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## Meeting Summary

### **Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee Meeting #18 April 24, 2019, 5:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

This meeting was the eighteenth convening of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Advisory Committee. It took place on April 24, 2019 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; Interconnected Surface Water Sustainability Indicator, the Mid-County Sustainability Goal, the initial draft of GSP recommendations for Sustainable Management Criteria (Chapter 3 of the GSP), and a preview of Advisory Committee deliberations and voting process on the recommendations. 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 and discuss the next round of modeling results and Sustainable Management Criteria for the Interconnected Surface Water Sustainability Indicator.
- Introduce the Mid-County sustainability goal.
- Receive and discuss an overview of initial draft GSP recommendations (Section 3 of the GSP), including refined Sustainable Management Criteria for all Sustainability Indicators.
- Discuss how the Advisory Committee will be making its recommendations, including sharing levels of support.

#### **Action Items**

Key action items from the meeting include the following:

- Staff to update the draft Sustainability Goal and draft Sustainable Management Criteria based on input provided by the Advisory Committee at the April 24th meeting. Staff to share this with the Committee before the May 16 joint Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) Board/Advisory Committee meeting.
- Advisory Committee to provide staff with any additional input on the draft Sustainability Goal before the May 16 meeting.



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### **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. Bruce Jaffe, Soquel Creek Water District
7. Dana Katofsky McCarthy, Water Utility Rate Payer
8. Jon Kennedy, Private Well Representative
9. Jonathan Lear, At-Large Representative
10. Marco Romanini, Central Water District
11. Charlie Rous, At-Large Representative
12. Allyson Violante, County of Santa Cruz
13. Thomas Wyner for Cabrillo College, Institutional Representative

No Committee members were absent.

### **Meeting Key Outcomes (linked to agenda items)**

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

John Ricker, County of Santa Cruz, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. Mr. Ricker asked the GSP Advisory Committee members, MGA Executive Team, and the consultant support team to introduce themselves. He also addressed members of the public in attendance and asked them for self-introductions. Trent Sherman introduced himself as the new Department of Water Resources (DWR) point-of-contact for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin.

Eric Poncelet, facilitator, reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives, and provided key updates to the project process for the remaining two months of the GSP Advisory Committee process as reflected on the updated timeline.

#### **MGA GSP Rollout Process**

Sierra Ryan, County of Santa Cruz, discussed the MGA GSP rollout process. She described key event for the May through late November time frame, which will include a survey and two public open houses in the July. She confirmed with DWR that the 60-day public comment period for the GSP will start as soon as it is submitted and posted to the DWR website.



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Ms. Ryan confirmed that staff will be sending out post cards regarding the public open houses to all residents of Mid-County Basin. Additionally, she clarified that the draft GSP will be discussed at the open houses, and changes to the GSP resulting from public comment will be incorporated into a revised version of the Plan that will be discussed at the September MGA Board meeting.

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

Mr. Poncelet, facilitator, invited members of the public to make comments on any GSP-related issues not on the agenda.

One participant expressed concern that the GSP roll out process seems to include the public toward the end and suggested that a separate (ad hoc) meeting among private well owners and small water users be convened prior to the summer open houses to solicit input on the Plan. The participant also requested an update on direct contact information for Committee members and separately, that staff consider further research on the impacts of Seawater Intrusion once it occurs.

Tim Carson, Regional Water Management Foundation (RWMF), responded that the MGA Board has approved email accounts for both Board and Committee members not affiliated with agencies. Those affiliated with member agencies generally already have accounts. He added that invitations to non-affiliated Committee members were sent out and that staff is awaiting responses.

Another participant commented that the climate change model being used to inform the GSP can predict climate change impacts better if it focuses on using actual local conditions in past years, selecting a catalog of the hotter years.

## **3. Project Updates**

Mr. Poncelet invited the following project updates:

- **April 18 2019 Enrichment Session: Forecasting Water Use from Land Use and Population**

Ms. Ryan provided an update on the April 18 enrichment session on Forecasting Water Use from Land use and Population, indicating that a recording of the session is posted on the MGA website.

Committee members who attended reported that the session was informative and helpful.

## **4. Interconnected Surface Water Sustainability Indicator**



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John Ricker, County of Santa Cruz, reviewed the outcomes of the April 8 Surface Water Interaction working group meeting. He confirmed that the group accomplished a great deal, including addressing Sustainable Management Criteria and reviewing the most current modeling results.

