

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday, Sept 12, 2022 | Meeting Summary

Contact: Andy Rodgers, Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Administrator
Email: arodgers@westyost.com | Phone: 707.508.3661

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Call to Order

Andy Rodgers, Administrator, opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed the group. Bob Anderson, Chair also greeted the members and noted that there would no longer be a facilitator working with the group. He then ran through the day's agenda. Andy Rodgers explained that it was because of budget constraints that the facilitator role was eliminated from Advisory Committee meetings.

General Public Comments

None.

Agenda Review, Approval of Previous Meeting Summary, 2022-2023 Meeting Schedule Review

Objective: Review 2022-23 schedule; confirm May meeting summary.

Andy Rodgers thanked the Advisory Committee for their work and input which was critical for moving the fee discussion forward. He also thanked the AC members who are interested to continue in their role on the committee. The GUIDE database has been updated to reflect the fees, letters were sent out last week, a press release was also issued last week, and staff is already fielding incoming calls. Rodgers has done a few presentations and is willing to do more if any AC member feels it would be helpful for their stakeholders.

The upcoming period will be a busy one as is evident with today's agenda. There will be less meetings because of budget limitations so we need to do things in a smarter and more focused way. Rodgers provided an updated staff organization chart for the three Sonoma County Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and an updated 2022-23 Board and Advisory Committee meeting schedule for Santa Rosa Plain GSA.

Regarding the May summary, Arthur Deicke requested that on page 4 "the need for each line *time*" should read "the need for each line *item*". If there are any other corrections, please send them to Andy Rodgers or Simone Peters by the end of this week so the summary can be finalized and posted.

No public comment.

Permit Sonoma Presentation

Objective: Provide updates on proposed well ordinance updates, Governor's drought Executive Order, and Proposition 68 grant achievements. Receive AC feedback on proposed well ordinance updates.

Robert Pennington presented proposed changes and a timeline to the well ordinance for Public Trust Resource. Revised draft ordinance changes include:

- Adds Public Trust Review Area
- Expands Ministerial Pathways
- Adds water conservation requirements
- Adjusts well monitoring

Pennington explained that Permit Sonoma was tasked with implementing three projects funded by Prop 68:

- Modifications to well permitting process and database (major update to well permit record; new land use and database question; and online well permit applications)
- Modernization of groundwater monitoring program (water resources monitoring (WRM) record in Accela; merge existing database into Accela; develop online reporting form; develop GIS interface for data viewing and download; update groundwater monitoring policy, procedures, and forms)
- Updates and expansion of Groundwater User Information Data Exchange (GUIDE), (expand SRP GUIDE to all three Sonoma County subbasins; update GUIIDE survey; draft protocols to validate surveys; tools for data download and sharing)

Pennington also detailed the Governor's Executive Order. Small domestic wells and public water wells are exempt from the Order. Permit Sonoma has developed guidelines for the Emergency Order and outlined the process for well permitting. Prior to permit approval for new or reconstructed wells:

- For non-exempt wells within Priority Basin, verification by GSA: groundwater extraction is not inconsistent with the sustainable groundwater management plan; will not decrease the likelihood of achieving a sustainability goal
- For all non-exempt wells, will not interfere with the production and functioning of existing nearby wells; not likely to cause subsidence

Questions/Comments

Wayne Haydon (chat) – Why are public wells exempt?

Rue Furch (chat) – What is an ISW?

Indigo Bannister (chat) – ISW = Interconnected Surface Water.

Marlene Soiland (chat) – The well permit reviews are probably not anticipated in the current GSA budget.

Rue Furch (chat) – Perhaps the well permit reviews occur through the county – another reason for greater cooperation/collaboration.

David Noren (chat) – Will the County of Sonoma publish guidelines for the hydrogeologic studies that are to be conducted to support the permitting process?

Rue Furch (chat) – Please clarify the definition of “domestic” wells.

Robert Pennington – The use of the well is predominantly for potable needs of humans.

Arthur Deicke (chat) – Are the Sonoma County navigable waters listed in the Ordinance?

Robert Pennington – We are using the definition from the California Public Rights and Navigation Tests. They must be navigable by small craft.

Arthur Deicke – Will that be in the Ordinance?

Robert Pennington – It is subject to change in the event additional waters are found to be navigable.

Rue Furch (chat) – What are “existing land uses” versus other uses that are approved within the zoning?

