

# Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday, February 26, 2024 | Meeting Summary

Contact: Andy Rodgers, Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Administrator  
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## Welcome and Call to Order

Andy Rodgers, Administrator, opened the meeting at 3:03 p.m. and Bob Anderson, Chair, welcomed the members. Andy Rodgers asked if the current meeting time works for everyone or if they would like to see a change. The members said they are content with the current dates and time.

## General Public Comments

Michael Hilber – resides outside the city limits of Santa Rosa. “I object to the recent newsletters. Stick to the facts including dates and times, etc. The February 24 issue covers Sebastian Bertsch, a consultant who helps clients with collection of rainwater for growing marijuana. I don’t need to hear this, and I also don’t want money or staff time spent on this.”

## Agenda Review, Approval of Previous Meeting Summary

*Objective: Confirm agenda and approve September 11, 2023 meeting summary.*

Andy Rodgers provided an overview of the meeting agenda. No changes were requested to the previous meeting summary; it will be posted as written. No public comment.

## Advisory Committee Meeting Planning in 2024

*Objective: Share and discuss draft meeting plan for Advisory Committee in 2024*

Andy Rodgers gave an overview of the plans for meeting topics in 2024. The goal of the Advisory Committee in 2024 is to provide stakeholder feedback on the project and management actions that are funded under the grant, including: Water Use Efficiency Assessment; Stormwater Capture and Recharge Planning; Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) planning; Policy and Programs assessments; and Voluntary Monitoring / Metering.

## Questions/Comments

Rue Furch – I met a gentleman a few days ago who is interested in maximizing recharge on his property but doesn’t know who to contact. I will give him GSA contact details. I went to the CA Water Law Symposium this past weekend and there was much discussion of SGMA.

Peter Martin – It would be good to hear about other basins throughout the state and their progress, state intervention, etc.

No public comment.

## Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Annual Report

*Objective: Provide overview of GSP Annual Report*

Marcus Trotta provided highlights of the 2023 Annual Report. He asked that AC members review the draft document and provide any input to him by March 8. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has indicated that they finished reviewing Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) and will now spend more time reviewing Annual Reports and providing feedback.

2023 experienced over 45 inches of rain compared with our long-term average of 33.1 inches. It was the first year of above average rainfall following three consecutive years of below average rainfall. Groundwater levels are similar or higher in Water year 2023 compared with 2022 throughout much of the subbasin in both aquifer systems. There were no minimum threshold exceedances of groundwater levels or storage, depletion of interconnected surface water, degradation of water quality or land surface subsidence. The total annual groundwater extraction estimated for 2020 through 2023 has remained within the estimated sustainable yield for the Subbasin of 23,900 acre-feet.

### Questions/Comments

Martin – Does the Board need to approve the Annual Report?

Trotta – We provide the Board with it as an informational item and give them an opportunity to provide input.

Wayne Haydon – What are the white bars on the Water Year 2023 chart?

Trotta – They represent an average rain year. I will add it to the chart key.

Furch – One of the things that DWR representatives on the GSA panel at the Water Law Symposium noted, is that the 2015 water year isn't necessarily a good baseline. Does it factor into these rolling averages?

Trotta – No, the way we established sustainable management criteria is that we factored in all available groundwater data but did not use a specific year. SGMA says the GSA is not required to address undesirable results that occurred before 2015.

Matt O'Connor – What is the tannish color on the Shallow aquifer monitoring map? Does that represent -1 to 1 or -1 to -5.

Trotta – It is in the positive 1-5. It is an issue of background color. We can correct that.

Furch – How does this compare with what the USGS says about our loss trend longer term? Is this an improvement?

Trotta – The USGS calculated longer term, this is just for one year. Year to year fluctuations can vary dramatically. This would improve the long-term average.

Anderson – You said more information is coming on some wells missing data, but it isn't in the Annual Report.

Trotta – We will add data description of the wells which are inaccessible and steps the GSA is taking to resume or replace the wells.

Anderson – Whose wells, are they? Do we just have to ask the owners for permission?

Trotta – They are generally private wells that DWR has monitored over the years. DWR went through a process of weeding out wells that don't have construction information, or agreements with property owners and stopped monitoring those wells. DWR has additional capacity to monitor more wells; this would reduce monitoring costs for the GSA.

