

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Advisory Committee Meeting Meeting Summary

Date/time: Monday, May 10, 2021; 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: Zoom

Contact: Andy Rodgers, Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Administrator

Email: arodgers@westyost.com | Phone: 707.508.3661

Next meeting: Monday, July 12, 2021 | 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Call to Order

Sam Magill, Facilitator, Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program, opened the meeting at 3:02 p.m. and welcomed the group. Magill then briefly reviewed meeting protocol, conducted roll call, and ran through the day's agenda.

General Public Comments

None.

Agenda and 2021 Meeting Schedule Reviews

Andy Rodgers asked that the June 14 date continue to be held for a potential Advisory Committee meeting. He said we are roughly three weeks behind where we were hoping to be with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (as compared to original timeline). We are, however, still on track for the Advisory Committee to review the Plan in July and for public review of the draft in September.

Ann DuBay said the Santa Rosa Plain Community Meeting will take place Wednesday, May 19 at 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Details can be found at: https://scwa-ca-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IDG3bmViQMinezLYiSTVJQ. She said this Community meeting is a follow-up to the one last summer. Andy Rodgers will cover groundwater sustainability indicators at a high level, and Marcus Trotta will provide a brief overview of groundwater in the basin and then discuss the water budget in detail. A press release will be sent out in a few days and an email will be sent to you to share with your groups.

No comments/questions.

Review Action Items and Approval of March 8 Meeting Summary

Sam Magill asked if any corrections to the previous meeting summary are needed. John Rosenblum sent one small correction by email; no additional corrections were requested at the meeting. Any corrections should be sent to staff by the end of the week so the summary can be posted.

Summary of Preliminary SMC

Objective: Review preliminary SMC for all five sustainability indicators

Marcus Trotta presented the matrix of Sustainable Management Criteria for all five Sustainability Indicators created for Santa Rosa Plain. The matrix includes the Significant and Unreasonable Statement, Minimum Threshold, Measurement, Measurable Objective, Undesirable Result, and interim Milestones for each SMC. Expect to see the matrix included/at the front of Section 4 at the end of May/early June, and that will be your opportunity to comment.

Questions/Comments

Matt O'Connor – At the last meeting we were talking about surface water – groundwater interaction and using modeling scenarios to deal with uncertainties. I wonder if there has been a formal follow-up from the modeling crew and Sonoma Water?

Trotta – We propose laying out the adaptive management plan for improving that SMC over time with data collected during the early years of implementing the GSP. You will see one of the areas of focus of the first five years of the GSP is to improve the model's ability to represent surface water-groundwater interaction.

O'Connor – There were numerous suggestions, I will do a little homework and send you an email to be clear about it. I don't have any problem with how you are proceeding; I am following up to keep the conversation alive.

Project and Management Actions and Scenario Modeling

Objective: Receive feedback on proposed projects and management actions

Marcus Trotta provided an overview of Project and Management Action concepts and phasing for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, an overview of modeling results from baseline scenarios, and an overview of scenario Modeling for Group 1 Project and Management Actions. He also mentioned next steps which include 1) complete and process output from Group 2a scenarios, 2) develop and simulate Group 2b scenarios, and 3) identify and prioritize conceptual projects and management actions for inclusion in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Questions/Comments

John Rosenblum – This brings the complexity to the forefront. Did we finish the conversation on the methodology? I am confused by the deep layer increasing levels in the southern end of the basin. How could that have happened unless you start with the drought baseline? That area showed very large reductions. The issue is the already known problem of the boundary. Why don't we start by expanding the boundary of the analysis? That should happen before all the model scenarios that look only at a limited portion of the impact on GSA members. When I look at the possibility of recharge, there is a limitation imposed by the contract of what needs to be delivered to the geysers. Already in 2019/2020 there were ag operations that couldn't get water from the Laguna subregional area. Why are we looking at actions before appreciating what the baseline is, and knowing there are gaps, especially in the boundaries?

