newsletters, press releases, and community parties.
 - b. Central Water District (all)
How to contact: Bill inserts, e-newsletters, press releases, and community parties.
 - c. Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) customers (all)
How to contact: Bill inserts and carrier routes, presentations to community groups, social media, e-newsletters, press releases, and community parties.
 - d. Private well residential users and small water systems (all)
How to contact: postcards, presentations to community groups, road signs, small water system quarterly meetings, partnering with RCD, press releases and community parties.
 - e. Commercial/institutional/agricultural well users (all)
How to contact: direct calls, press releases, partnering with RCD, presentations to industry groups.
- 2) Non-profits: Email lists, presentations to Boards/Councils
- 3) Government agencies: Presentations to Councils, Boards, and Advisory Committees

Category of Interest	Examples of Stakeholder Groups	Engagement purpose
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Boards • Basin Residents 	Inform to improve public awareness of sustainable groundwater management
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Santa Cruz Planning • City of Capitola Planning • County Planning • LAFCO • AMBAG 	Consult and involve to ensure land use policies are supporting GSPs, and GSP reflects projected population and development
Private users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private domestic pumpers • Soquel High School • Cabrillo College • Seascape Golf Course • Small community systems 	Inform and involve to avoid negative impact to these users, and to inform about the need and basis for possible future fees

Urban/ Agriculture users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soquel Creek Water District • Central Water District • City of Santa Cruz Water Department • Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County • Farm Bureau • Vintners association • Cannabis Licensing Division 	Collaborate to ensure sustainable management of groundwater, and to inform about the need and basis for possible future fees
Environmental and Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal and State agencies (Fish and Wildlife) • Wetland managers • Environmental groups 	Inform and involve to sustain vital groundwater dependent ecosystems
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chambers of Commerce, SC Business Council; business sectors such as real estate, developers, tourism • Elected officials (Board of Supervisors, City Council members) • State Assembly members • State Senators 	Inform and involve to support a stable economy
Human right to water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged Communities • Environmental Justice Groups • Human Service non-profits (Human Care Alliance etc.) 	Inform and involve to provide a safe and secure groundwater supplies to DACs
Integrated Water Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional water management groups (IRWM regions) • Flood agencies 	Inform, involve and collaborate to improve regional sustainability

Audience Survey and Mapping

Organizational stakeholders identified through the interested parties list are already engaged in the process through the MGA partner agencies and receiving email information from the MGA. A survey is available for private well owners at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MGAwellowner>. The MGA is also planning a baseline phone survey in late 2018 to identify the level of knowledge and interest of the community in the MGA to inform future outreach.

Key stakeholder groups have also been engaged through membership in the GSP Advisory Committee. Advisory Committee members represent diverse social, cultural, economic, technical, and organizational backgrounds, and provide outreach to the stakeholder interest groups they represent.

Key Messages

- 1) The MGA and its partner agencies must get the Mid-County groundwater basin up to protective levels to prevent seawater intrusion.
- 2) We are working toward a strategy to bring the basin into sustainability without compromising human or environmental health.
- 3) Water conservation must continue.

- 4) Conservation alone will not restore the groundwater basin.
- 5) MGA and its member agencies have used conservation and water production management strategies to protect groundwater supplies from depletion and seawater intrusion. We need to examine alternative water sources to develop a supplemental water supply to achieve sustainability.
- 6) To be successful, management efforts and supplemental water supply efforts will require beneficiaries to support funding mechanisms.

Define sustainability:

The use of groundwater to meet our needs without harming the environment or jeopardizing future water supply reliability.

Venues for Engaging

Partnerships to develop consistent groundwater messaging:

The water agencies and partners within and around the Mid-County Basin have been working together closely on joint messaging and outreach strategies around water issues since the early 2000s. The primary mechanism for this effort is the Water Conservation Coalition (WCC) of Santa Cruz County ([www. Watersavingtips.org](http://www.Watersavingtips.org)). MGA partner agencies collaborate to develop narrative messages that inform the public about the need for groundwater basin restoration.

Partnerships with existing outreach and youth engagement programs:

The WCC has produced educational booklets for elementary schools, maintains a website with information on water purveyors and rebates, jointly pays for a high school and college level video contest about water in the county, sponsors programs like adult learning classes at Cabrillo College, classroom presentations, and educational campaigns including newspaper ads and bus ads. The Coalition has been featuring information on groundwater hydrology and SGMA at recent tabling events in partnership with the MGA and other GSAs in the region.

