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SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY
Board of Directors Meeting

December 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
Capitola Branch Library, 2005 Wharf Road, Capitola
Meeting webcast (via Zoom) for remote viewing.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Chair Kennedy.

2. Roll Call

Directors present: (Alternates acting as voting Directors shown in *italics*)
Jon Kennedy (Chair) – Private Well Owner
Carla Christensen (Vice Chair) – Soquel Creek Water District
Jim Kerr (Secretary) – Private Well Owner
Curt Abramson – Private Well Owner
Kimberly De Serpa – County of Santa Cruz
Dr. Bruce Jaffe – Soquel Creek Water District (arrived at 6:05 p.m.)
Susie O'Hara – City of Santa Cruz
Marco Romanini – Central Water District
Doug Engfer – City of Santa Cruz

Alternates present as non-voting observers:
Robert Schultz – Private Well Owner

Member Agency Staff present:
Heidi Luckenbach – City of Santa Cruz
Melanie Mow Schumacher – Soquel Creek Water District
Sierra Ryan – County of Santa Cruz
Ralph Bracamonte – Central Water District
Leslie Strohm, Treasurer – Soquel Creek Water District

Supporting Staff and Consultants:
Tim Carson, Rob Swartz, Sophia Sholtz – Regional Water Management Foundation (RWMF)
Ryan Aston (remote via Zoom) – SCI Consulting Group (SCI)
Cameron Tana (remote via Zoom) – Montgomery & Associates

3. Closed Session

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Becky Steinbruner commented, David Ponza commented.

Chair Kennedy announced that the Board will enter closed session to discuss threatened litigation.

There were no reportable items from closed session.

4. Oral Communications Related to Items Not on the Agenda

Becky Steinbruner commented.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Approve September 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes
5.2 Treasurer's Report for Period Ending November 30, 2025
5.3 2026 Board Meeting Schedule
5.4 Consider Amendment 6 to Contract No. 2020-04 with Montgomery & Associates for Groundwater Model Improvements

No questions or comments on this item.

MOTION: Director Christensen; Second: Director Romanini; to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

6. General Business

6.1 Receive Update on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Compliance Funding Options Assessment

Ryan Aston of SCI Consulting Group presented an update on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Compliance Funding Options Assessment. This update focused on Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) costs and the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin (Basin)'s funding considerations.

He reviewed the MGA's projected revenue needs, including the revenue and operating expenses in the main budget categories. He reviewed cost apportionment and consideration of who benefits from Basin sustainability and SGMA compliance. He presented examples of potential benefits to users and different cost drivers.

A summary of methodologies used by 35 Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) around the state to assess user fees was presented. Of those GSAs, 12 use a volumetric approach, 10 use a hybrid approach (volumetric, acreage, and/or parcels), 9 use acreage, 1 uses irrigated acreage, and none rely solely on parcels. He discussed the basic assumptions used in developing the scenarios presented to the Board. After reviewing basic assumptions and the most common fee methodologies, he presented several conceptual scenarios for Directors to review and discuss.

Corrections needed to the slides were pointed out by Board members and staff. Rob Swartz noted that on slide 12 the Private Non-De Minimis member class had partial metered

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extraction and Private De Minimis had estimated extraction contrary to the slide deck. Director O'Hara also noted that the estimated consumption for Private Non-De Minimis should be 62% and the estimated consumption for Private De Minimis should be 33% contrary to the slide deck. These errors are corrected in the presentations posted to the MGA website.

Ryan Aston will return at the March 2026 Board meeting to present the study findings.

Directors asked questions and discussed Ryan's presentation.

David Ponza commented. Becky Steinbruner commented.

MOTION: Director Romanini; Second: Director O'Hara; to incorporate suggestions from Directors into the final Memorandum to be presented in March. Motion passed unanimously.

6.2 Consider Appointments of Two Private Well Owner Directors and Resolution to Establish the Term Effective Date

Tim Carson provided an overview of the process that the Temporary Committee to Recommend Private Well Owner Representatives took to announce, publicize, and engage potential applicants. He reviewed the process for interviewing, evaluating and selecting applicants. Six applications were received, and all applicants were interviewed. The Committee had no formal recommendations for future solicitations.

