



SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY
Final Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2016

1. **Call to Order:** Dr. Jaffe called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

Board Members Present: B. Jaffe, R. Marani, C. Mathews, C. Abramson, J. Benich, Z. Friend, J. Kennedy, J. Kerr, T. LaHue, D. Lane, J. Leopold

Staff Present: L. Strohm, R. Bracamonte, R. Duncan, J. Ricker, J. Townsend, S. Ryan, M. Schumacher, H. Luckenbach

Absent: T. Carson, R. Menard, E. Cross, I. Rivera

Others: There were approximately 15 members of the public in attendance.

Presentations: “Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Regulations,” by Derrik Williams of HydroMetrics, WRI

The Chair rearranged the agenda as shown below by staff request.

6.2 Update on Groundwater Model

Mr. Williams provided an update on the model. There are two main components: the surface water module and groundwater module. Both components are moving forward as well as an effort to integrate the two. He explained how global climate models will be integrated into the local model.

What do you mean by results?

- This first round will result in a calibrated model that can simulate stream runoff, groundwater levels, and how they interact with each other.

Which numbers will you be using regarding climate change projections?

- HydroMetrics WRI will be using a standard number to be determined.

Which data are being used for streamflow and rainfall measurements?

- HydroMetrics WRI is using data on rainfall, soil and plant canopies, evapotranspiration, and runoff, all of which drive streamflow. Long term stream flow data are limited. USGS data are being used as well.

5.1 Approve Scope and Budget for Groundwater Model Effort by HydroMetrics WRI for FY 2016-2017

Mr. Duncan reviewed the Scope of Work which focuses on simulating future conditions, water budgets, and answering basic questions in the near term.

Will the evaluation of previous protected elevations be part of the model?

- Yes, those will be used expressly in the model without further evaluation.

What would happen if the model showed saltwater intrusion?

- That is unlikely to happen based on the structure of the model, but if it did HydroMetrics WRI would re-evaluate the model's parameters. The water levels reflect those needed to prevent intrusion in 70% of scenarios.

Dr. Jaffe noted the addition of a surface water consultant to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and inquired about what he would contribute. Mr. Williams responded that the TAC requested someone with Mr. Hecht's expertise. Mr. Ricker added that the TAC is interested in surface water interactions and expressed his support. Mr. Duncan noted that Mr. Hecht was the county's hydrologist and possesses a wealth of local knowledge. The TAC is composed of consultants and agency staff including: Bruce Daniels, Andy Fisher, Brian Lockwood, and Robert Marks.

Can Private Well Owner Representatives vote on financial matters?

- They can vote on any matter. However, financial matters must be unanimously approved by agency representatives in order to pass.

Mr. Marani noted that USGS cannot have an agreement with the MGA. Ms. Schumacher suggested an amendment to the Scope of Work noting that Mr. Hecht will be paid by the MGA rather than HydroMetrics WRI.

MOTION: Dr. LaHue; Second: Mr. Leopold. To approve the Scope of Work and Budget for the Groundwater Model as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

4.1 Accept Minutes from May 19, 2016 MGA Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Friend; Second: Mr. Lane. To approve the minutes of May 19, 2016 as written. Motion passed unanimously. Abstentions: Dr. LaHue, Mr. Leopold.

6.1 Update on Quarterly Monitoring Data

Mr. Williams stated that data show short term recovery, but the goal is still to achieve long term recovery. Dr. Jaffe commented on how seasonal fluctuations can affect desired protection levels. Mr. Williams replied that the graphs do not reflect long term recovery. In the long term, water levels will fluctuate and the goal is to have the average be above protection levels. Mr. Kennedy inquired about inferring the state of the basin from the quarterly

reports. Mr. Williams shared that the state of the basin is better portrayed via annual and bi-annual reports down the road.

6.4 Update on Counties with Distressed Groundwater Basins Grant

Mr. Ricker reported that the county received a \$250,000 grant to augment efforts to model inland and non-municipal pumping impacts. Work will be completed by December 2017 with streamflow measurements expected next year. The county will work with HydroMetrics WRI and the TAC to assess inland areas of the basin.