O'Connor – So, the three wells that are no longer monitored by DWR are creating data gaps?

Trotta – Yes, our first preference would be to work with the three well owners and get the wells back online. There is a long period of history with the wells.

David Long – Do you track the amount of pumping in Rohnert Park?

Trotta – Rohnert Park has metered data; it is included in the Annual Report. Reporting is broken down by well in their quarterly reports.

Furch – Isn't the area east of Rohnert Park a good opportunity for monitoring?

Trotta – Yes, it is an area where recharge projects could be done.

Soiland – I would expect the storage changes in the deep and shallow aquifers to be a bit more parallel.

Trotta – It is mainly due to pumping change patterns. It is the same time frame when Rohnert Park moved away from groundwater pumping to surface water supply. There has also been an increase in recycled water availability to agriculture.

Anderson – Have you compared data prior to 2018?

Trotta – We went back to 2012. Between 2012 and 2018, there is some overlap. When we do the five-year GSP update there will be additional overlap; we can do the comparison again.

Furch – It takes longer to get water into the deep aquifer than the shallow aquifer. It seems like there should be an offset delaying what happens in each of the aquifers.

Trotta – The direct recharge of a deep aquifer takes longer but because it is confined, we see bigger changes due to the pressurized nature of the aquifer.

Furch – With a significant change in the shallow aquifer, is there something to indicate an offset to show a greater recovery later, or is it so much later that it does not show here?

Trotta – With a deep aquifer system, it is an effect of climate each year and pumping increases or decreases. Scales of each are very different and volume of water in the shallow aquifer is much lower.

Anderson – How big is the bank account? 11,630 and 350 are numbers relative to something, what is the something?

Trotta – The real indicator for sustainability long-term is the long-term change in storage.

Anderson – Is it better if you use water from the deep aquifer?

Trotta – The volume of total storage is much bigger in the shallow aquifer than the deep aquifer.

Deicke – When I looked at the Annual Report on water quality, it seems to indicate there are wells with exceedances.

Trotta – The way the sustainable management criteria are established is that minimum thresholds are calculated on the number of wells exceeding regulatory thresholds. If the total number increases in any year, there are exceedances.

Deicke – So, we are concerned with the number of wells with exceedances rather than the exceedance at a particular well?

Trotta – Correct. If we would see changes in multiple areas, we would want to pay attention.

Furch – Do we know why the 'turf, golf course and schools' usage has doubled from 2020 to 2023?

Bannister – It is most likely because of a change of methodology in calculation. But we can check that.

Shirley Johnson – What is the baseline of groundwater storage in acre-feet in the basin?

Trotta – Some estimates are four million acre-feet; that includes groundwater that is 1,000 feet deep possibly with water quality issues. 23,900 acre-feet can be pumped on an annual basis without causing undesirable results.

Furch – We are looking for trendlines.

Trotta – SGMA defines sustainability as metrics that don't cause undesirable results to users.

Haydon – One of the difficulties is that the maps look so detailed, is that an artifact of the modeling? It is interesting that there is such a similar pattern between the shallow and the deep aquifers.

Furch – Are there any aquifers where water quality is poor and can't be used?

Trotta – There certainly are areas in the subbasin impacted by water quality. There are certain areas where water quality isn't suitable for drinking water. Some impacts are caused by land use.

Furch – How do you quantify the amount of water in the areas of the aquifer, where we can't use the water?

Trotta – That is more area specific than this mapping. We have maps of known contamination sites in the GSP. There hasn't been an attempt to quantify the amount of water impacted by water quality.

Furch – Will it be important to do so at some point?

Trotta – It would be extremely challenging.

Martin – You can always go on GeoTracker; the information is available. The GSA's are responsible for monitoring, not fixing, water quality.

Anderson – Will the Montgomery & Associates report on interconnected surface water and groundwater dependent ecosystems be submitted as part of the Annual Report?

Trotta – No, it will not be included.

Martin – Should we be focusing on anything particular in the updated DWR guidance document?

Trotta – The only thing we added was some additional water quality data.

Deicke – Do we know when the contract ends of recycled water going to the geysers? That is a potential water supply source for us.

Martin – In 2037. Even by maximizing the contract, it is an ongoing challenge. We have a list of customers interested in recycled water. We will continue to study the mix; it seems a waste to discharge.

