

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Board Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2021 | 1:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom Meeting
www.santarosaplaingroundwater.org

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hopkins called the meeting to order at 1.00 p.m. **Directors Coursey, Jacobs, Harvey, Hopkins, Nagle, Salmon, Schwedhelm, Slayter, Stafford and Jackie Elward** (City of Rohnert Park Alternate Director) were present. **Director Dutton** was absent. Also, in attendance at the meeting, were Andy Rodgers, Administrator; Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager; Marcus Trotta, Technical staff; Ann DuBay, Outreach; Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach staff; and Simone Peters, Administrative Aide (recording meeting minutes); Jerry Bradshaw, Arcelia Herrera and Valerie Flores, SCI; Brett Bradford and Andrea Lifto, Pisenti & Brinker; Bob Anderson; Rue Furch; Peter Martin; Elizabeth Cargay, and Mary-Grace Pawson – all SRP Advisory Committee members; Colin Close, City of Santa Rosa; Brittany Jensen; Gold Ridge RCD; and Joe Plaughter (Rep. Thompson).

Ann DuBay swore in six directors that had served as Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Board members for four years: **Directors Harvey, Hopkins; Jacobs; Nagle; Schwedhelm and Stafford.**

2. Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board

None.

3. Consent Calendar

- a. **Approve Minutes of January 28, 2021 Board Meeting**
- b. **Approve Year-To-Date Financial Report**

No public comment.

Director Harvey moved to approve the Consent Calendar as presented, **Director Stafford** seconded. Motion passed **9-0-0 (Director Dutton absent).**

Vote Roll Call

Director Harvey – aye, **Director Stafford** – aye, **Director Slayter** – aye, **Director Dutton** – absent, **Director Jacobs** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye, **Director Salmon** – aye, **Director Schwedhelm** – aye, **Director Coursey** - aye

Director Jacobs – The Independent Water Supplier Group met in January and will be meeting at least once every other month going forward for chapter reviews. He welcomed anyone who would like to join the meetings to attend. Meeting information is posted on the Santa Rosa Plain website.

No public comment.

4. Directors/Subcommittee Report

None.

5. Advisory Committee Report

Bob Anderson confirmed that since the last Board meeting, the Advisory Committee has met twice. He said that we are entering a new phase of reviewing Groundwater Sustainability Plan text. So far, Sections 1 and 2 have been reviewed. We are now awaiting Section 3: Basin Setting. At this past Monday's meeting, we went through early results of the 50-year Water Budget. We have another meeting come up on March 29.

Rue Furch added that staff is phenomenal working to deadlines! She also mentioned there is lots of public outreach happening.

Questions/Comments

Director Nagle – Are there any significant concerns by the Advisory Committee about the 50-year Water Budget?

Furch – The discussion is back and forth regarding worst-worst case scenario versus worst-case scenario, versus “what we can imagine” scenario. The projections are the most important discussion at this point as well as the tipping point for each criteria.

Anderson – The next phase will look at Projects and Actions that are needed to show sustainability.

No public comment.

6. Information items

a. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Updates

Jay Jasperse gave a quick update and status report on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. He mentioned a few shifts in the 2021 schedule. Section 3.0 Basin setting will be ready by the end of March. Section 4.0 Sustainable Management Criteria, and Section 5.0 Monitoring Program, will be available for review by the Advisory Committee in May, rather than April. Jasperse said the April 8 Board meeting will be a “full content” meeting. He also echoed praise for the large amount of work being done by Marcus Trotta and his technical team.

i. Projected Baseline Water Budget

Marcus Trotta provided a more detailed view of the Water Budget including next steps.

Questions/Comments

Director Coursey – I am interested in the increase in the ag projected pumping due to a variety of crops. What crops do you expect to drive the increase over time?

Trotta – We looked at it on a crop basis, I believe vineyards was the main increase (18%) and truck crops are expected to increase. Pasture is expected to decrease. Because of an expected increase in temperature, and number of vineyards, water use for irrigation is expected to increase.

Director Coursey – Would you include any projection about cannabis crop?

Trotta – We haven't included cannabis in the initial Groundwater Sustainability Plan because there is a lot of uncertainty in water use and amount of future growth. We are planning to include the amount of cannabis acreage in the current Groundwater Sustainability Plan and track cannabis acreage during implementation of the plan, so that we can consider incorporating into future water budget updates.

Director Schwedhelm – Where would we find the slide show to help us with talking points?

Trotta – We will be posting it. There is a more comprehensive slide show that was included in the March 8 Advisory Committee meeting packet, it is available online.

Director Nagle – On the “In/Out” slide, it shows that during dry years there is less groundwater evapo-transpiration. Is that because there is less water in the ground?

Trotta – Yes, because, groundwater levels will be lowered in dry years.

Director Nagle – It is counter-intuitive. You would think that during high temperatures and low humidity situations, the ground would produce more evapo-transpiration. It is a management response to the climate conditions in those years, correct?

Trotta – Correct.

Director Nagle – In the slide using RCP 8.5, you were saying that after 2040 there will be a drop off in groundwater storage?

Trotta – Yes, it really happens after 2050/2055 or so. SGMA has two timeframes for the implementation phase: 20 years (2042) to achieve sustainability and avoid undesirable results, and the following 30 years to maintain the sustainable conditions.

Director Nagle – I would like to get some background on this, maybe we can do this offline. NOAA's Western Drought presentation shows a very dry period now.

Trotta – The important thing is to think about the probability/variability of things happening, the projected timing will be different.

Director Nagle – So the probabilities of dry/wet periods will occur in the timeframe but when exactly, is not known?

Jasperse – Yes, don't pay too much attention to the timing. Each scenario will be wrong. It is important to look at the overall variability in the models.

Director Harvey – On the first set of graphs including rural residential and ag, is the rural domestic going up because of the growth in the number of wells because of property development, rather than people using more?

Trotta – Correct. We use the 0.5% annual growth throughout the period. It doesn't account for future changes or water use practices.

Director Harvey – So growth in this model means additional number of wells?

Trotta – Yes, additional developed residential units in the unincorporated area. We used the County's data base and applied the new units at that growth rate.

Director Harvey – On the ag slide – that data seems to move up/down a lot. Does that have to do with temperature and amount of rainfall?

Trotta – Yes.

Director Harvey – It would be very helpful to have the presentation.

ii. Groundwater Level (GWL) Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) Update

Marcus Trotta gave an update on the status of where we are with Minimum Thresholds and Measurable Objectives for Chronic Lowering of Groundwater Levels. He said the aim was to bring a complete proposal for direction at the April 8 Board meeting.

iii. Groundwater Storage (GWS) Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) intro

Marcus Trotta provided a high-level overview of the Groundwater Storage SMC. This Sustainable Management Criteria is closely linked to Groundwater Levels SMC and the recommended approach is to use groundwater levels as metric. This SMC needs to be developed and reported for the entire Subbasin, not individual aquifers. The goal is to pump within the sustainable yield and have “zero long-term change in storage once sustainability is reached”. This SMC will be brought to the April 8 Board meeting for possible direction.

Questions/Comments

Director Jacobs – Wilson Grove Highland – Some of the IWS folks have concerns. I would assume some of the comments related to improving monitoring and truing of the model are to better understand the recharge. What if anything should we be sharing with the IWS members?

Trotta – It has come up quite a bit at the Advisory Committee meetings. The Western boundary is an important source of inflow to the Santa Rosa Plain Basin and Wilson Grove provides a significant amount of recharge to the Basin. As part of our overall monitoring network, we are looking for wells along the boundary as well as the other side of the boundary that we can continue to track and monitor. There are CASGEM wells that are monitored in the Wilson Grove. We think it would be prudent to evaluate groundwater-level data from the wells along the basin boundary.

Director Harvey – On the groundwater level and differences between percentages and number of years – what would the upsides/downsides of the different methods be?

Trotta – We are trying to balance between being too conservative and going into a condition of an undesirable condition. One of the challenges is if we are in a dry period it is hard to determine whether the declines are more related to climate or increased pumping. Sometimes having a larger timeframe may help constrain and balance it. Some people feel a longer timeframe may be more appropriate to ascertain if the groundwater declines are chronic in nature, meaning they continue to decline without recovering in wet years. In addition to looking just at conditions where we have an undesirable result, we may want to look at surrounding land uses, and use the GUIDE program to communicate with well owners if there are issues.

Director Nagle – Thinking of this basin as a reservoir, we are using the level of the groundwater as a proxy for an estimate of groundwater volume in the basin, correct?

Trotta – The *change* in storage is what SGMA is interested in. The total amount of groundwater storage isn't a very useful metric. It is more important to identify the usable groundwater in storage

which is the amount of storage before you start seeing the impacts, we are defining with the sustainability metrics.

No public comment.

b. Rural Residential Outreach Update

The project is being conducted jointly with the other two Sonoma County GSAs. Major contract tasks include research (survey and focus groups); development and implementation of an engagement campaign; and funding analysis. Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach staff, introduced SCI Consulting Group who conducted the Rural Residential Outreach survey.

Jerry Bradshaw, SCI Consulting Group gave a project overview and presented the results of the survey. 5404 surveys were mailed to well owners, 1165 surveys were returned, representing a return rate of 22%. Survey recipients were allowed the option to provide comments; 664 comments were made (many negative – which is common). 160 participants (15%) offered to participate in upcoming focus groups. Valerie Flores, SCI provided an overview of the comments.

The survey will be followed by virtual focus groups – there will be five groups of about 10 people each, including one for each basin, and two across the basins (ag and one other specialty group).

Questions/Comments

Director Harvey – I have reached out to staff. I continue to be concerned about the focus groups. We had a large return rate but there is only one focus group of 10 people; I don't feel it will be a good representation for Santa Rosa Plain. I would like to have at least two focus groups for Santa Rosa Plain.

Director Hopkins – I agree that one small group wouldn't be representative of the entire basin.

Director Stafford – It seems our basin should have a bigger representation; I agree with **Director Harvey**.

Director Schwedhelm – I agree, if that many people are willing to engage, let's take advantage of it.

Director Jacobs – Maybe there is some way for the folks we don't chose, to provide feedback – such as a Community meeting.

There is strong interest from the Board to reach more folks in the second round of engagement.

No public comment.

c. Groundwater User Information Data Exchange (GUIDE) Program Update

Andy Rodgers said the program will launch the week of March 22 with a press release and notification mailers. Staff is preparing materials for the Board, Advisory Committee, and outreach staff in anticipation of questions from the community.

No public comment.

7. Action Items

a. Election of Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Agency) Officers

The Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JPA) for the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (at 6.04) requires the Board of Directors (Board) elect officers annually for a term of two years commencing July 1. The officers that must be elected include: Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson (JPA at 6.03). At the April 2020 Board meeting, the Board re-elected Director Lynda Hopkins as Santa Rosa Plain GSA Chairperson and Director Tom Schwedhelm as Vice-Chairperson for a term beginning July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022. Director Hopkins has served as Board Chairperson since the GSA was formed in 2017. She recently indicated a willingness to continue serving as a GSA Director but would like to open the opportunity for other Board members to serve as Chairperson until June 30, 2022. Director Schwedhelm indicated a willingness to continue serving as Vice-Chairperson for the remainder of his current term or serve as Chairperson, should the Board support a transition. Staff recommends the Board of Directors accepts nominations and elects a Chair and Vice-Chair to serve from March 11, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

Director Hopkins – Thank you for letting me serve, I appreciate the dedication of all the Board members. I am looking forward to handing over the virtual gavel.

Director Stafford – Thank you **Director Hopkins** for everything you have done over the last four years. I would like to nominate **Director Schwedhelm** as Chair, to give you a break from the position.

Director Jacobs – Thank you for your leadership. You have done a great job on this Board. Well done!

Director Stafford moved to approve **Director Schwedhelm** as the new Chair, **Director Harvey** seconded the motion, and thanked **Director Hopkins** for her service.

Motion passed **9-0-0**. (**Director Dutton** absent).

Vote Roll Call

Director Harvey – aye, **Director Stafford** – aye, **Director Slayter** – aye, **Director Dutton** – absent, **Director Jacobs** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye **Director Salmon** – aye **Director Schwedhelm** – aye, **Director Coursey** – aye

Director Hopkins handed over the virtual gavel to **Director Schwedhelm**. **Director Schwedhelm** thanked **Director Hopkins** and said her leadership had been instrumental to get where the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Agency is today.

Director Stafford – I think **Director Harvey** would be a great Vice-Chair. **Director Stafford** made a motion to approve **Director Harvey** as the new Vice-Chair, **Director Nagle** seconded. Motion passed **9-0-0**. (**Director Dutton** absent).

Vote Roll Call

Director Harvey – aye, **Director Stafford** – aye, **Director Slayter** – aye, **Director Dutton** – absent, **Director Jacobs** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye **Director Salmon** – aye **Director Schwedhelm** –aye, **Director Coursey** – aye

Director Coursey – Thank you to former **Chair Hopkins** and congratulations to new **Chair Schwedhelm**.

No public comment.

b. Fiscal Year 2019-20 Audit. Receive report from auditor and consider adoption of audit.

Andrea Lifto, Pisenti & Brinker, confirmed that the audit has been completed. She provided an overview of the audit noting that in their opinion, the financial statements are materially accurate, and there are no significant deficiencies in internal controls.

Director Harvey moved to receive and accept the audit for Fiscal Year 19-20 as written, **Director Stafford** seconded.

Motion passed **9-0-0**. (**Director Dutton** absent).

Vote Roll Call

Director Harvey – aye, **Director Stafford** – aye, **Director Slayter** – aye, **Director Dutton** – absent, **Director Jacobs** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye **Director Salmon** – aye, **Director Schwedhelm** –aye, **Director Coursey** – aye

No public comment.

c. Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget Adjustment. Consider Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget Adjustment for Professional Services.

Andy Rodgers said that as a result of the audit, there were a few changes requested by the County of Sonoma, the GSA's bank. Invoices totaling \$36,212 were booked in FY 2020-21 with the County, and the purpose of the budget adjustment is to book them in FY 2019-20.

Director Harvey moved to approve the budget adjustment as requested, **Director Stafford** seconded. Motion passed **7-0-0**. (**Directors Dutton, Coursey, Salmon** absent).

Vote Roll Call

Director Harvey – aye, **Director Stafford** – aye, **Director Slayter** – aye, **Director Dutton** – absent, **Director Jacobs** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye **Director Salmon** – absent, **Director Schwedhelm** –aye, **Director Coursey** – absent

8. Administrator, Plan Manager and Legal Counsel Report

Andy Rodgers reminded the Board members, if they haven't already done so, Form 700 should be completed and submitted before April 1. He also said the Fee Study will be updated for Santa Rosa Plain so a Request for Quote (RFQ) will be done. We would like a representative from this Board to participate / work with staff to review proposals and make a selection. **Director Nagle** volunteered to be the representative for Santa Rosa Plain.

Jay Jasperse reported on three things: 1) DWR today released their draft Bulletin 118 Update 2020. Bulletin 118 is the State's compendium of groundwater; comments are accepted through April 26. A Workshop will be held on March 30; 2) We received an email from DWR confirming they are precluded from changing the Groundwater Sustainability Plan deadline as it is in the statute; and 3) Mike Martini, SAVE, has been before the Board to discuss the farm plan. We had a meeting with SAVE, and then a smaller meeting to look at more technical aspects. We are working with them on draft language that will have a description of an initial coordination project. There is progress being made on that front; you will see progress on it in Projects and Actions.

Director Jacobs asked if there were any changes to basin prioritization in Sonoma County.

Jasperse – From my look at it, I don't see anything to that effect.

No Legal Counsel report.

No Public Comment.

9. Adjournment

Newly appointed **Chair Schwedhelm** thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.