Elements of the project include:

- an inventory of wells and groundwater users for inland parts of the basin;
- groundwater measurements for private wells (inland parts of the basin);
- expanding the volunteer network to help calibrate the model;
- seasonal streamflow interactions and the impacts of inland pumping;
- looking at the potential for aquifer recharge projects in the basin;
- outreach with well owners, agricultural, and commercial well users; and
- audits with well owners to identify the potential for increased efficiency.

Mr. Kennedy asked if the county is looking for private well owner input for specific areas of the basin. Mr. Ricker welcomed input from those interested in participating. The county is available to come out and take measurements using a non-intrusive method that sends a pulse of sound down the well. Depending on how the model develops, they might also need help on the edges of the basin.

The group discussed when and how private well owner meetings have been publicized over the past two years. Mr. Duncan suggested that interested parties sign up for the MGA email list. Mr. Kerr reported that the group is contemplating additional private well owner meetings. The group acknowledged that sending notices by mail made a big difference in meeting turnout. The website nextdoor.com was suggested as another potential channel that the county is already using.

How are you identifying which streams to analyze?

- Major streams are the focus as well as anadromous salmonid streams.

Do you have long term data on any of those streams?

- Some streams have spot flow measurements for the last few years.

Mr. Ricker reviewed allowable funding applications, and mentioned that funding cannot be used for implementation. Proposition 1 allows funds spent since the proposition passed in November 2014 to be used as local match.

6.5 Update on MGA’s Basin Boundary Modification Request for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin

Mr. Duncan provided an update on the basin boundary modification request which was submitted to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and is anticipated to be accepted on September 21, 2016. Mr. Williams added that the request will be an information item at the next California Water Commission meeting, and will be included in Bulletin 118 which names every basin in the state. Mr. Ricker added that the boundary was accepted without any changes, and picked up some locations that were combined into the mid-county groundwater basin (e.g., Glen Canyon Road).

6.6 Update on Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Formation Status for the MGA

Mr. Williams shared that this group has become the exclusive GSA in the basin, and the only group that has the right to implement SGMA. Once Bulletin 118 is published, it will become the official GSA and will not have to reapply. Ms. Schumacher acknowledged the efforts of those who contributed to the growth of this group over the years especially the formation committee. Dr. Jaffe acknowledged that the group is a model for collaboration.

6.3 Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Regulations*

*Note: the minutes for Item 6.3 have been updated to reflect the input of DWR Regional Coordinator Amanda Peisch-Derby by email at a later date.

Mr. Williams provided an overview on the regulations, timeline, and required actions. He underscored that the legislation is a legally enforceable document along with the regulations. The Best Management Practices (BMPs) are currently being developed and are intended to provide optional guidance as needed. Some BMPs will be released in December, and all six sustainability indicators must be addressed in the GSP.

Who determines whether plans are substantial enough?

- DWR. It will be in your best interest to be in touch with DWR throughout the process to give them confidence in the basin’s ability to be sustainable.

Who decides which levels are acceptable?

- The GSA and the public will decide along with local jurisdictions.

Mr. Williams discussed Representative Monitoring Points (RMPs). The group will have to prove that each RMP is representative of the wells in that area. Each Undesireable Result will be defined once for the entire basin (e.g., the locally defined level for significant and unreasonable saltwater intrusion). The GSA will have to decide how large the buffer zone will be in order to mitigate the risk of having Undesirable Results.

The overall goal is for sustainability indicators to improve over time to reach measurable objectives. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is tasked with intervention within the basin in certain scenarios. For example, where there is evidence that the basin is not heading toward sustainability by 2020 and DWR has determined that the GSP implementation is not adequate. The SWRCB can also step in by 2022 if the basin groundwater levels continue to decline and DWR has determined that the GSP implementation is not adequate. For more information visit:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/gmp/docs/sgma/triggers.pdf

How will fluctuations be factored into the mix (e.g., over 50 years)?

- DWR appears to be more concerned with the direction of results over a 20 year trend than short term fluctuations. Having an Undesirable Result by itself is not an automatic trigger for DWR intervention. Overall, DWR needs to have confidence in the direction the basin is heading.

