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Meeting Summary

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee Meeting #14 December 12, 2018, 5:00 – 8:30 pm

This meeting was the fourteenth convening of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Planning (GSP) Advisory Committee. It took place on December 12, 2018 from 5:00 - 8:30 p.m. at the Simpkins Family Swim Center in Santa Cruz. This document summarizes key outcomes from Advisory Committee and staff discussions on the following topics: project updates; briefing on current water management efforts in the Aromas Aquifer; differences between the Aromas and Purisima Aquifers; impacts from pumping; and how all of these factors influence the development of the GSP. This document also provides an overview of public comment received. It is not intended to serve as a detailed transcript of the meeting.

Meeting Objectives

The primary objectives for the meeting were to:

- Receive updates and guidance from the November 15, 2018 Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) Board meeting.
- Receive briefing on current water management efforts in the Aromas Aquifer by the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, and discuss implications for the Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).
- Begin discussing groundwater modeling impacts and how these will influence the GSP.

Action Items

Key action items from the meeting include the following:

1. Staff (Darcy Pruitt) to publicly post press release regarding the Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency's GSP educational community meeting series, the first of which will be held on January 12, 2019.
2. Staff to discuss further modeling scenarios involving Pajaro Valley (Aromas Aquifer) with respect to recharge.



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3. Staff to coordinate scheduling a Mid-County Basin groundwater model enrichment session in early 2019 and invite the following Committee members: Marco Romanini, Jon Kennedy, Kate Anderton, Keith Gudger, and Jonathan Lear.
 - a. Staff also to publicly post details of the groundwater model enrichment session.
4. Kearns & West to send confirmed meeting summaries for the October 23 Advisory Committee field trip and October 24 Advisory Committee meeting to RWMF staff to include in the next MGA Board meeting packet.

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. Rich Casale, Small Water System Management
5. Keith Gudger, At-Large Representative
6. Dana Katofsky McCarthy, Water Utility Rate Payer
7. Jon Kennedy, Private Well Representative
8. Jonathan Lear, At-Large Representative
9. Marco Romanini, Central Water District
10. Allyson Violante, County of Santa Cruz
11. Thomas Wyner for Cabrillo College, Institutional Representative

Committee members who were absent included:

1. Bruce Jaffe, Soquel Creek Water District
2. Charlie Rous, At-Large Representative

Meeting Key Outcomes (linked to agenda items)

1. Introduction and Discussion of GSP Process Timeline and Project Updates

Ralph Bracamonte, Central Water District, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. Mr. Bracamonte asked the GSP Advisory Committee members, MGA Executive Team, and the consultant support team around the room to introduce themselves. He also addressed members of the public in attendance and asked them for self-introductions.

Eric Poncelet, facilitator, reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives, and described key updates to the project process for the first quarter of 2019 as reflected on the updated GSP process timeline.



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2. Oral Communications (for items *not* on the agenda)

No public comments were provided on non-agenda items during this session.

3. Project Updates

Mr. Poncelet invited the following project updates:

- **Outcomes of November 15, 2018 MGA Board Meeting**

Committee members Jon Kennedy, David Baskin and Allyson Violante, who were present at the Board meeting, provided a brief overview of the outcomes of the November 15, 2018 MGA Board meeting, including a summary of the Board motion that passed. They reported on three main outcomes from the Board meeting. These related to: 1) the MGA's role with respect to GSP management measures and environmental actions; 2) inclusion of comprehensive management measures in Section 4 of the GSP; and 3) inclusion of Pure Water Soquel and Santa Cruz Winter Water Harvest projects in Section 5 of the GSP. The Committee and staff had a brief discussion about these topics following the report. Key points included:

- Uncertainty about the role of the Advisory Committee in the GSP process given the high level of oversight the MGA Board has over the Advisory Committee's work.
- Lack of clarity on continuity of the GSP process once Advisory Committee disbands.

Concern about limiting Mid-County GSP projects to only Pure Water Soquel and Santa Cruz Winter Water Harvest, and excluding other suitable projects.

- **Surface Water Interaction Working Group**

Mr. Ricker reported that once the groundwater model results are completed by technical staff, staff will reconvene the Surface Water Interaction Working Group, which would most likely be in late January or early February, 2019.

- **January 12 Santa Margarita Basin Meeting**

Sierra Ryan, County of Santa Cruz, provided a brief update on topics to be covered in the upcoming Santa Margarita Basin educational series on water from January through March, 2019. There will be three outreach meetings on the following topics:

- January 12: land use and water.
- February: water budget and modeling and balancing the use of and need for water.
- March: projects and management of aquifers.

Ms. Ryan reported that all of the meetings will be held from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Felton Community Center. Staff will post a press release with all meeting details shortly.



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4. Current Water Management Efforts in the Aromas Aquifer

Mr. Bracamonte introduced guest speaker, Brian Lockwood, General Manager of the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA or PV Water), who presented on the topic of water management efforts in the Aromas Aquifer and implications for the Mid-County GSP¹. Mr. Lockwood provided background on PV Water's collaboration with other neighboring water districts and focused his presentation mainly on multi-jurisdictional basin management planning. He also discussed this planning in the context of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and briefly covered funding of PV Water's groundwater projects and programs. Last, Mr. Lockwood emphasized that public outreach to the broader community is hugely important.

The Advisory Committee's discussion of Mr. Lockwood's presentation included the following key points:

- Pajaro Valley is different from Mid-County because a majority of their water is used for agricultural purposes.
- Successful PV Water approaches to groundwater sustainability include conservation and recharge net metering.
- PV Water fees and rates for groundwater management activities are mainly litigation-focused.
 - PV Water is subject to Proposition 218² in augmenting management rates, which are tax assessed.
 - PV Water has a tiered water rate system based on property size for residents but a non-tiered system for agricultural customers as they tend to have more variability in size, need and usage.
- PV Water has adopted creative ways of collecting of rainfall related to agricultural activities, including catching runoff from ranches and nurseries.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Poncelet, facilitator, invited members of the public to comment on Mr. Lockwood's presentation on current water management efforts in the Aromas Aquifer, the Advisory Committee's comments on the presentation, and any other Advisory Committee work.

One participant asked Mr. Lockwood about PV Water's net recharge program, whether it considers soil and storm water, and whether it is done in collaboration with Dr. Helen Dahlke (University of California, Davis). Mr. Lockwood indicated that PV Water considers areas where large scale recharge can occur, and this is not limited to the foothills. Mr. Lockwood indicated that he is familiar with Dr. Helen Dahlke's work but does not work directly with her on recharge issues.

¹ [Presentation, Brian Lockwood, Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency](#)

² https://lao.ca.gov/1996/120196_prop_218/understanding_prop218_1296.html



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Another participant asked whether PV Water riparian owners have water rights. Mr. Lockwood indicated that riparian owners do have water rights in PV Water's jurisdiction.

A participant asked why PV Water does not have a net metering program in lieu of making estimates for water usage. Mr. Lockwood clarified that PV Water does have a net metering program, but that it is only applicable to larger customers. He added that for smaller and more rural customers, PV Water does make usage estimates.

A final participant asked how PV Water monitors water quality for private and domestic use wells (e.g., Harkin Slough) and whether there are any issues with contamination in that water. Mr. Lockwood reported that PV Water does monitor water quality for private and domestic wells and found one well with elevated nitrate levels. He indicated that PV Water also does extensive water quality monitoring for water diverted from Harkin Slough, mostly to determine irrigation suitability.

6. Primer on Difference Between the Aromas and Purisima Aquifers

In this segment of the meeting, Georgina King, Montgomery & Associates Inc., presented on differences between the Aromas and Purisima Aquifers. She focused on the categories of hydrogeologic, groundwater quality, connected surface water and sensitivity to pumping, and the respective implications for Mid-County Basin GSP.

Some key discussion points on the topic of differences between the Aromas and Purisima Aquifers included:

- There is more connection between surface water and groundwater in the Purisima than in the Aromas. Groundwater levels are deeper in the Aromas because it is more permeable and there are no aquitards to limit infiltration from the surface.
- The Aromas area is more susceptible to contamination from surface sources because of a lack of aquitards compared to the Purisima areas

7. Impacts from Pumping and How These Influence the GSP

Ms. King presented an update on groundwater modeling assumptions and scenarios. She described how the data have changed since they were initially presented to the Committee in August and September, 2018, as well as targeted follow-up work anticipated for certain scenarios. Ms. King also discussed the option of having "management areas" in the basin—in particular, to differentiate the southern part of the basin, where there are undesirable results, from the northern part, where there are not.

The Advisory Committee discussed the following factors as influencing a decision to include management areas in the Mid-County GSP:

- DWR's input on inclusion of management areas.



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- Neighboring basin influence on development of management areas for GSP.
- Stakeholder input and feedback in the Aromas Aquifer on management areas.
- Other GSP's logic for not including management areas.
- The need for further modeling scenarios involving the Aromas Aquifer with respect to recharge.

During the discussion, DWR representative Amanda Peisch-Derby stated that identifying management areas in a GSP is optional under SGMA and is encouraged only if they help manage a basin more effectively. Ms. Peisch-Derby added that whatever the decision is on management areas, DWR requires a sufficient description and justification of the decision to be included in the GSP. She also indicated that thus far, she is not aware of any GSP that includes management areas to address issues in the basin. Finally, in addressing the question of unreasonable results for a certain sustainability criteria using management areas, the unreasonable results have to be defined consistently for the entire basin.

At the end of the Committee's discussion, there was general agreement that no strong rationale for utilizing management areas in the Mid-County Basin has been identified. Committee members recognized that key differences characterizing the distinct areas in the basin would be captured through the different sustainable management criteria that would be established for individual representative monitoring wells.

8. Public Comment

During this final public comment session, Mr. Poncelet invited members of the public to focus comments on the Committee's discussion of the differences between the Aromas and Purisima Aquifers, pumping impacts on the Mid-County Basin, and on any other Advisory Committee work.

One participant asked for clarification from Ms. King on how one can determine whether agriculture or septic tanks are the source of existing or increasing nitrate levels in the Seascape area. Ms. King indicated that water quality testing detected pharmaceuticals in the same wells, which come from waste water sources.

9. Confirm the October 23, 2018 GSP Advisory Committee Field Trip and the October 24, 2018 Advisory Committee Meeting Summaries

The Advisory Committee did not have any edits or comments on the drafts October 23, 2018 GSP Advisory Committee Field Trip and October 24, 2018 Advisory Committee Meeting summaries. Mr. Poncelet confirmed them for submission to the MGA Board.



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10. Next Steps

In closing, Mr. Poncelet provided a recap of the GSP process timeline for first quarter of 2019 and discussed general next steps.

Before the meeting adjourned, Mr. Ricker queried the Committee for interest in scheduling a dedicated enrichment session on groundwater modeling scenarios and assumptions. The following Committee members expressed interest in a dedicated modeling session: Marco Romanini, Jon Kennedy, Kate Anderton, Keith Gudger and Jonathan Lear. Members of the public also expressed interest in participating in such a session. Mr. Ricker indicated that staff will coordinate this session and post an announcement in early 2019.

Executive Team members closed the meeting by thanking the attendees for their participation.