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Meeting Summary

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee Meeting #16 February 27, 2019, 5:00 – 8:30 pm

This meeting was the sixteenth convening of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Planning (GSP) Advisory Committee. It took place on February 27, 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; groundwater modeling results; and proposed draft sustainable management criteria for “surface water interaction.” 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:

- Discuss groundwater modeling results for various sustainability strategies, including:
 - Pure Water Soquel, enhanced for Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)
 - Preliminary combined projects
- Discuss draft proposed Sustainable Management Criteria for “Surface Water Interaction” Sustainability Indicator

Action Items

Key action items from the meeting include the following:

1. Staff to remind Advisory Committee of exact dates for upcoming and remaining Advisory Committee and joint MGA/Advisory Committee meetings.
2. Staff to consider options for convening a land use and water enrichment session and schedule it for some time in April.
3. In finalizing the definition of Significant & Unreasonable for the lowering of groundwater levels connected to surface water, staff to check with NOAA Fisheries regarding the necessity of the time period reference in the definition.
4. Surface Water Working Group to revisit analysis of temperature data relating to impacts on fish.



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5. Kearns & West to revise and transmit the confirmed meeting summary for the January 23, 2019 Advisory Committee meeting for inclusion in the Mid-County Groundwater Agency's (MGA) Board meeting packet in March.

Meeting attendance

Committee members in attendance included:

1. John Bargetto, Agricultural Representative
2. David Baskin, City of Santa Cruz
3. Rich Casale, Small Water System Management
4. Keith Gudger, At-Large Representative
5. Bruce Jaffe, Soquel Creek Water District
6. Jon Kennedy, Private Well Representative
7. Jonathan Lear, At-Large Representative
8. Marco Romanini, Central Water District
9. Charlie Rous, At-Large Representative
10. Allyson Violante, County of Santa Cruz
11. Thomas Wyner for Cabrillo College, Institutional Representative

Committee members who were absent included:

1. Kate Anderton, Environmental Representative
2. Dana Katofsky McCarthy, Water Utility Rate Payer

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 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 provided key updates to the project process for remaining five months of the GSP Advisory Committee process as reflected on the updated timeline. Additionally, Mr. Poncelet reported that staff will be planning an enrichment session on land use and water sometime in late March or early April.

Committee members made the following requests regarding the land use and water enrichment session:

- Invite a staff member from the County's planning department to present.



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- Present on the relationship between water and permitting agencies and what happens if there's a conflict between the agencies. How does this tension get resolved and incorporated into GSP development?

With respect to the remaining GSP Advisory meetings, Committee members requested a reminder from staff on the exact dates for the upcoming Advisory meetings. Darcy Pruitt, Regional Water Management Foundation (RWMF), committed to sending out such a reminder.

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 thanked staff for their recent efforts in the GSP-related work in the Mid-County and Santa Margarita Basins, which has resulted in a good level of coordination between agencies and jurisdictions. The participant also indicated that she had filed a CEQA petition in pro per legal action against the Pure Water Soquel (PWS) project asserting issues with the draft environmental impact report (EIR). The CEQA petition names the MGA as a real party of interest.

3. Project Updates

Mr. Poncelet invited the following project updates:

- **February 11 GSP Modeling Enrichment Session**
Ms. Pruitt reported that there was good participation for the February 11, 2019 GSP modeling enrichment session. There was positive feedback that it helped participants have a better understanding of the groundwater model. Committee members agreed that details covered during the session were helpful in understanding model inputs and resulting outcomes. Staff reported that the session recording is posted on the MGA website for everyone's reference.
- **Santa Margarita Basin Educational Meeting Series**
Sierra Ryan, County of Santa Cruz, provided an update on the February 9, 2019 Santa Margarita educational session covering water budgets and how groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDE) are incorporated as users of the system. Ms. Ryan announced that the final session of the educational series in March will cover climate change scenarios and types of management actions, and will include some fact-checking exercises.
- **DWR Update**
Amanda Peisch-Derby, Department of Water Resources (DWR), shared that DWR will be hosting a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) forum on March 21, 2019 from 10 am – 3:00 pm, at the Civic Center Galleria in Sacramento. She indicated that the intended audience includes all



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stakeholders and is focused on outreach. She added that Ms. Ryan will be serving as a forum panelist.

4. Groundwater Modeling Results for Sustainability Strategies

In this segment, Cameron Tana, Montgomery & Associates, described the Pure Water Soquel (PWS) project, including design components and modeling for environmental review, and provided an evaluation of the potential for benefits to the Mid-County Groundwater Basin from the project. In the second part of this segment, Mr. Tana gave a preview of modeling that Montgomery and Associates will be doing simulating a combination of PWS and the City of Santa Cruz Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project. In the final portion of this segment, Mr. Tana discussed climate change scenario selection for the GSP.