Deicke – I understand they made improvements to their process. Hopefully, it is an area we can explore.

Cargay – Windsor is looking at taking over wastewater from the airport area – we are looking at expanding recycled water into gray areas. It will take a few years.

No public comment.

## Overview of Grant Scopes & Outreach and for Filling Data Gaps

*Objective: Receive Advisory Committee feedback grant scopes and planned outreach, and for filling data gaps*

Marcus Trotta provided an overview of planning and implementation of scopes of work on projects including Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) planning and pilot projects, stormwater capture and recharge studies, and recycled water availability for offsetting groundwater use. Trotta also gave an update on planning and implementation of demand management programs: Voluntary Water-Use Efficiency Program; Voluntary Metering Program; and Groundwater-Level Monitoring Data Gaps. Staff are looking to re-form the

interconnected surface water/groundwater dependent eco systems workgroup in a few months to help provide input. More information will be available at the May Advisory Committee meeting.

### *Questions/Comments*

Deicke – On Aquifer Storage and Recovery, what does a pilot study look like? Are these monitoring or water supply wells?

Trotta – We are in the process of renovating some of Sonoma Water’s wells. While doing that, we are adding flow control valves and other features that are necessary to reverse the flow.

Soiland – How do you work with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation that is talking about rerouting Mark West Creek back to the way it was in the 1930’s?

Trotta – I do not know enough about their proposed plans. We would want to look at any proposed plan that impacts groundwater.

Soiland – How do you find out what the agencies are saying about the impacts of what you are doing?

Deicke – We had an Open House on the restoration plan. It is a small section of the river; it will benefit groundwater recharge, surface water flow, and recharge. Sonoma Water is involved in the project. I have the restoration plan; it will happen over many years, there is a long way to go.

Trotta – The GSA is a rather new agency. We have been making headway to being included in different projects throughout the county; it is hard to capture as we are not involved in all the projects.

Deicke – Has Sonoma County required metering for any of the permitting?

Trotta – Yes, for all wells pumping over two acre-feet a year.

Deicke – One comment that jumped out at me was on a table on page 7.

Trotta – Was it a comment from one of the resource agencies?

Deicke – National Marine Fisheries Service.

Trotta – Those were comments included in the GSP. Montgomery & Associates reviewed the comments and addressed them.

Furch – Did they say there is a problem, or did they say, avoid the problem?

Deicke – The comment was based on refinement of the sustainable management criteria.

Trotta – They submitted comments on every GSP in the state.

### *Public Questions/Comments*

Michael Hilber – Do you have an estimate of how much rain makes it into the ground instead of running off?

Furch – The amount of rain that falls some years, not much gets in. This year, by virtue of time in between the rains, more went into the ground without runoff. It makes a huge difference of how the rain comes down rather than the amount of rain.

Trotta – Our best estimates could give long term information. There is probably some information that could be pulled from our modelling work. It is variable throughout the basin.

Furch – It is a good question. Outreach on this would be helpful.

### *GSP Implementation Updates*

*Objective: Provide Advisory Committee with progress updates on GSP Implementation*

Marcus Trotta provided an update on general statewide SGMA updates.

### Questions/Comments

Deicke – Can we get the report forwarded to us?

Trotta – Yes, we will do that.

Haydon – You have a map of wells being permitted in 2022-2023. Where would monitoring wells be?

Trotta – We have excluded monitoring wells from the list. Categories are public supply wells, etc.

No public comment.

### GSA Operational Updates

*Objective: Provide progress updates on GSA administration and operations*

Andy Rodgers provided an update on the GSP Implementation contracts. He mentioned the GSA long-term funding workgroup that includes two representatives from each basin. At the ad hoc meeting in December, it was generally agreed that increased efficiencies on consolidations are a good idea in theory, but a majority of Board members do not see a consolidation path forward at this time. We do a lot of coordination between the basins, share staff and consultants, and utilize the same legal counsel, etc. that gives cost savings. The ad hoc will continue to meet and revisit the topic.

Indigo Bannister gave an update on the Fee Study. The original fee study didn't include an adjustment for inflation. She said that they aren't looking at rehashing the methodology of the original fee study. Sonoma Valley and Petaluma Valley fees will be tied with Santa Rosa Plain by means of a county contribution. Bannister provided a tentative timeline for the updated study.