Additional outreach to local schools within the basin is done by staff from the Soquel Creek Water District and the City of Santa Cruz. Outreach includes shows at school assemblies, field trips, and in-class presentations that include building a model water system and learning about jobs in the water industry. Starting in Fall 2018, outreach will include 6-8th grade education about water supply systems which includes groundwater generally and the MGA specifically. More information can be found at <https://www.soguelcreekwater.org/schools/school-programs>.

Social Media:

- MGA e-newsletter
- City of Santa Cruz Water Supply Advisory Committee (WSAC) e-newsletter
- SqCWD e-newsletter and Facebook page
- County and City Water Department Facebook pages
- County supervisor email lists and Facebook pages
- Nextdoor

Informational brochures and handouts: *Sharing and Sustaining Mid-County Groundwater, Who Cares About Groundwater?*, Postcards, 2-page information factsheet handout.

Community Groups:

- Parent Teacher Associations
- Public Meetings
- Civic Organizations (e.g. Rotary, Lions, League of Women Voters, etc.)
- Farm Bureau
- Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations/sectors.

Website:

- 1) Background and basic information about the problem, SGMA, the MGA, and the GSP
- 2) Projects that have been implemented or are being prepared (recharge, water transfers, see also *Water Supply Augmentation Options for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin*)
- 3) Identify gaps in information that we are presenting (how much recharge makes it to aquifer)

Stakeholder Meetings, Community Events:

- At least 2 workshops per year.
- Fun neighborhood events to engage folks that may not come to a meeting.
- Participation at tabling events like Earth Day, the County Fair, and Farmer's Markets either as the MGA or in partnership with the Water Conservation Coalition.
- Connecting the Drops.

Educational Videos and Infographics:

- Soquel Creek has invested in some very good graphical videos.
- Our interest right now is to do a series of short (1-3 minute) videos each covering a simple topic relating to the MGA (see list below for possibilities).
- Develop interactive groundwater games (aquifers, infiltration, supplemental supplies) for use at community events.

Phased Approach Implementation Timeline

The Mid-County Agency has prepared a 3-phase approach to outreach.

Phase 1: Ongoing Efforts

- MGA Website, www.midcountygroundwater.org (regular updates)
- Key press releases and social media information (ongoing as needed)
- Public meetings/workshops (ongoing)
- MGA Drop-Ins (ongoing bi-monthly)
- Mailings (ongoing as needed)
- MGA E-blast (ongoing monthly)
- Recording meetings and having them online

Phase 2: July 1-October 31, 2018.

Purpose: Name recognition, basic information about what the MGA is, what we are doing, and why (both state regulations and the problem):

- a. Joint powers of different agencies working together to ensure a sustainable water supply now and for the future.
- b. State mandate to write, implement, and monitor a GSP

- c. Critical overdraft (stream flow is affected, seawater intrusion impacts basin groundwater supply.)

MGA Considerations and Work to Date:

- a. Around the world, 70% of coastal groundwater aquifers have already been ruined by seawater contamination.
- b. Locally we have avoided seawater contamination to our municipal supplies through price adjustments, water conservation, and groundwater management, but seawater contamination is on is already onshore at Soquel Point and La Selva Beach.
- c. Projected climate change impacts on local rainfall patterns and hotter temperatures will require additional tools to continue to protect our coastal groundwater aquifers.
- d. Since its creation in 2016, MGA has used innovative technologies like SkyTEM, DualEM to better understand subsurface geology and aid in planning projects that enhance our water supplies and protect our coastal groundwater from seawater intrusion.