Following Mr. Tana's presentation, Committee members discussed following key points with respect to the groundwater modeling results for PWS:

- Modeling shows that recharge needs to continue in order for there to be benefits against seawater intrusion.
- The causal relationship between climate scenarios and groundwater levels is minor relative to the effects of projects and management actions
- The model shows increased groundwater levels from Pure Water Soquel in some areas when there is increased pumping. The effect of recharge at the seawater intrusion prevention wells outweighs the effect of increased pumping.
- The fact that the model design accounts for different pumping distribution scenarios and does not have political boundaries is a positive result for managing seawater intrusion in the Purisima.
- The model shows that recharge levels at 1,500 AFY is maintaining sustainability for the Basin. As such, the model could be used to evaluate more pumping redistribution.
- The timeframe to set up, assess and run different modeling scenarios is about one month.
- Mr. Tana responded to a question about why model simulation results showed a drop in groundwater levels around Water Year 2020. Mr. Tana incorrectly described the drop as resulting from a simulated increase in groundwater demand and pumping. Total municipal pumping is not simulated to increase in this year. Instead, the simulation implements a pumping redistribution beginning in this year – three years prior to commencement of Pure Water Soquel in the simulation. This helps display the effect of pumping redistribution without recharge from Pure Water Soquel seawater intrusion prevention wells.



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The Committee exchanged the following ideas with respect to the ASR preview and climate scenario selection for the GSP:

- With respect to simulation of climate change, the worst case scenario (primarily from droughts) is not currently being modeled for the City's ASR or the GSP. Staff should consider it going forward.
- In the climate change scenario selection process, the catalog climate approach takes into account many dry years to model for longer drought periods.
- With the infrastructure in place for modeling different projects, it would be useful to build in sensitivity analysis to determine the best climate change modeling for the GSP.
- Climate change approaches either provide estimates of potential evapotranspiration or estimates of temperature for the model to calculate potential evapotranspiration. . The Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin model calculates potential evapotranspiration and then actual evapotranspiration based on rainfall and soil moisture.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Poncelet, facilitator, invited members of the public to comment on Mr. Tana's presentation on groundwater modeling results on sustainable strategies, the Advisory Committee's reflections on the presentation, and any other Advisory Committee work.

One participant asked for further explanation on why PWS is not considering in-lieu recharge, water demand offset policies and the scientific basis for the 1500 AFY recharge threshold for the Soquel Creek Water District.

Another participant asked whether the energy demand associated with redistributing pumping was factored into the PWS modeling.

6. Proposed Draft Sustainable Management Criteria for "Surface Water Interaction" Sustainability Indicator

In this segment, Ms. Ryan reported on the outcomes of the January 30, 2019 surface water interaction working group meeting. Her report was followed by Mr. Tana's presentation on surface water connection to groundwater in the Mid-County Basin and staff's request for the Committee to provide initial input on proposed minimum thresholds and measurable objectives.

Key discussion points on the topic of surface water interaction sustainable management criteria included:



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- The surface water interaction analysis is variable for different areas and basins. Conclusions for the Mid-County Basin should not be extrapolated for other basins (e.g., Santa Margarita).
- It is necessary to conduct monitoring at different locations and at different groundwater levels as a way to adaptively manage for GDEs or other species. Further, DWR regulations require that GSAs incorporate varying levels of monitoring to demonstrate and justify the use of the groundwater level proxy for surface water and groundwater interactions.
- Some Committee members suggested the following revised language for Significant & Unreasonable conditions: *“Lowering of groundwater levels adjacent to interconnected streams due to groundwater extraction that results in a significant decrease in depletion of stream baseflow.”* [Omits timeframe.]
- The definition of significant and unreasonable (e.g., what constitutes a “significant decrease”) can be qualitative, but the minimum threshold and measurable objective criteria must be quantitative.
- Staff should further analyze temperature data relating to fish survival.

7. Public Comment

During this final public comment session, Mr. Poncelet invited members of the public to provide comments on the Committee’s discussion of the working group’s work on surface water connection to groundwater in the Mid-County Basin, the preliminary sustainable management criteria for surface water interconnections, and on any other Advisory Committee work.

One participant noted a few areas for further investigation with respect to surface water interconnections, including well data showing similar conditions, correlation of streamflow to groundwater levels under dry conditions, the effect of evapotranspiration, reconciliation of data gaps, and how to monitor around private wells.

8. Confirm the January 23, 2019 Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

There were no comments on the January 23, 2019 Advisory Committee meeting summary, which was therefore considered confirmed for forwarding to the MGA Board.

9. Next Steps

In closing, Mr. Poncelet provided a recap of the GSP process timeline for March through July 2019, focusing on objectives for the March and April meetings, and discussed general next steps. He also confirmed that staff will be providing exact dates for all upcoming meetings, particularly the meetings dates that will be changed.

Committee members expressed concern that there may not be sufficient time to adequately address the topic of funding tools and the implementation plan in the remaining GSP Advisory Committee meetings.



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Staff indicated that these topics will be introduced to frame the potential approaches but that the detailed evaluation of strategies is being deferred until there is more direction from the state related to fees that we anticipate is likely be coming over the next several years as a result of anticipated SGMA-related legal proceedings as SGMA is implemented across the state.

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