### Questions/Comments

Deicke – How does the Request for Proposals (RFP) process work, does it go through the GSA?

Rodgers – Yes, last summer we had an RFP process for technical and outreach services; we considered applicants in September.

Bannister – To be precise, it was a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) rather than a Request for Proposals.

Rodgers – We are in the proposal review phase now.

Anderson – What is the pilot? 15% of parcels? I have questions about what changes in the watershed.

Trotta – The money in the budget is for the consultants to conduct the assessment of the existing water use in the basin and recommend efficiencies and the pilot program. The funding for the incentives and water saving devices is separate.

Bannister – The number of parcels or acre-feet that will be saved will come through the development of the workplan that will be developed in the next 9-12 months.

Trotta – Costs and types of incentives would affect the number of parcels.

Furch – So, this is an actual implementation?

Trotta – It is a little of both. The Water Use Efficiency contract is to implement the pilot program. The second phase is rolling out the incentives to groundwater users in the basin.

Soiland – Groundwater use changes are dependent on the water year. How will you build that into the fee?

Bannister – The original amount was not large enough to account for the changes.

Trotta – The rate and fee structure uses a five-year structure to report usage.

Deicke – I don't see how you incorporated the grant funds into the revenue.

Bannister – Now that we have actual numbers rather than estimates, we can incorporate real data. SRP AC Mtg Summary 02.26.24 /sp

Rodgers – The grant funds don't pay for operations including staff, SGMA compliance, etc.

O'Connor – So the grant funds help improve the quality of the science of the Plan.

Furch – Would we be able to say to rate payers that there is anything correlated to use? If we charge everyone \$25, that would be a flat fee. If we charge by usage type, there is a correlation to amount of use and the charge.

Rodgers – Through the GUIDE process, parcel specific conversations can happen. If folks present data that indicates a use change, etc., we could correct it and the fee would change.

Deike – On Slide 36, 'incorporate grant awards' is confusing.

Rodgers – There is a cost to administer grants.

Deicke – I would add something about administering grants.

Anderson – Will this be a five-year look see or just get us until the end of the five-year update?

Bannister – Right now, we are looking to get to the end of the five-year update.

Anderson – Will you bring this back to the May meeting?

Bannister – Yes.

Furch – Over the next five years, I guess we will continue looking for grants. Will it change what we can do in terms of implementation, or will it change the fee structure?

Rodgers – It depends on the grants. We expect to go after other grants that are on the smaller scale. I don't know if other grants this large will be available.

Furch – Thinking about new revenue streams, could well users become sources for more data if they have the right equipment?

Rodgers – I think we will see that.

No public comment.

## Meeting Wrap Up and Closing

Bob Anderson reminded the members to send Annual Report feedback to Marcus Trotta by March 8. Indigo

Bannister said a reminder would be sent out along with the interconnected surface water documents.

Andy Rodgers thanked everyone for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

The next Board meeting will take place Thursday, March 14, 1:00 – 3:30 pm and the next Advisory Committee will be Monday, May 13, 2024 from 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm.

## Attendees:

### Advisory Committee Members (present)

Agricultural representative, Bob Anderson

Agricultural representative, David Long

Business representative, Arthur Deicke

City of Santa Rosa appointee, Peter Martin

Environmental representative, Shirley Johnson

Environmental representative, Rue Furch

Gold Ridge RCD appointee, Matt O'Connor (arrived 3:14 p.m.)

Rural Residential representative, Marlene Soiland

Sonoma RCD appointee, Wayne Haydon

Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria representative, Maureen Geary

Town of Windsor appointee, Elizabeth Cargay

[Advisory Committee Members \(absent and/or excused\)](#)

City of Cotati, Craig Scott

City of Rohnert Park, Justin Brandt

City of Sebastopol, Dante Del Prete

County of Sonoma, Mark Grismer

Independent Water Systems, Sarah Davis

Rural Residential representative, David Noren

[Staff/Presenters](#)

Andy Rodgers, GSA Administrator

Marcus Trotta, Plan Manager

Indigo Bannister, GSA staff

Pamela van Halsema, Outreach

Simone Peters, GSA staff

[Other Attendees](#)

Claire Nordlie, City of Santa Rosa

Chris Kennedy, Member of Public

Michael Hilber, Member of Public

*Meeting summary produced by Simone Peters, GSA staff*