Trotta – Reclaimed water recharge – what we propose simulating is delivering recycled water for irrigation that offsets groundwater use. Your point on the availability of that resource is well taken. This year there are constraints on the amount of water available for irrigation. In the future there may be opportunities for expansion. In terms of the boundary and expansion of the model, I thought we were quite clear in the past, we need to use the model we have for the GSP. We would assess the boundary and we can certainly look to making updates during implementation of the GSP. On the deep-water levels in the southern basin, you can see the projections that have been recovering. That is why the increases in groundwater levels are simulated to continue to some degree.

Rosenblum – I well understand most of what you are saying except the City of Sebastopol and three water companies are GSA members. We have no way of seeing trends and conveying a message to our customers. Who is "we"? I don't see anyone from the City of Sebastopol voicing opinions.

Director Salmon had some questions about the analysis and the boundaries. I don't think staff should say we can't change the boundaries. I appreciate all your work; this is very complex.

Trotta – In terms of analyzing the boundaries of our analysis, that is something we would ultimately bring to the Board if there were recommendations to do that. Also, as a reminder, DWR sets the boundaries for the basin itself and that is our main starting point.

Joe Gaffney – I have a question regarding slide 17, that slide isn't in our packet. I am concerned about the cluster of wells that are north and south of Sebastopol but outside the boundary. Sebastopol relies solely on groundwater unlike other cities, there is no aqueduct connection. You showed data points north and south of the Sebastopol boundaries. Do you have data on those wells or are you making assumptions from the model?

Trotta – I apologize these slides didn't make it into your packet. They will be made available with the other materials. These maps are not showing a reduction in groundwater levels or storage but the distribution of simulated pumping. The amount of pumping within each ten-acre grid cell you are pointing out is about 2 ½ acre-feet on an annual basis. The data we are using to simulate that pumping is a combination of rural residential and ag. The rural residential pumping data comes from the county's data set, and the ag pumping comes from crop use maps.

Gaffney – So you are saying the dots represent grid cells?

Trotta – Correct.

Gaffney – We are particularly concerned about the wells outside the basin boundary.

Wayne Haydon (chat) – What value does the grey depict in the cells?

Andy Rich – Less than 1 acre-foot.

John Rosenblum (chat) – Joe Gaffney's question reveals the problem of ignoring Sebastopol's recharge area - there are many more wells to the west that will draw more (dark blue) MUCH more water.

Wayne Haydon (chat) – Is there a 2020 version? Just looking to compare now to 2040.

Rich – There could be, we have one produced for 2025.

Magill – Is that a heavy lift to put together?

Rich – Medium lift.

Public Comment

Colin Close (chat) – Didn't the Board agree on the boundary prior to submittal of the boundary change to DWR?

Introduction to GSP Implementation Plan

Objective: Provide overview of GSP implementation plan contents, including identified data gaps and recommendations for addressing during GSP implementation.

Marcus Trotta gave an introduction of implementation plan contents:

1. GSA Administration (Board/AC meetings, Finance, Operational, and Legal support)
2. Communication and Engagement (maintain/improve website and GUIDE interface, roll-out and maintain groundwater data dashboard, community meetings, focused stakeholder group briefings, and engagement and coordination with other agencies and regional partnerships)

3. Routine Monitoring, Data Evaluation and Annual Reporting (groundwater level and quality monitoring, subsidence monitoring, streamflow measurements and groundwater storage calculations)
4. Addressing Data Gaps (such as amounts and locations of groundwater pumping, role of faults with and along the boundaries of the subbasin, basin boundary characteristics, interconnection of streams to the shallow aquifer system, aquifer characteristics)
5. Maintaining, Updating and Improvements to Model (including focused calibration of surface water and groundwater interaction, assessment of model boundary conditions, improve how model represents groundwater pumping, assessment of aquifer properties assigned to model)
6. Refining, Study and Implementation of Potential Projects and Actions (assessment of conservation and groundwater-use efficiency opportunities, managed aquifer recharge studies, assessment of additional recycled water irrigation opportunities, study of potential policy options for future GSA consideration)
7. Five-year update to GSP (first updated scheduled for 2027, include any new information or changes that have been made after submittal of 2022 GSP, updated 50-year projected water budget)
8. Five-year budget, schedule, and funding strategy (focus on initial 5-years of GSP implementation, pursue potential funding sources).

