



SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY (MGA)

Thursday, July 18, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.

Simpkins Family Swim Center

979 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz, California

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Chair LaHue.

2. **Roll Call**

Board members present: Mr. Abramson, Mr. Baskin, Mr. Benich (Alternate), Dr. Daniels, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Kerr, Dr. LaHue, Ms. Mathews, Mr. Romanini, Ms. Violante (Alternate).

Board members absent: Mr. Friend, Mr. Leopold, Mr. Marani.

Staff present: Mr. Bracamonte, Mr. Duncan, Ms. Menard, Mr. Ricker, Mr. Carson, Ms. Ryan, Ms. Pruitt, Ms. Partch.

Others present: Several members of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP or Plan) Advisory Committee, Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) consultants, a representative from the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and approximately 5 members of the public.

3. **Oral Communications**

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner thanked the group for their work on the Draft GSP. She requested the Board resolve discrepancies of chloride levels in the Pleasure Point/Moran Lake monitoring well from Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) reports and information presented at an Advisory Committee meeting. Ms. Steinbruner requested information about the DWR critical overdraft designation for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin (Basin) and on the interaction between the Pajaro Valley sub-basin and the GSP, and stated that her lawsuit against SqCWD for the Pure Water Soquel (PWS) project is proceeding.

4. Elections

4.1 Elections for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

MOTION: For Board Chair, Ms. Mathews nominated Chair LaHue, Mr. Kerr nominated Mr. Romanini. Chair LaHue received 8 votes, Mr. Romanini 3 votes. Chair LaHue reelected Board Chair.

MOTION: For Vice Chair, Dr. Daniels nominated Ms. Mathews. No other nominations, none opposed. Ms. Mathews reelected Vice Chair.

MOTION: For Board Secretary, Chair LaHue nominated Mr. Kerr to continue as Board Secretary. No other nominations, none opposed. Mr. Kerr reelected Board Secretary.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Approve minutes from the May 16, 2019 Board meeting (No Memo)

MOTION: Ms. Mathews; Second: Dr. Daniels. To approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed unanimously with two abstentions (Mr. Baskin and Mr. Romanini).

6. General Business

6.1 Receive the Recommendations of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee

Staff introduced Item 6.1, a conveyance memo with the recommendations of the GSP Advisory Committee. Staff expressed appreciation for the challenging work of the Committee given the highly technical subject, and credited committee members with providing important feedback so staff could better support their work. Staff acknowledged the facilitation support of consultant Eric Poncelet and the technical support of Cameron Tana and Georgina King, whose efforts were critical to the development of the high-quality recommendations.

Staff invited questions from the Board; there were none.

Public Comments:

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner requested that hard copies of the Draft Plan be made available in local libraries, had questions about projected inflow

changes, whether the projections that stream alluvium would go down were based upon a climate change model, appreciated that contaminants are identified as an emerging concern in the Draft GSP, and believes the Draft GSP reflects a bias in favor of PWS.

Member of the public and SqCWD employee Melanie Mow Schumacher said she has been involved with groundwater management for many years and congratulated the MGA on the Draft GSP. She stated that the Santa Cruz area is a leader under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), and reported that on a recent trip to Washington D.C., there was great interest in the SkyTEM data instituted by the MGA. She appreciated that PWS and other projects are included in the Plan.

Staff acknowledged the long-term commitment and ongoing work on groundwater sustainability by Mr. Bracamonte and Ms. Mow Schumacher, both of whom began collaborating in the 1990's on groundwater management and AB 3030, which led to the work of the MGA.

MOTION: Dr. Daniels; Second, Mr. Kennedy. To receive the Recommendations of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee, with deep appreciation for the work of the GSP Advisory Committee and their contribution to the completion of the Draft GSP. Motion passed unanimously.

6.2 Receive the Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan, Approve the Process for Receiving Public Comments and Community Outreach, and Open the Public Comment Period

Chair La Hue announced that opportunities for public comment on the Plan include several scheduled public outreach meetings in July and August, written comments submitted through the MGA website, and oral comments at the September 19, 2019 Board meeting.

Is there is an email address on the MGA website for comments?

- “GSP2019Comments@midcountygroundwater.org” will be on the MGA website once the Board opens the public comment period.

How should typographical errors should be submitted?

- These can be provided to staff.

It was noted that at issue was a process motion to receive the Plan and open the comment period, and that questions about submitting specific comments would be addressed later.

John Ricker, County Water Resources Division Director, provided an overview and key takeaways of the Plan, as set out in a detailed presentation *Introduction to the Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan*. (Both the presentation and a recording of the presentation are available on the MGA website on the Board Meetings page.)