Rue Furch (chat) – How are the four water-availability (Class 1, 2, 3, 4) areas addressed, if there is anything different?

Robert Pennington – In terms of the pattern, Class 4 (water scarce areas) largely are outside the Public Trust Review Area. Mapping by Stetson Engineers in 2008 accounted for the hydrogeologic properties of the aquifer and what areas are likely to be connected.

Beth Lamb (chat) – Do you have a link for Stetson Engineers 2008 document?

Marcus Trotta (chat) – I believe the Stetson Engineers 2008 document is located here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/instream_flows/subterranean_streams.html

Robert Pennington (chat) – Yes, that is the Stetson mapping that was used. We were able to get the GIS files and the layer is viewable in our GIS viewer:

<https://sonomacounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8baedfd50be640b0b11548537f89fee2>

Arthur Deicke (chat) – The map is a bit confusing regarding Public Trust Areas. For example, it appears Dry Creek is including other tributaries.

Matt O'Connor (chat) – The GSA is being asked to weigh in with Permit Sonoma regarding the well ordinance revisions relating to addressing Public Trust issues; the hydrologic models developed to date are THE MOST DEFENSIBLE AND ADVANCED TOOLS AVAILABLE and should be utilized to develop supplemental information that will narrow the scope of project-by-project evaluation. It is incumbent on this group to give serious consideration to using the model we need to get more global answers and help the county to address this. Can this issue get on the Board of Directors agenda for October 13?

Robert Pennington – We will be looking to the Board for more direction on this re long-term and development needs. I agree with the idea we use these modelling tools to look at the watershed as a whole and not site scale analysis typically used for individual permits.

Matt O'Connor – I want to stress that the best tool for the county to make selections on what wells need what kind of permits, are the modelling tools. I don't know how the Advisory Committee can make that happen, but it should be pursued.

Peter Martin – I agree we should share resources of the GSA. In terms of conservation requirements – is the intent to have county staff inspect potential parcels?

Robert Pennington – At this point, it would be up to well and septic staff to do site visits.

Peter Martin – Is there any expectation of a timeline for review of these types of permits?

Robert Pennington – We can't say how many permits will be ministerial but probably significant.

Requests for discretionary permits would probably be limited. As per timing, I think we are thinking months up to one year. The ministerial permits should only take a month or two.

Marlene Soiland (chat) – How does "under 2 AFY" translate to gallons per minute which is a typical residential well volume measurement?

Marcus Trotta (chat) – 2 AFY = Approximately 1,700 gallons per day or about 1.2 gallons per minute.

Rue Furch (chat) – How many irrigated acres are expected to be connected to a well?

Marlene Soiland (chat) – What is the definition of non-functional turf?

Robert Pennington – We use the state definition, it is decorative, any turf not used for gatherings or recreational purposes.

Rue Furch (chat) – How will different irrigation methodologies (sprinklers, drip, etc.) be accounted for?

Beth Lamb (chat) – What about cannabis irrigation, what are the limits?

Robert Pennington – There are no set limits in our water conservation requirements. The cannabis permitting is discretionary already.

Rue Furch (chat) – Who will be charged with responding to the referrals from Permit Sonoma to the GSA?

David Noren (chat) – These requirements seem reasonable, however realize that the cost for the hydrogeologic studies to demonstrate that the proposed well meets these requirements will not be inconsequential.

Elizabeth Cargay (chat) – What if records and calibrations, etc. are not implemented or turned in after a well goes in? Who will enforce?

Indigo Bannister (chat) – Here is the link to the Permit Sonoma web map:

<https://sonomacounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8baedfd50be640b0b11548537f89fee2>

Rue Furch (chat) – The two acre-feet per year measure for domestic use is a tremendous amount of water for one single residence. Do we know how the governor arrived at that number?

Peter Martin (chat) – It looks "de minimis extractor" of 2 acre-feet is defined in California Water Code for what was codified by SGMA.

Rue Furch (chat) – I wonder how they made that decision. Residences with massive lawns?

Peter Martin (chat) – Good question. That threshold was what was negotiated in the legislation in 2014-15 timeframe. It is statewide so it may have considered differing climates and parcel sizes.

Rue Furch (chat) – Indeed. California's "average" is from a very large spectrum.

Bob Anderson – How many domestic users in the model exceed 2-acre-feet?

Robert Pennington – Relatively few. We look at number of units connected to a well. If more than four, we assume more than two acre-feet.