The Committee was unanimous in its recommendation of Keith Gudger and Jon Kennedy to fill the two Private Well Owner Director positions and serve four-year terms beginning January 2026.

MOTION: Director Romanini; Second: Director Abramson; to consider the Committee recommendations and approve the appointment of Jon Kennedy and Keith Gudger as Directors to serve on the Board as representatives of Private Well Owners. Motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION: Director Romanini; Second: Director Abramson; to approve the Board Resolution No. 25-01 appointing Private Well Owner Directors to four-year terms effective January 1, 2026.

AYES: Abramson, Christensen, De Serpa, Jaffe, Kennedy, Kerr, O'Hara, Romanini, Alternate Director Engfer.
NOES: None.

Resolution carried.

No questions or comments were received on the item.

6.3 Consider Small Groundwater Sustainability Agencies Cost Sharing Agreement

Rob Swartz presented on the Small Groundwater Sustainability Agencies Coalition (Coalition)'s Cost Sharing Agreement. He has been involved with the Coalition on behalf of both the MGA

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and neighboring Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency in an effort to reduce the costs of SGMA compliance for small GSAs.

Previous costs for the Coalition's staff support were borne by the Sonoma Valley Water Agency. Beginning in 2026 they will no longer be able to subsidize those costs, and the Coalition is pursuing a cost sharing agreement amongst the 11 to 13 agencies anticipated to participate. The cost to the MGA for the remainder of this Fiscal Year (FY) will be $2,400 and the cost in subsequent years is estimated to be $4,800.

Rob Swartz highlighted Coalition successes: recent legislation has identified small GSAs as a priority for Proposition 4 funding, and discussions with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) surrounding reporting requirements are making headway. One of the Coalition's goals is to reduce the number of hard-copy report submissions in favor of data submissions that contain the same information but require less staff time to prepare. DWR has stated that they intend to phase out mandatory hard-copy reports in favor of shorter data uploads where possible.

Becky Steinbruner commented.

MOTION: Director Jaffe; Second: Director Kerr; to approve the small Groundwater Sustainability Agencies cost sharing Agreement and authorize the Soquel Creek Water District General Manager to execute the Agreement on behalf of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Informational Updates

7.1 Presentation on the use of Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) Surveys in the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin Groundwater Sustainability Planning

Cameron Tana of Montgomery & Associates presented on the use of AEM geophysical survey data to assess the distribution of saltwater and fresh water along the coastline of the Basin. He covered the following topics: Sustainable Management Criteria for seawater intrusion; sustainability status for seawater intrusion; use of 2017 and 2022 offshore AEM data; a summary of comparison of 2017 and 2022 AEM data in Seascape area; and, induction logging as an alternative geophysical method for seawater intrusion.

Cameron Tana's presentation can be found in the Agenda Packet for review.

Becky Steinbruner commented.

7.2 Staff Reports

- GSP Implementation Status Update

The GSP Implementation Status Update table can be found in the Agenda Packet for review.

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No questions or comments were received on the item.

- SGMI Grant Update

The SGMI Grant Update can be found in the Agenda Packet for review.

Tim Carson informed the Board that one project has been completed and the four other projects are close to completing the grant funded work. A grant schedule extension was approved by DWR to allow for additional time to wrap up the grant funded work in 2026.

No questions or comments were received on the item.

- Other

Tim Carson informed the Board that a new MGA website was in the final stages of the process.

Chair Kennedy thanked Curt Abramson for his service to the Board.

Chair Kennedy congratulated Keith Gudger on his appointment to the Board.

8. Future Agenda Items

None.

9. Written Communications and Submitted Materials

Written comments can be found at the MGA website.

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Next Board Meeting: March 19, 2026

SUBMITTED BY:

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Sophia Sholtz
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Sophia Sholtz
Regional Water Management Foundation

DocuSigned by:
Jim Kerr
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Jim Kerr, Secretary
Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency