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Meeting Summary

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Planning (GSP) Advisory Committee Meeting #4 February 28, 2018, 5:30 – 9:00 pm

This meeting was the fourth convening of the Groundwater Sustainability Planning (GSP) Advisory Committee. It took place on February 28, 2018 from 5:30-9:00 p.m. at the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office. This document summarizes presentations to the Advisory Committee and discussion focusing on three Sustainability Indicators: groundwater levels, groundwater storage, and seawater intrusion. It also captures a staff report on additional information requested by Advisory Committee members, clarifying questions from Advisory Committee members, Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) staff responses and an overview of public comment received. It is not intended to serve as a detailed transcript of the meeting.

Meeting Objectives

1. Begin discussing three Sustainability Indicators: groundwater levels, groundwater storage, and seawater intrusion.
 - a. Decide whether these three are applicable Sustainability Indicators in the Mid-County Basin.
 - b. Discuss what are considered significant and unreasonable conditions for each of those three Sustainability Indicators.
 - c. Discuss what Undesirable Results may look like for the three Sustainability Indicators.
2. Share additional background information with Advisory Committee members.

Action Items

Key action items from the meeting include the following:

1. Kearns & West to revise the January 24 meeting summary based on comments provided.
2. Executive Team to transmit the January 24 meeting summary to the MGA Board for their information (per the Charter).
3. John Ricker to provide data on the number of wells in the Basin that are at risk of going dry, average depths of wells, and other well-related data.
4. Staff to help identify where the "management areas" should potentially be located in the context of measuring groundwater levels.



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5. Staff to consider how to better share background information and provide technically-based options and alternatives to which Advisory Committee members can respond.

Meeting attendance

Committee members in attendance included:

1. Kate Anderton, Environmental Representative
2. John Bargetto, Agricultural Representative
3. David Baskin, City of Santa Cruz
4. Bruce Jaffe, Soquel Creek Water District
5. Jon Kennedy, Private Well Representative
6. Jonathan Lear, At-Large Representative
7. Douglas P. Ley, Business Representative
8. Marco Romanini, Central Water District
9. Charlie Rous, At-Large Representative
10. Allyson Violante, County of Santa Cruz

Committee members who were absent included:

1. Rich Casale, Small Water System Management
2. Dana Katofsky McCarthy, Water Utility Rate Payer

Meeting Key Outcomes (linked to agenda items)

1. Introduction

Ron Duncan, Soquel Creek Water District, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. Mr. Duncan introduced members of the MGA Executive Team and staff, the MGA consultant support team, and he addressed members of the public in attendance. Darcy Pruitt, Regional Water Management Foundation, reported that staff has made a recommendation to the MGA Board on the process to replace Ned Spencer, At-Large Representative, who had withdrawn from the Advisory Committee. The Board is expected to make a decision at their next meeting on March 15, 2018.

Eric Poncelet, Facilitator, reviewed the agenda, meeting objectives, and the GSP process timeline.

2. Confirm January 24th Advisory Committee Meeting Summary



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A Committee member noted an edit to the January 24th Advisory Committee meeting summary, and Mr. Poncelet stated that once the edit is made, the summary will be forwarded to the MGA Board.

3. Brief Update on Informational Requests

Rosemary Menard, City of Santa Cruz, provided the Advisory Committee with an overview of the *Relationship of Plan Elements Graphic* (Materials Item 4) and the *Cross-walk between GSP and information to inform Advisory Committee discussions* (Materials Item 5). She noted that the documents are intended to show relationships between the major Sections (2 and 4) of the GSP and the Sustainability Goal and Sustainability Indicators. Ms. Menard emphasized that the GSP process is intended to be an iterative process.

Key discussion points under this overview include:

- The distinction between groundwater in storage and groundwater levels is that the former is measured by a single volume for the entire Basin, and the latter is measured at specific wells in the Basin. Management criteria for groundwater storage and groundwater levels are set differently.
- When assessing future projects, factors that will help achieve sustainable management criteria will be considered.
- The feedback loop illustrated in Materials Item 4 will help determine the specific areas where water levels are sufficient.

Darcy Pruitt, Regional Water Management Foundation (RWMF), reviewed the draft *Annotated Outline of the GSP* (Materials Item 6). She emphasized that the framework provided in the Outline is intended to support Committee conversations about the available information responsive to DWR's stated GSP content requirements. Ms. Pruitt informed the Committee that the Outline is most useful when referenced electronically, as the reference links can be more easily accessed. Darcy asked Committee members to email her any questions regarding the *Annotated Outline* at: DPruitt@cfsc.org.