Tasks for Phase 2:

- 1) Review draft stakeholder engagement plan, make suggestions. Include more text about leveraging existing programs, add the survey (benefits messaging and support), multiple phased approach to outreach.
- 2) Contract with survey company to provide us with a baseline of outreach priorities.
- 3) Possible survey questions:
 - *Have you heard about the MGA and if so, what do you know about it?*
 - *Do you know we have groundwater issue?*
 - *Do you think you can conserve more?*
 - i. *Do you think more conservation can solve our problem?*
 - ii. *Is your water consumption metered?*
 - iii. *Do you know how much water your household uses per person/day?*
 - iv. *Did your water usage changed in response to drought conditions?*
 - v. *Has your water usage gone up since the State drought ended in 2017?*
 - *Do you have a strong feeling about supplemental supplies?:*
 - i. *Desalination*
 - ii. *River transfers (Explain if needed)*
 - iii. *Stormwater infiltration (explain if needed)*
 - iv. *Recycled water (explain if needed)*
 - *What would you be willing to pay to keep your groundwater supply sustainable?:*
 - i. *A \$20-50 annual fee for monitoring and basin management)?*
 - ii. *A \$50-100 annual fee to share costs to develop additional water supply projects?*
 - iii. *A \$100-200 annual fee for restoration and environmental stewardship?*
 - *Who do you trust for information on water issues?:*
 - i. *Specific individual or agency (please name)*
 - ii. *Local county/city governments (please name)*
 - iii. *Local water providers (please name)*
 - iv. *State water agencies (please name)*
 - v. *UCSC research scientists (please name)*
 - vi. *Others (please name)*

- *How do you get information about local issues?:*
 - i. *Local daily/weekly newspapers (please name)*
 - ii. *Radio (please name)*
 - iii. *Websites (please name)*
 - iv. *Social Media (please name)*
 - v. *Other (please name)*
- 4) Design and print a table cloth, stickers, and 2 banners.
 - 5) Finish the “Who cares about groundwater?” brochure/postcard.
 - 6) Hire RogueMark Studies or similar to create story graphics/graphic recording of SkyTEM meeting and the June Stakeholder meeting.
 - 7) Hold stakeholder meeting in June 2018 and periodically through GSP roll out in late 2019/early 2020 similar to past meetings.
 - 8) Create a participatory group of two to four students, called Student Sustainable Groundwater Liaisons, who can observe and occasionally participate in the MGA Board and Advisory Committee meetings. Their role will be to provide us with some guidance on how to engage with youth, provide input to the GSP, and work to inform students that there are careers and other roles in local water governance that benefit from new, young participants. (Students would be recruited from local high schools, Cabrillo College, UCSC, or CSUMB if they have a connection to the MGA area. We would solicit recruitment assistance from teachers and career counselors interested in enriching student experiences through practical work experience.)

Phase 3: November 1, 2018-December 31, 2019

Purpose: to foster trust in GSP process and ultimately support for approval of the plan. Teach people about supplemental water supply and how we pay for it. Provide an opportunity for meaningful input.

Tasks for Phase 3:

- 1) Create simple infographics for use in e-newsletter, MGA Board meetings, and general public outreach (need to decide topics from list below or others based on survey results).
- 2) Create videos (need to decide topics from list below or others based on survey results).
- 3) Hold stakeholder outreach meetings to allow for meaningful input to key GSP sections and document public concerns. Individual stations for GSP topic areas with question and comment cards, note pad, bullet points.
- 4) Use existing water related meetings and relationships to amplify MGA messages.
- 5) Decide how to target messages based on survey results.

Infographic/Video concepts – will decide which are needed based on survey results and input from executive team.

- Seawater intrusion/protective levels (already a good video available)
- Conjunctive Use
- Need for supplemental supply
- Growth vs water use
- One water/ All water is recycled – careful what you put down the drain
- Surface water/groundwater levels/groundwater dependent ecosystems/ streamflow (could include data or be conceptual)

- Storage
- Groundwater level
- SGMA process
- GSP content
- Data displays:
 - groundwater production and rainfall over time,
 - water that could be created from various projects,
 - implementation costs,
 - streamflow
 - land use
 - water use and population
 - water quality

Phase 4: January 1, 2020- ongoing

Purpose: Roll out of the final plan, informational meetings, press releases, GSP completion celebration.

Work with Student Sustainable Groundwater Liaisons to improve engagement with local high schools and colleges.

Evaluation and Assessment

By taking a phased approach to outreach, we allow ourselves opportunities to assess to the program and evaluate how our plan is performing against our goals and objectives by asking:

- What worked well
- What didn't work as planned
- Meeting recaps with next steps
- What are the gaps in citizen knowledge that we should focus our outreach towards?