Andy Rich – If a parcel is zoned as domestic, it is estimated at .5 acre-feet per year. If it is a vineyard with a house on it, the size of the vineyard dictates the volume of water usage.

Bob Anderson – You are creating a threshold of two acre-foot that doesn't have on-the-ground impact.

Robert Pennington – We don't want discretionary review for a huge volume of permits. The idea is to set a threshold consistent with SGMA and has conservation requirements.

Rue Furch (chat) – On September 22, 2022 at 4 PM, Permit Sonoma will be hosting an informational webinar on the Well Ordinance update in collaboration with Sonoma County. The webinar will include a presentation from experts about the proposed updates then followed by a public Q&A. RSVP at

https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9gFHRIq7Q8SwLrKKkwwgKDA. (The meeting will be in English with Spanish interpretation available).

Public Comment

Bill Krawetz (chat) – How many wells (under two acre-feet) are exempt?

Gail Yamamoto Seymour (chat) – Are existing wells causing subsidence? Are subsidence studies being conducted? If there is subsidence then any new wells will contribute, correct?

Gail Yamamoto Seymour (chat) – Irrigation limits are for new well permits? What about existing wells?

Gail Yamamoto Seymour (chat) – How do I find out who the recipients are of the county's public outreach efforts?

Robert Pennington – Please contact me at Permit Sonoma, Robert.Pennington@sonoma-county.org.

Unknown (chat) – How was .06 acre-feet per year originally mandated?

Andy Rodgers (chat) – Rural residential volume estimated by GSA is 0.5 acre-feet per year, which is roughly 450 gallon per day.

Unknown (chat) – Does the Graton Casino have to abide by any of this whatsoever?

Jennifer Klein – For anything on Federal Trust Land, the answer is 'no'. They do not have to get well permits; they are not subject to our civil regulatory jurisdiction unless we negotiate otherwise.

Gail Yamamoto Seymour (chat) – How is it common sense to not understand how much water is extracted by existing wells to determine how many new wells can be permitted?

Gail Yamamoto Seymour (chat) – Since CEQA doesn't apply to this revised ordinance, what compels the county to conduct cumulative impact analyses for groundwater extraction? Is there anything in the General Plan that requires cumulative impact analyses?

Unknown (chat) – Is there any upper limit on how much water can be pumped by either private or commercial well owners?

GUIDE Update & Fee Implementation

Objective: Provide updates on GUIDE release and fee implementation process.

Andy Rodgers provided a review of the groundwater fee timeline, approvals, and adoption. He gave an update on the GUIDE launch and the Santa Rosa Plain GSA GUIDE response from March to August 2021 along with key take-aways. He also provided information on outreach for implementation of GUIDE and the fee.

Rodgers then requested feedback from the Advisory Committee: How do we reach more groundwater users? Should there be a presentation for AC members to use? Are there groundwater user categories needing more or different focus? Is outreach/engagement a key component to grant applications?

Questions/Comments

Craig Scott (chat) – When a parcel owner replies they are a municipal water customer, and it is verified, is the GUIDE mailing database updated?

Andy Rodgers – Yes if, it is verified. We are working on the process right now. We accounted for it but still need to make corrections as we move forward.

Craig Scott – We are available to verify the customers.

Ryan Crawford – A lot of towns have users (not on city water), that still use their old wells – and fall under the radar.

Andy Rodgers – Sebastopol provided back-flow information; it probably isn't foolproof. As soon as we know who those people are, they will receive a bill. Every city is different with what and how much they know.

No public comment.

SGMA Implementation Round 2 Grant Prioritization

Objective: Receive AC input on potential projects for SGMA Implementation Round 2 grant application.

Hawkeye Sheene, GSA Grant Funding and Management, gave an overview of Round 2 grant funding. A total of \$204.5 million is available. Priority will be given to medium-and high-priority basins that did not receive previous funding from SGMA implementation. \$15 million is allocated for severely disadvantaged communities, and \$35 million is for communities identified by the GSM grant program's Underrepresented Community Technical Assistance Program. The minimum grant award is \$1 million per basin and the maximum grant award is \$20 million per basin. Sheene also outlined the grant program schedule and funding priorities.

Marcus Trotta provided a high-level overview of potential SGMA grant projects and asked the Advisory Committee members if there are other projects not included on the list that they would like to see advanced, and which projects are the highest priority for their stakeholder groups.