How do you prevent the bottom line from causing irreversible consequences?

- By defining thresholds that allow for uncertainty and mitigate risk.

Is this program granting permission to spend unlimited amounts of money?

What are the financial components of this kind of undertaking?

- Money is not one of the indicators, however there is an assumption that desirable results will take the success of the local economy into account.

Undesirable Results are a function of the minimum thresholds set basin-wide and are an aggregated metric. The GSP does not have to calculate sustainable yield for the basin. Some aspects of the Plan are local and others are basin-wide. There will be one plan, one basin, and one agency for this area. The GSA will have to demonstrate that the usage of this basin does not impact neighboring basins' minimum thresholds. Ideally, neighboring GSAs will write letters to DWR acknowledging collaboration. Mr. Williams suggested that the group invite neighboring members to future meetings.

How will this group meet demand reduction goals?

- Mr. Ricker replied that the group will be interacting with all adjacent basins whether or not they have a GSP. Overdrafted basins will need to provide an estimate of the demand reduction needed to mitigate overdraft.

Mr. Abramson noted that there are basins to the east and south that should also be accountable to this basin. What provision is there for that?

- This group's minimum thresholds cannot prevent neighboring basins from reaching their sustainability objectives, and vice versa.

Does DWR want check-ins during the GSP development process?

- They would like early consultation but do not have a formal program. This group has the opportunity to work with DWR from the beginning.

What is the definition of a beneficial user?

- This term is not yet defined, but could refer to environmental groups, municipalities, industrial users, and private well owners. There should be a good faith effort to reach out to everybody who may be affected by the Plan.

Mr. Kennedy commented that sustainability goes beyond avoiding negative impacts, and should encompass the nexus of social, environmental, and economic goals. He added that the GSP should consider adopting a broader definition, and requested an agenda item for next meeting item to discuss the formation of a GSP committee and charters to guide said committee.

What about environmental impacts?

- Environmental impacts are still being defined through the BMP process.

6.7 Status Update on Hiring of Senior Water Resource Planner (Oral)

Mr. Ricker reported that the recruitment process has been reopened, and the deadline for the first review is the beginning of this week. The Executive Team will reviewing the applications submitted and decide how to proceed.

6.8 Treasurer's Report

Ms. Strohm provided an example of what future reports will look like.

3. Oral Communications (Items not on the Agenda)

Ms. Steinbruner urged the group to consider putting to vote the topic of injecting sewage water and expressed her concerns about a lack of scientific analysis. Mr. Cogan echoed her comments and articulated his support for being cautious and holding a public vote. He asked the board to consider alternatives. Ms. Schumacher acknowledged the 2nd anniversary of SGMA, the leadership of this group, and becoming the official agency of the basin.

7. Oral Reports

7.1 Outreach Reports

Mr. Kerr provided an update on the MGA office hours held on July 12, 2016. There were 7 members of public in attendance and several board members. He suggested hosting office hours in months without MGA meetings. The next session is tentatively scheduled for October 20, 2016.

Ms. Schumacher provided an update on the monthly e-blasts. There are currently more than 450 subscribers. She asked everyone to share the website and invite others to subscribe to the newsletter.

Mr. Kerr reported that there are continuing email exchanges between the Private Well Owner Representatives and other private well owners, including requests for future meetings and opportunities to connect. Several private well owners have created a mid-county Google group. He offered to share information as appropriate.

Ms. Ryan shared the new MGA logo and latest Google analytics for the website since March including: a 30% open rate on the last e-blast, 1,150 individual users from the Santa Cruz county area, and some from Sacramento. Most people go to at least three different pages.

Dr. LaHue highlighted the importance of communicating about these meetings through a mailer or nextdoor.com or both. He also suggested that the group find a larger venue for the next board meeting.

7.2 Board Member Reports

None

7.3 Staff Reports

None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Staff indicated that they would look for a larger venue for future meetings. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m. The next meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 17th at the Simpkins Family Swim Center unless otherwise posted on the MGA website.

SUBMITTED BY:

APPROVED BY:

Julia Townsend, Program Associate
Regional Water Management Foundation

Cynthia Mathews
Board Secretary