Eric Poncelet, Facilitator, updated the Committee on the items which are still in the process of development and are to be shared with the Committee at a later meeting. These items include:

- *Matrix table of Water Supply Augmentation Options for the Basin*: this table will be shared with the Committee by the April or May meeting.
- *Example of setting Sustainable Management Criteria*: HydroMetrics is hoping to present an example at the March meeting.
- *Draft policy questions*: this list is intended to be a living document incorporating ongoing comments from Committee members.

Participants made the following general points and requests with respect to this information briefing:

- The *Annotated Outline* is currently only available in the e-packet. Staff is still figuring out how to best offer this resource as a living document to the Committee.



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- It is important for Committee members to know what information to sort through and focus on related to the discussion topics. As much as possible, staff should let Committee members know where to focus their time and attention.
- It would be helpful if staff would note when updates have been made to the living documents so that Committee members can track.

4. Refresher on SGMA Terminology and Basin Conditions for the Three Focal Sustainability Indicators.

Derrick Williams and Georgina King, HydroMetrics, provided a refresher to the Advisory Committee on SGMA terminology and basin conditions for three Sustainability Indicators: groundwater levels, groundwater storage and seawater intrusion. This session reviewed information that had been presented to the Committee in the public orientation sessions in fall 2017.

The following are key discussion points made on these Sustainability Indicators:

- Significant and unreasonable, and undesirable results statements and definitions are made and applied separately for each Sustainability Indicator.
- If projects and management actions cause flooding in an ecosystem, this should also be taken into account when developing management criteria.
- Staff needs to present information on Sustainability Indicators (especially groundwater in storage) to the Committee members more clearly so that the information is more easily understood and digested.
- DWR does not define critical overdraft; it merely provides examples of overdraft.
- It is important for staff to assist the Committee in identifying initial steps needed to stay on the path of achieving sustainability and to avoid regressing.

5. Discuss and Decide on Applicability of Sustainable Indicators

Ms. King explained that the default position under SGMA is that all six Sustainability Indicators apply to the Basin, unless an Indicator is determined not to be applicable.

Mr. Poncelet posed the key question for consideration by the Committee: *Does anyone object to including all three Sustainability Indicators being discussed at today's meeting?*

The Committee members all agreed that groundwater levels and seawater intrusion were applicable to and important for the Mid-County Basin, however, they wanted to better understand the applicability of groundwater storage for the Basin before weighing in.

As such, Committee members suggested that the meeting focus primarily on groundwater levels and seawater intrusion and that groundwater storage be deferred to a later meeting when more clarifying



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information is available. Further, the Committee asserted that covering these three Sustainability Indicators at different times should not preclude them from being “packaged” together for the purpose of technical analysis.

6. Significant and Unreasonable Conditions for the Focal Sustainability Indicators

Mr. Williams provided an overview of Significant and Unreasonable Conditions for two of the focal Sustainability Indicators: groundwater levels and seawater intrusion. He asked Committee members to share their qualitative views on the significant and unreasonable impacts for Mid-County Basin, explaining that the technical team will use the Committee’s response to determine how to analyze the data and quantify the impacts.

Committee members emphasized that they needed more direction from the Executive Team and technical staff in order to more effectively respond to these questions. They suggested that staff provide guiding questions or a list of potential impacts for the Committee to consider and respond to.

The specific question posed to the Committee was: ***For each focal Sustainability Indicator, what would be significant and unreasonable impacts to the basin (i.e., what could we not live with?)?***

Groundwater Levels

Committee members shared the following input with regard to Significant and Unreasonable Impacts on groundwater levels:

- The average domestic well should not go dry.
 - The Committee needs more information on how many wells are at risk of going dry, the average depth of the wells, and other well-related data for Mid-County Basin.
- Consider groundwater levels as a source of stream flows.
 - What is the lowest level that is acceptable?
 - What point are we restoring to?
- Consider the cost of projects in determining return to levels of stream water flows required to support aquatic ecosystems.
- The Committee would benefit from expertise regarding impacts on supply wells when discussing stream flows.
- Consider groundwater levels as they apply to agriculture, which is as important as domestic and municipal interests in the Mid-County Basin.
- Assess whether unreasonable impacts criteria should be more stringent for average domestic wells.



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- Consider the issue of affordability of pumping from wells and accessibility to wells for all Basin groundwater users.
- Consider the number of sustainable wells needed to support a thriving economy.

Seawater Intrusion

Committee members shared the following input on Significant and Unreasonable Impacts related to Seawater Intrusion:

- Stop Seawater Intrusion at the shore.
- Stop Seawater Intrusion where it is now.
- We cannot live with any Seawater Intrusion at the production wells.
- Identify contingency plans for drought periods.
- Identify a buffer for any further Seawater Intrusion.
- Stop Seawater Intrusion at the monitoring wells.

