



Groundwater is a vital resource, together let's protect it.

midcountygroundwater.org • 5180 Soquel Drive • Soquel, CA 95073

SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY
Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair LaHue

2. Roll Call

Directors present: Curt Abramson, David Baskin, Fred Keeley (late arrival), Jon Kennedy, Jim Kerr, Manu Koenig, Tom LaHue, Rob Marani, and Marco Romanini; Alternate Directors Rachél Lather and Allyson Violante

Directors absent: Carla Christensen, Zach Friend

Staff present: Ron Duncan, Rosemary Menard, Sierra Ryan, Leslie Strohm

Consultants present: Tim Carson, Rob Swartz, and Laura Partch, Regional Water Management Foundation (RWMF), Georgina King (Montgomery & Associates)

Others: Shelley Flock, Soquel Creek Water District (SQCWD); and at least 1 member of the public

3. Oral Communications Related to Items Not on the Agenda

Becky Steinbruner encouraged the pursuit of managed aquifer recharge, storm water capture, and natural groundwater recharge projects.

Director Baskin noted the conditions this past winter are bearing out what the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) modeling experts have predicted that even in years of normal rainfall there would be storms of greater intensity so that infrastructure would be inadequate even if functional under previous standards.

4. Consent Agenda

4.1 Approve December 15, 2022, Meeting Minutes

4.2 Acknowledge Member Agency Board Appointments

MOTION: Director Baskin; Second, Director Kennedy, to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously, Director Keeley and Alternate Director Lather abstained.

5. General Business

5.1 Conduct Annual Election of Officers

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner supported the appointment of Jon Kennedy, as a Private Well Owner representative, as Chair.

The following Officers were elected: Chair, Jon Kennedy; Vice Chair, David Baskin; and Secretary, Jim Kerr.

5.2 Approve Submittal of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin Water Year 2022 Annual Report to the Department of Water Resources

A presentation on the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin Water Year 2022 Annual Report was provided by Georgina King of Montgomery & Associates, followed by Board discussion.

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner had several questions on the Annual Report.

MOTION: Director Baskin; Second, Director Koenig, to approve the submittal of a transmittal letter and the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin Water Year 2022 Annual Report from the MGA Basin Point of Contact to the Department of Water Resources in accordance with California Code of Regulations, Tit. 23, secs. 353.4 and 356.2. Motion passed unanimously.

5.3 Review Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 and Consider Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24

Staff summarized the categories of information provided in Table 1, Budget Summary including reviewing the Beginning Reserves, Operating Revenue, Operating Expense, and Ending Reserves for the projected totals in FY 2022/23 and the proposed budget for FY 2023/24. Staff reviewed Table 2 and provided information on the Operating Expenses for the major budget categories including: Administration, Legal, Management & Coordination, Monitoring, GSP Reporting, and Outreach and Coordination.

In FY 22/23, the Member Agency contributions totaled \$312,000. Based upon the proposed activities and anticipated grant revenue in FY23/24, the proposed Member Agency contributions total \$100,000. As in prior years, the contribution allocations is 70% from SqCWD and 10% each from the other three Member Agencies.

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner requested public outreach activities.

5.4 Provide Input on Public Remote Participation at Future Meetings

Staff sought input from the Board on providing public remote participation at future Board meetings. The meeting at the Capitola Branch Library was recorded by a video conferencing device by OWL Labs, a technology that could be used to provide public remote access to Board meetings provided there is a reliable, high-speed internet connection.

The Board memo set out the post-COVID Brown Act requirements and the expectation that, absent emergency circumstances, Board members would attend meetings in person. The Board was asked to consider three options for the public at future MGA Board meetings: 1) in-person only, 2) streaming only, or 3) providing for remote participation.

Board members expressed general support for hybrid meetings that allow for public remote participation. Concerns were raised that public participation via Zoom could result in an electronic trail or digital identification, but several options were identified for members of the public who prefer anonymity.

A request was made that staff report back to the Board on the adequacy of the OWL recording in terms of capturing the meeting audio, and the audio by remote participants.

It was noted that Brown Act requirements, both pre-COVID and under Assembly Bill 2449, provide options for Board members to participate remotely, so remote access system could be used by both the public and Board members.

Staff reminded the Board that a lack of an internet connection at the meeting location would eliminate the opportunity for remote access.

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner encouraged providing a hybrid option for public participation.

6. Informational Updates

6.1 Treasurer's Report

No questions or public comments.

6.2 Staff Reports

GSP Implementation Status Update: It is anticipated that Trout Unlimited will begin dry season stream monitoring in April and will start with inspections to make sure the stream gages are still in place. To date there has been limited data on interconnected surface water, and the monitoring of the shallow wells and nearby stream gages will begin to provide this data. The MGA will be entering into sub-agreements with the Member Agencies that own the wells and gages to cover the cost of monitoring.

The next step for the Groundwater Metering Plan, adopted by the Board in December, is to move forward with installing meters for about 40 larger users. Staff are talking with other water agencies to understand issues in the management of their metering programs.

SGWP Grant Update: The work is primarily done; the grant is wrapping up and final reporting will take place in the spring.

SGMI Grant Update: A table of updates was included in the Board packet. Shelley Flock, Water Resources Manager at SqCWD, gave an update on the Component 4 optimization study, a joint project with the City of Santa Cruz with \$1.9 million dollars in grant funding. The focus is on the GSP Group 1 and Group 2 activities and finding ways to provide a greater regional benefit for sustainability and water supply reliability than would be obtained by each agency working in isolation. This work will also focus on implementation, including modeling, and obtaining additional grant funding. The plan is to work with consultants to focus on the implementation and impact of four projects.

The County and the MGA are working together on Component 5, which includes the AEM studies, the data management system, Sustainable Groundwater Management Act coordination, RWMF activities, and the 5-year update as well as the annual reporting.

Other Updates: The City of Santa Cruz is waiting for State Board approval of its petition on water rights, which, once granted, will allow movement of water anywhere within the Mid-County or Santa Margarita basins. The City recently experienced a water emergency and was able to work with SqCWD and other agencies to resolve the problem through the transfer of water. The City appreciated the opportunity and ability of local water agencies to work together.

7. Future Agenda Items

Board member requests were made for an update on the stream monitoring and an update on the groundwater model.

8. Written Communications and Submitted Materials

A member of the public encouraged the MGA to provide remote public access to Board meetings.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Next Board Meeting: June 15, 2023