Key takeaways of the Draft GSP include:

- The GSP is required by law and addresses unique local issues
- The Basin is in a critical situation
- The local water supply is threatened by seawater intrusion
- The development of the GSP was a collaborative and public process
- The Draft GSP incorporates cutting-edge modeling of local groundwater
- The state of the Basin is improving, but more work is needed
- Many projects and management actions are needed for Basin sustainability
- All costs are currently being covered by the MGA member agencies
- The final GSP will involve ongoing, adaptive management based on new data

Additional highlights of Mr. Ricker's presentation include:

Long before SGMA was adopted, there had been extensive collaboration among the local agencies for regional water management.

Regarding projections for population growth and water demand, improvements in water efficiency are projected to balance out new demands for water.

To account for the impact of climate change, a climate catalogue was produced by the MGA Model Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC used historic climate data with selected years biased towards warmer and drier conditions.

The Draft GSP Sustainability Goal focuses on both identifying sustainability goals and avoiding undesirable results.

The SGMA regulations require a GSP to address six sustainability indicators; the Draft GSP looked at all but land subsidence, which is not a local issue given Basin geology.

For seawater intrusion, the goal is to stop seawater from moving further inland than has been observed and maintain sufficient groundwater levels to keep the seawater back, providing more than a 99% probability of no additional intrusion.

For streamflow depletion, modeling identified those streams connected to and influenced by groundwater. The objective is to prevent surface water depletion in interconnected streams that support steelhead trout and other sensitive species.

For water quality, the goal is for no water monitoring well to exceed state drinking water standards due to groundwater pumping or managed aquifer recharge.

Chronic lowering of groundwater levels refers to groundwater levels away from the coast and interconnected streams, as these were addressed by seawater intrusion and stream depletion. The objective is to maintain sufficient groundwater levels to ensure there is a reliable supply for overlying groundwater wells.

For groundwater storage (addressed through modeling), the goal is to maintain net extractions with no undesirable results on the other sustainability indicators. Groundwater storage varies from year to year. Storage was low in the 1990's, but has recovered. The data used in the model was from 1985 to 2015.

Projects identified in the Plan to achieve sustainability goals fall into three groups. Group 1 includes baseline projects that are already underway such as conservation and efficiency measures. Group 2 identifies projects needed to achieve sustainability in the Basin. Group 3 includes projects, not yet well defined, that may be needed if the Group 2 projects are not adequate to achieve Basin sustainability.

Sustainability strategies were modeled against baseline conditions. Initial modeling looked at groundwater levels and seawater intrusion over a five-year average. PWS was modeled on its own and combined with the City's Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project.

Where the baseline is below the minimum threshold, projects are needed to achieve sustainability. In some instances PWS gets groundwater levels to acceptable levels; in others, ASR is also needed to significantly raise the groundwater levels.

Modeling showed that benefits of the Group 2 projects attenuate problems inland, raising stream levels and reducing surface water depletions.

The City's ASR project would inject water into the groundwater aquifer on the western part of the Basin. At Moran Lake and Pleasure Point, in some cases both PWS and ASR are needed to get groundwater levels above the minimum threshold.

PWS gets the Basin part way to sustainability; ASR provides the City's drought supply and also get the Basin to the objectives in the western side of the Basin.

MGA costs may include monitoring, reporting, and running additional modeling.

In addition to annual reports to DWR, a detailed Plan review is required every five years to assess progress toward sustainability and to recommend changes needed to adaptively manage the Basin in light of further data collection and unanticipated circumstances.

Monitoring will include existing monitoring (SqCWD and the City) with additional wells and stream gauges to have a comprehensive data system on the sustainability indicators, including groundwater elevations, chloride concentrations, water quality concentrations, and streamflow.

Reporting is required on groundwater extraction which may require an increase in metering for larger private wells. The County is looking at countywide monitoring of all new non-de-minimis wells.

Staff will be reviewing all comments on the Plan. Unlike CEQA, only generalized responses to comments are required. Staff will create a summary of the comments received, then work to respond appropriately.

The deadline for the final MGA GSP is January 31, 2020. Staff hopes to submit it before the end of 2019.

The Board directed staff to make hard copies of the Draft GSP available at the public libraries served by the MGA and the Santa Cruz main branch.

It was suggested that the period for written comments end before the September 19th meeting when the Board receives oral comments.

- Staff replied that the comment period for both oral and written comments is set to close at the end of the Board meeting on September 19th.

It was asked if there had been a change in the location of wells in light of potential interference with PWS and ASR, and if pumping redistribution was done to address unsustainable wells in the La Selva area.

- The MGA modeling reflected in the Plan shows the City moving its injection site for ASR to the east and higher up in the Basin.
- Pumping redistribution was changed to raise groundwater levels above minimum thresholds in Aromas (in the La Selva area).

It was requested that once the final Plan is adopted, staff bring the Board a revised schedule for MGA board meetings.

A further discussion was held regarding the request to close the comment period for written comments a week before the September 19th meeting. Since the comment period was established to include both written and oral comments, it was not clear to some of any benefit to closing the comment period earlier for written comments.

- Staff responded that since it will take time to review and respond to all comments, closing the written comment period before September 19th would not serve any significant interest.

Public Comments

A member of the public requested a table of contents for the entire Plan, not just at the beginning of each section.

- Staff stated that a table of contents will be added to the website.

Member of the public asked if the slide presentation from this Board meeting will be available on the website.

- Yes.

Member of the public Ms. Steinbruner appreciated the MGA's Draft GSP Question and Answer session in August; asked if comments would be provided to the public verbatim and who will create the responses; requested that graphs identify their source so the data can be reviewed; questioned City and SqCWD data showing reduced future water demand; noted the climate change models do not address fog, a big piece in the catalog climate; and stated that as the modeling does not include conjunctive use, water transfers, and in lieu, the Draft GSP is biased towards PWS.

Tom Wyner, a member of the GSP Advisory Committee, noted that there were only about 20 people at the meeting, and asked why so few members of the public were in attendance, whether if it was lack of interest, or ineffective outreach. He asked if the MGA could change its outreach approach if there is limited turnout at the early outreach efforts.

- Staff reported that 50,000 postcards were mailed to residents in the Basin, and there were 183 responses to an online survey associated with the postcard. There have been a number of publicity efforts, such as a recent front page article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel, other press releases, and posts on Nextdoor and Facebook. It seems the public is aware but is perhaps trusting of the process, or are not inclined to come to meetings. Staff hopes for a good turnout at upcoming Draft GSP workshops.

A final Board discussion was held to clarify that the public comment period would close for all comments at the end of the Board meeting on September 19, 2019.

MOTION: Ms. Violante, Second, Mr. Baskin. To receive the Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan, to approve the process for receiving public comment, to open the public comment period which will close at the end of the MGA Board meeting on September 19, 2019. Motion passed unanimously.

6.3 Approve Montgomery & Associates, Inc. Contract No. 2017-4 Amendment 3

The original contract with Montgomery and Associates was executed in the fall of 2017. The bulk of the work was for Section 3 (Sustainability Management Criteria) of the Plan, as well as the orientation workshops and technical support for Section 2 (Plan Area and Basin Setting). The original contract did not include work related to providing technical support to staff in addressing comments on the Draft Plan.

Staff requested additional funds for Montgomery and Associates to work on the bulleted items set out in the Board memo: responding to comments, refining the surface water budgets, and attendance at additional Board meetings. Staff acknowledged that assistance may also be needed with Sections 2 and 3, so the first bulleted item should not be limited to just Sections 4 and 5.

As it is not yet clear what additional work might be required, Montgomery and Associates will provide a more detailed proposal. The SqCWD General Manager will approve additional work, if needed, in a phased manner.

Staff suggested changing the first bulleted item in the draft scope of work to “for work as needed for sections of the Plan”.

If there are too many comments, might the work of responding require more than \$40,000?

- This is the best estimate for now, and will cover the costs until the next Board meeting.

A request was made to clarify the first bulleted item, which was then changed to “Review and add to GSP sections as needed”.

MOTION: Dr. Daniels; Second, Mr. Romanini. To approve the General Manager of the Soquel Creek Water District to authorize the amended scope of work for Contract No. 2017-4, Amendment 3, and issue Purchase Order(s) Not to Exceed a total amount of \$40,000.

7. Informational Updates

7.1 Treasurer's Report

No comments.

7.2 GSP Advisory Committee Meeting Summaries for April, May, and June 2019

No comments.

7.3 Staff Reports

Staff reported that upon the advice of counsel, the MGA filed a notice of non-interest in the lawsuit against PWS. The City and other agencies have taken the same approach. The MGA is not a lead or a responsible agency under CEQA for PWS, and has no discretionary authority over the project.

8. Future Agenda Items

After the Final GSP has been submitted, presumably at the November 2019 Board meeting, to discuss a revised meeting schedule for the MGA Board.

9. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.