The following are some key points of discussion and clarification between Committee members and staff regarding Significant and Unreasonable Impacts related to Seawater Intrusion.

- Seawater Intrusion needs to be identified for each aquifer.
- Seawater Intrusion is represented by a line on the map, with a concentration of 250 mg/liter chloride (which could be set lower for agricultural areas).
- Consider impacts on aquifers.
 - Confirmation of the Seawater Intrusion line is dependent on results from monitoring wells.
 - Staff reported that SkyTem data (which will be presented at the next MGA Board meeting) can also be used to confirm this line.
 - More monitoring wells will help to maintain the certainty of the Seawater Intrusion line.
 - Measuring a Seawater Intrusion line set offshore would involve modeling.
- Consider the depth of Seawater Intrusion in addition to the extent.
- Seawater Intrusion limits can be set relative to production wells, with some buffer to guarantee sustainability.
- In assessing whether protection of municipal well fields from Seawater Intrusion should be prioritized over domestic, consider the following:
 - Domestic wells is the only source for individual properties.
 - Municipal wells serve more of the population.
 - Agricultural wells are also important.



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- Consider the contamination implications and risks of allowing Seawater Intrusion for any area.
- The idea that we have to push back the Seawater Intrusion line is a high standard.
- Consider adding to the management toolbox a contingency plan for Seawater Intrusion during drought periods.
- It is necessary to identify how many agricultural wells exist between the coast and the production wells.

7. Undesirable Results for the Focal Sustainability Indicators

Mr. Williams presented on what undesirable results may look like for groundwater levels and seawater intrusion. Advisory Committee members shared their thoughts on how flexible they are if Minimum Thresholds were to be exceeded.

Groundwater Levels

Committee members shared the following input on how flexible they were with Minimum Thresholds being exceeded with regard to groundwater levels:

- Assess the percentage of wells that have undesirable groundwater levels.
- It is good to have some flexibility in Minimum Thresholds by management area.
- Consider stricter Minimum Thresholds and more flexibility with exceedances.
- Identify the goal(s) of assessing Undesirable Results.

Committee members largely supported having flexibility if Minimum Thresholds were to be exceeded, with some requests from staff as follows:

- Consider splitting Minimum Thresholds in different areas by choosing monitoring wells carefully.
- We need help from staff on defining appropriate management areas..
- We need evaluation from staff as to whether management areas are the best way to measure Minimum Thresholds exceedance.

Seawater Intrusion

Committee members shared the following input on how flexible they were with Minimum Thresholds being exceeded with regard to Seawater Intrusion:

- There should be no further Seawater Intrusion.



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- There is a need to allow flexibility during drought periods.
- Moving pumping inland would not be an undesirable result.

The following are some key points of discussion and clarification between Committee members and staff regarding Undesirable Results for Seawater Intrusion:

- Only one Seawater Intrusion contour line can be set for each aquifer, but wells can have specific Minimum Thresholds.
- Possibility of resetting the Seawater Intrusion line every year.
- Consider the cost and feasibility of measuring Seawater Intrusion offshore.

8. Public Comment

Comments (C) offered by members of the public on the Advisory Committee's discussion of Sustainability Indicators and other topics included the following:

- C: Considering only monitoring wells with respect to setting Seawater Intrusion barriers will not allow us to look at what's happening inside the wells, which SGMA does not consider in the context of assessing Undesirable Results. Also, monitoring wells have to be placed throughout the Basin so there's no issue with water supply. There are some things we care about that will not be a part of the GSP.
- C: Consider holding public comment periods after each agenda topic. Holding one public comment session at the end of the meeting renders my comments "old and stale."
- C: I am concerned that we are restricted by legal aspects of this process, but if we do the work properly, we can find a way to satisfy the regulations in the end. We can do this by considering sustainability factors, as Minimum Threshold is not relevant. I'd like to hear more about the absolute capacity of the Basin. We need to find a way to increase infiltration (e.g., ways to store excess water). If the decision with respect to Seawater Intrusion is to shut down wells, who will pay for this action, and who will enforce it?

9. Next Steps

In closing, Mr. Poncelet reviewed the anticipated meeting objectives for the March Advisory Committee meetings as well as action items from this meeting, noting that staff has heard the Committee's suggestions and requests and will consider different ways to more effectively engage the Committee on these GSP planning topics and objectives. Executive staff members closed the meeting by thanking the attendees for their participation.