The Committee members discussed the following key items following Mr. Ricker's overview:

- With respect to the relationship between rainfall and groundwater pumping, groundwater storage and streamflow in the upper watershed is primarily influenced by rainfall amounts in the current and prior years. Groundwater levels in the lowers and streamflow interactions in the lower watershed are also significantly influenced by pumping
- Watershed evapotranspiration is captured in the groundwater model (e.g., PRMS model), , but it does not account for riparian evapotranspiration influence on streamflow, which is substantial. not on the riparian side.
- Historical data shows pumping reduction and redistributions, that has resulted in some groundwater level recovery in both shallow and deeper zones.

Georgina King, Montgomery & Associates, covered the updated proposed Sustainable Management Criteria for the Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water Sustainability Indicator. Staff and Committee members discussed key points for each criterion as follows:

- For **Significant and Unreasonable Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water**, Ms. King asked the Committee to comment on the following statement: *Surface water depletion due to groundwater extraction in interconnected streams supporting priority species, greater than that experienced over the period from the start of monitoring through 2015, would be a significant and unreasonable depletion of surface water.* Key discussion points included the following:
  - The term “priority species” is used to infer that if such species’ needs are met, other species’ needs would also be met (e.g., riparian habitat, salmonid). This term is will be specifically defined in the GSP
  - The working group considered all creeks that support “priority species.
  - Staff used metrics on how the “priority species” standard is set, even though it is not required by the GSP.
- For **Minimum Threshold for Groundwater Elevations as a Proxy for Streamflow Depletion**, Ms. King indicated that the working group used the Environmental Defense Fund’s (EDF) proposed approach, which is based on a relationship between groundwater levels and stream depletion. Ms. King also reported the working group has proposed a *Minimum*



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*Threshold that is the highest observed seasonal low Groundwater level in a below-average rainfall year, over the period from the start of monitoring through 2015.*

The Committee discussed the possibility of using a lower Minimum Threshold to cover the years when Groundwater Levels went below the Minimum Threshold. The Committee concluded that this is ultimately not necessary since recent data show that groundwater levels are increasing. Staff also indicated that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are both looking closely at this Sustainability Indicator to improve conditions for fish habitat (Steelhead and Coho).

- For **Measurable Objectives**, Ms. King proposed the objectives, that groundwater levels be:  
1) higher than creek bed elevations to ensure groundwater contribution to streamflow; and  
2) higher than the minimum threshold - in seasonal-low elevations over the period of record to provide operational flexibility. Ms. King also discussed how to link streamflow depletion with groundwater level Measurable Objectives using the groundwater model.

The Committee discussed the following key points regarding Measurable Objectives related to streamflow depletion:

- It is more challenging to accomplish Measurable Objectives and stay above the Minimum Threshold without new projects.
- Adjustments to Measurable Objectives can be made over the next 20 years during GSP implementation as more information on surface water/groundwater interactions is generated from monitoring.

## **5. Mid-County Sustainability Goal**

Darcy Pruitt, RWMF presented an introduction to the Mid-County Sustainability Goal and proposed the following draft goal statement for the GSP: *To provide a safe, reliable, and affordable water supply to meet current and expected regional demand without causing undesirable impacts.*

The Committee discussed the following key points regarding the proposed Sustainability Goal:

- There were concerns expressed about the term “affordability” because the MGA has said that its role does not include governing affordability. Committee members agreed that some element of affordability or economics, and diversity should be included in the Sustainability Goal.
- There was agreement on using the term “beneficial users” as a way of incorporating diverse socioeconomic populations in the Sustainability Goal.



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Staff indicated that it will rework the draft Sustainability Goal statement, considering the Committee's comments and suggestions, and will present an updated draft before the May 16 joint MGA Board/Advisory Committee meeting.

## 6. Public Comment

Mr. Poncelet, facilitator, invited members of the public to comment on the proposed Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water Sustainable Management Criteria and the Sustainability Goal, the Advisory Committee's reflections on the presentation, and any other Advisory Committee work.

One participant commented that various groundwater models do cover evapotranspiration and that most streamflow comes up from the upper basin. Therefore, it is difficult to see how there are more controls in the lower basin. Further, the participant indicated that as it is not easy to manage groundwater levels as they link to streamflow.

Another participant requested that staff consider fog within the climate model, as it could affect the evapotranspiration rates in the riparian areas. Further, the participant commented on groundwater recharge from outside and inside the basin and when to start monitoring for significant and unreasonable conditions for depletion of surface water interaction.

## 7. Overview of initial draft GSP recommendations (Section 3 of GSP), including refined Sustainable Management Criteria for all Sustainability Indicators

Ms. King reviewed the initial *draft* GSP recommendations of Sustainable Management Criteria, focusing her discussion on the four relevant Sustainability Indicators (i.e., Groundwater Levels, Groundwater Storage, Seawater Intrusion and Groundwater Quality) in the basin, excluding the Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water, which was already covered earlier in the meeting, and Subsidence, which is not applicable to the basin. Ms. King emphasized that the group has discussed all of these Sustainability Indicators in previous meetings and this discussion is a review.