Next steps include 1) prioritize activities and recommended studies, 2) further develop descriptions of activities, 3) develop cost estimates and funding strategy, and 4) refine implementation schedule.

Questions/Comments

Peter Martin – At least for the near term, the focus should be on improving the monitoring network, new wells, and data gaps. And then looking where we are with Sustainable Management Criteria; the Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water was an area we weren't very comfortable. Anything we can do to help it long term and come up with a better SMC, maybe revising the GSP when we understand it better, would be good. It is one area we are weak with the GSP right now. Marcus Trotta brought up fees. Hopefully, fees will be borne by everyone in the basin. Anything we do to refine data gaps, projects going forward, that is going to be funded by everyone in the entire basin. We need to make sure we represent the interests of landowners throughout the basin. There are other data gaps in the basin boundary, maybe we should focus on them before looking outside the basin.

Trotta – As we develop these cost estimates we will look closely at the activities and try to be comprehensive at the start. Keep in mind we have 20 years to maintain sustainability.

Rosenblum – Santa Rosa has done an enormous amount of work on urban irrigation. That can be weather controlled. Most sophisticated ag has very sophisticated irrigation controls that are weather based, soil moisture based, etc. Those could be used across the different growers to improve their use. Those reductions could be huge. There is room for optimism. I was listening to Peter Martin – there are plenty of gaps within the basin. We are four GSA members at the boundary. I keep harping about the boundary because it will impact us. It isn't enough just to know what is happening at the boundary. We don't need expensive monitoring wells to go in, we need the monitoring tools, pressure transducers and such, to drop down into a few representative wells and we will know what is going on across the basin and could get many more level and spatial data. Maybe once every three months we drop monitoring equipment down various wells that have volunteered. The voluntary component is going to be very important.

O'Connor (chat) – Groundwater elevations and pumping west of Sebastopol should be included in the basin boundary data gaps bullet point.

Furch (chat) – Will predictions include changes in land uses? Changes/intensification of land uses could/will likely increase pumping and/or surface water use - so seems important to integrate into future scenarios to realistically plan for sustainability.

Rich (chat) - Yes, the projections of land use change are incorporated into the projections that Marcus Trotta showed earlier in the presentation.

Lisa Porta (chat) – Future land use changes can be incorporated into future modeling scenarios; like we did for the projected baseline model.

Rosenblum (chat) – Adding to Rue Furch’s question with an answer for you - the MODFLOW model allows you to segregate irrigation from evapotranspiration, so land-use conversions can be assessed. For example, fallowed land in the Central Valley has caused dust problems (indication of soil moisture losses).

O'Connor (chat) – John Rosenblum's suggestion that there are additional opportunities of potential importance/advantages of developing supplemental monitoring data is of various types and geographic distribution is well-taken. It presents challenges of many kinds jurisdictionally and financially and organizationally.

Furch (chat) – Following up, I expect prioritization should consider areas of greatest impact and/or greatest opportunities.

Gaffney (chat) – How long will it take surface recharge to reach the deep (200 ft+) groundwater table?

Rich (chat) – Based on the Santa Rosa Plain USGS report, it can take hundreds or more years depending on the location/geology. In the Wilson grove (outside of the subbasin) it is likely relatively fast, whereas in Petaluma formation and other alluvial materials in the Subbasin it is variable and difficult to measure but is slower.

Gaffney (chat) – The cannabis trade will not go away.

Noren (chat) – It may be beneficial to have a priority list for update items from this group once the draft plan is complete so we can see the entire process. Basin boundary, monitoring results and validating data from the first five years seems like good candidates. Others?

O'Connor (chat) – I greatly appreciate the preview of the implementation plan. It is reassuring and I complement the staff for tracking our discussions of data gaps over the course of these numerous meetings.

Martin (chat) – We are responsible for understanding inflow and outflow at the boundary as part of our basin-wide model. I think we should be limiting our evaluations to improving that metric. If John Rosenblum is proposing there are limitations there, then I would certainly be more supportive but recognizing that other boundary areas are experiencing the same issue (Northeast).

Public Comment

Colin Close, City of Santa Rosa – Thinking about the boundaries, I know there is a lot of information that could be gained by understanding what is happening beyond the boundary. I think the Board considered it a lot when approaching DWR about the basin boundaries. I think there is much interest in data, but I believe the Board considered this carefully before requesting DWR to expand the boundary. I expect every basin will struggle with this issue. I am guessing that DWR will recognize that it will be difficult for many basins to deal with boundaries inflows/outflows. I think we may want to consider that we do have data gaps in the boundary and recognize there is probably a lot of valuable information just outside the boundaries.

Rosenblum – I am not saying to say move the official DWR boundary, that would be difficult. I am talking about the analysis boundary.

Close (chat) – Perhaps if monitoring could be conducted within our boundary, but at the boarder adjoining basins, it could provide helpful info without expending funds outside the GSA jurisdiction.

Trotta (chat) – Good point. The Monitoring Network section (Section 5) we are developing will include available data from wells located along and outside the margins of the contributing watershed areas of the basin (both inside and outside the basin).

Updates

Objective: Provide relevant updates that inform the Advisory Committee - AC to ask questions if needed.

Marcus Trotta gave an update on the Prop 68 Monitoring Well Program. He said that we are in the planning stages of the construction of the four deep-nested groundwater monitoring wells. Staff is currently working with construction management, technical writing staff, and a consultant on the design of the wells so we can put the project out to bid early summer with the goal of constructing the wells in the fall. Mitch Buttress, Technical staff, has been in contact with member agency staff looking for locations for the wells. We are currently, in the process of doing the environmental reviews.

Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager, provided an update on the drought. He said there is lots going on across the board. The 2020/21 water years are third and fourth driest in the last 120 years. Compared to 1977, the temperatures are warmer now. We look at droughts in terms of precipitation as well as temperature. Given the low rainfall the last few years, the most noticeable thing is the surface water impact. Sonoma Water is managing the Russian River system – both reservoirs Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma are at their lowest storage level ever on May 10. Lake Mendocino is just under 37,000 acre-feet. The Russian River watershed unimpaired flows are drying up. We are wrapped up in forecasting Lake Mendocino, working with stakeholders from Healdsburg and Ukiah and the State Board trying to come up with a plan to preserve water until it hopefully, starts raining next winter. This is as grim as we have seen on the upper Russian River. Lake Sonoma is in better shape, approximately 148,000 acre-feet, but it is the primary water source for 600,000 people. It is a very important water source for the Santa Rosa Plain. We are thinking of here and now but also next year in terms of management activities. Conservation and river management are also very active. Tomorrow there will be a joint item on drought update (Sonoma Water Directors and Board of Supervisors). There will be a resolution for the Board to consider for the areas outside of Sonoma Water's jurisdiction. Governor Newsom declared an emergency for Sonoma and Mendocino counties recently and today extended the emergency to another 39 counties in California. As part of the emergency, the County will have a public agency task force to ensure coordination, communication, and resource sharing.

Questions/Comments

Furch – Is there a predicted time for the joint item?

Andrea Rodriguez (chat) – On the agenda it shows after closed session.

Jasperse – There is a Board of Supervisor's climate ad hoc at 11:00, the joint item will go after that.

Furch (chat) – Thank you, I know predicting Board items may be as challenging as predicting the weather.

Noren (chat) – Thanks for the information. The information regarding the drought and call for actions for well owners and water contractors should be timely and conducted in conjunction with providing information about the GSA process and the importance of groundwater management for a shared and vital

resource. The current situation provides an opportunity to make the point and ask of all to contribute with participation, funding, and interest.

Jasperse – Good points!

Andy Rodgers gave an update on GUIDE. We are in the seventh week of the program being live. As of last week, we have received about 200 calls, 120 voicemails, and 15 email inquiries. Most of the questions have been resolved. Thirteen paper surveys were received in addition to 83 online surveys. Next steps include a GUIDE work group developing a plan to process input and survey results, improve/enhance GSA information and resources, update the groundwater database, and provide progress updates to the Advisory Committee and Board.

Questions/Comments

Furch – Will we see the results?

Rodgers – Yes, the Board is very interested as well. There has been lots of conversation and we want to make sure we share what we learn.

Rate and Fee Study – Andy Rodgers said this project will be run in parallel with the GUIDE program and will be done in coordination with the other two basins in the county. In response to the RFP, we have received three proposals from qualified firms. The GSA staff reviewed the three proposals; interviews with the firms are scheduled for May 12. The Board liaisons and GSA staff will determine a recommended firm for consideration by the Board on June 10. We are hoping for work to commence in August. September through November will be for project development. Santa Rosa Plain is fortunate to have already been through a fee structure in 2019; our idea is to update that and make sure the new Board members and Advisory Committee are informed. We expect a report from the consultant in February/March 2022, and hope for Board approval in April or June 2022.

Andrea Rodriguez – Please register for the Santa Rosa Plain Community Workshop which will take place on May 19 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

With regards to the Rural Residential Outreach, SCI Consultants wrapped up the focus groups last weeks and are now consolidating the information received.

Review Meeting Action Items and Discuss February Meeting Agenda

Sam Magill, Advisory Committee Meeting Facilitator

- Advisory Committee to look out for Section 4 in late May/early June for review.
- Staff will send the AC the complete slide deck of today's meeting that includes all presentations.
- Wayne requested more near-term projections for 2020. Staff will get information to the AC.
- Marcus Trotta to send out results from Group 1 modeling to AC.
- Staff will confirm the June 14 meeting as soon as known. Please continue to hold the date for now.

Rosenblum – Is there a time limit to providing comments on Section 3?

Trotta – Section 3 comments are due by May 24. Sections 4 and 5 will allow three to four weeks for review. You will see the full GSP draft in the July timeframe.

The next Board meeting is June 10 and the next Advisory Committee meeting is June 14 (To be confirmed) and/or Monday, July 12 (confirmed).

Bob Anderson and Rue Furch thanked everyone for attending and focusing on the next chapters. Furch echoed David Noren's comment about highlighting the drought at the upcoming Community Meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Attendees:

Advisory Committee Members (present)

Agricultural representative, Bob Anderson
Agricultural representative, David Long
City of Santa Rosa appointee, Peter Martin
Environmental representative, Rue Furch
Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria representative, Maureen Geary
Gold Ridge RCD appointee, Matt O'Connor
Independent Water Systems appointee, John Rosenblum
Rural Residential representative, David Noren
Sonoma County Water Agency appointee, Carolyn Dixon
Sonoma RCD appointee, Wayne Haydon
Town of Windsor appointee, Elizabeth Cargay
City of Cotati appointee, Craig Scott
Business representative, Joe Gaffney

Advisory Committee Members (absent)

City of Rohnert Park appointee, Mary Grace Pawson
County of Sonoma appointee, Mark Grismer (excused)
Environmental representative, Beth Lamb (excused)
Rural Residential representative, Marlene Soiland

Staff/Presenters

Andy Rodgers, SRP GSA Administrator
Jay Jasperse, Sonoma Water, Plan Manager
Ann DuBay, Sonoma Water, Outreach
Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff
Andrea Rodriguez, Sonoma Water, Outreach Staff
Lisa Porta, Montgomery & Associates, Technical Staff
Simone Peters, GSA Administrative Aide, (*recording meeting summary*)

Facilitator

Sam Magill, Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program

Other Attendees

Colin Close, City of Santa Rosa
Robert Pennington, Permit Sonoma
Sandi Potter, Town of Windsor
Chris Watt, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board