- With respect to **Groundwater Levels**, the Committee discussed the following additional key points:
  - A Committee member commented that the Significant and Unreasonable Conditions statement seems vague and open to interpretation. Staff responded that it is supposed to be a qualitative statement, and it is not required to be included in the GSP. [Note: it was pointed out by DWR after the meeting that staff's response that statements of Significant and Unreasonable Conditions are not required to be in the GSP is not correct. Consideration of Significant and Unreasonable Conditions is made when determining Undesirable Results, which occur when significant and unreasonable effects for any of



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- the sustainability indicators are caused by groundwater conditions occurring throughout the basin
- The 90<sup>th</sup> percentile is only applicable to representative monitoring wells.
- There is further need to justify staff's decision to use the Minimum Threshold of 30 feet below historic levels to assure that a GSP reader would understand that this threshold would result in a sustainable basin.
- For **Groundwater Storage**, the Committee requested more clarity on Sustainable Yield. Staff indicated that it will provide this information by the June meeting.
- For **Seawater Intrusion**, the Committee discussed the following key points for this Indicator:
  - There is a concern about the five-year average for evaluating groundwater protective elevations to determine whether there is seawater intrusion at coastal monitoring wells.
  - A Committee member requested that staff include the time span (e.g., 2013 – 2017) for observed Significant and Unreasonable Conditions for Seawater Intrusion in the GSP as it is important to clearly define the five-year *timeframe*.
- For **Degraded Groundwater Quality**, the Committee addressed the following key discussion points for this indicator :
  - A period of background monitoring on Groundwater Quality needs to be conducted before and after projects are implemented.
  - Staff included a statement in the GSP requiring background monitoring for Groundwater Quality before project starts and after project is mobilized in order to determine the change in/impact to the Groundwater Quality. This is particularly important for constituents like Arsenic, which is naturally occurring.
  - State regulations are constantly evolving with respect to the list of constituents of concern which need to be monitored to set drinking water standards and could include more information on *emerging* constituents of concern in the future.
  - A Committee member requested staff confirm whether Significant and Unreasonable Conditions for Groundwater Quality is caused by or linked to Seawater Intrusion.

At the end of her presentation on the draft Sustainable Management Criteria, Ms. King requested input from the Committee on how to present the same information to the MGA Board, considering that the Board does not have the same background discussing these items. Committee members offered the following suggestions:

- Provide an example graph showing changes in Groundwater Levels at particular wells. This is helpful to illustrate overall concepts.



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- Include visuals and provide a good overview of this content in a clear, succinct staff memo.

## **8. Preview of Advisory Committee deliberations and voting on recommendations to MGA Board**

Eric Poncelet, facilitator, provided a preview of method by which the Committee would deliberate, vote, and indicate levels of support on its recommendation to the MGA. This method was pulled from the Advisory Committee's Charter. Mr. Poncelet indicated that the Committee would be asked to vote on a single package that would contain the Sustainability Goal and Sustainable Management Criteria for all of the Sustainability Indicators. He noted that each Committee member in turn would be provided the opportunity to express their level of support for the package and to provide additional details and rationale behind their stated level of support. The three levels of support identified in the charter include: general support ("I like it"), qualified support ("I have some issues with it but can live with it"), and fundamental disagreement ("I don't like it and cannot live with it"). Any disagreements will be shared with the MGA Board. Mr. Poncelet reminded the Committee that while it is an agreement-seeking body, unanimity is not required to make a recommendation to the Board.

The Committee asked clarifying questions about the approach. Their discussion included the following observations:

- The MGA Board will want to know whether the Committee's consent is unanimous on any Sustainability Indicator. This will be expressed in the conveyance letter.
- Committee members confirmed that they understand the intended approach.

## **9. Public Comment**

During this final public comment session, Mr. Poncelet invited members of the public to provide comments on draft GSP recommendations for Sustainability Indicators, the process for Committee deliberations and recommendations to the MGA Board, and any other aspect of Advisory Committee work.

A participant asked for clarification on who will be drafting the GSP and requested a discussion on the Sustainable Yield earlier than June. The participant reiterated the request for staff to convene a community meeting before the June 19 Advisory Committee meeting to get a sense of community input on the GSP.

## **10. Confirm the February 27, 2019 and March 27, 2019 Advisory Committee Meetings Summaries**

The Committee confirmed the February and March meeting summaries for forwarding to the MGA Board.



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## **11. Next Steps**

In closing, Mr. Poncelet provided a recap of the GSP process timeline for May through July 2019, focusing on objectives for the May and June meetings and emphasizing that June is the last Advisory Committee meeting.

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