Questions/Comments

Rue Furch (chat) – 20 or 200 million dollars?

Matt O'Connor (chat) – 204 million dollars statewide.

Marcus Trotta (chat) – Correct, \$20 million maximum per basin.

Rue Furch (chat) – I was just looking at our potential, 20 million is a big part of 200 million if there are a lot of applications.

David Noren (chat) – As there are many GSA basins in California that are either in overdraft or critical overdraft conditions, how realistic is it that the Santa Rosa GSA will qualify for grant funding given the process is competitive based upon need and conditions? While I am happy these conditions are not present in the Santa Rosa Plain it would be prudent to plan for realistic funding sources for the proposed projects.

Rue Furch (chat) – Hence my concern about the limit of our application request.

Andy Rodgers (chat) – This program focuses on medium and high priority basins.

Arthur Deicke (chat) – It also depends on grant writing talent. Sonoma Water is very good at that.

Arthur Deicke (cat) – Have we received previous grants for planning or other?

Indigo Bannister (chat) – We have received over \$2 million in grant funding so far.

Wayne Haydon (chat) – Sounds like the GSA will need to develop a portfolio of different projects and apply for these projects.

Rue Furch (chat) – Did Bob Anderson just ask if there would be benefit/advantages to applying for grant/s in partnership with other jurisdictions/organizations?

Andy Rodgers (chat) – What we've learned so far about the State grant scoring is they "support/encourage" efforts to collaborate with other jurisdictions, but the collaboration itself doesn't give extra scoring points in a grant application.

Matt O'Connor (chat) – Can we bundle some of these together in a grant or do each of these need to be a separate grant application?

Andy Rodgers (chat) – My understanding is we will be preparing one application to include a range of projects. In other words, we'd like to focus the project matrix provided in the meeting packet to become one grant application for SRP GSA.

Hawkeye Sheene (chat) – These can and should be bundled together, with the goal of getting the most benefits that apply toward the grant program priorities, with the total cost and schedule feasible to accomplish. It would be the goal to come up with a list of projects (that would become components of the larger project in the application). Then we would start nailing down those projects, with costs, potential partners, timeline, and benefits quantified (if applicable).

Rue Furch (chat) – If each GSA area applies, do we optimize the amount we might receive – or vice-versa?

Elizabeth Cargay (chat) – I think we should put several together, do a couple projects to remove major data gaps, add a project towards recycled water expansion, add a project for groundwater banking and add a monitoring project to have a better database where we don't have data.

Arthur Deicke (chat) – Yes and target them to the listed priorities.

Elizabeth Cargay (chat) – And add a project on an assessment of water use efficiency tools.

Rue (chat) – These suggestions are good. It would be important to know what level / standards for recycled water would be appropriate for uses and soil types.

Marlene Soiland (chat) – Is there a way to identify the largest benefit for dollar spent? Or top priorities for data gap solutions?

Marcus Trotta – We will be doing that as we compile the list. Top priorities are largely in the order presented on the matrix.

Peter Martin – On the 5% cost share, 5% or more gives you the same score or does it change depending on how much percentage you cost share?

Hawkeye Sheene – They haven't released the application yet, but it looks like you get full cost share points if you have at least 5%. The more you can leverage, the better.

Rue Furch – Have you checked our plan to see how many of the projects qualify within the scope, including the three or more benefits?

Hawkeye Sheene – There has been discussion about the projects in the plan, the challenge is the timeframe, it will need to happen fast.

Bob Anderson – Do you need to be a GSA to apply?

Hawkeye Sheene – You don't need to be a GSA, there are other entities, but they need to represent a GSA. As you can only file one application per basin, everyone should get together to come up with the project, most likely made up of multiple smaller projects.

Rue Furch – Our documents include the watershed. If there were an area that benefited the basin, that was outside the basin boundaries, we could propose a project within the watershed but outside the basin boundaries? Is this correct?

Hawkeye Sheene – I assume so. If you had a project like that, it would be good to discuss with DWR so there is no confusion when submitting the application.

David Long – What is the definition of a project?

Hawkeye Sheene – It is not easily defined; it can't exceed \$20 million but can have many smaller components to make up the larger project.

David Long – So, you don't have to build something? Studies, etc. can be part of a project?

Hawkeye Sheene – A mix is probably most competitive; it doesn't have to be a construction project, but it would help to point to numbers/benefits.

Bob Anderson – I am looking at the schedule and wondering how the Advisory Committee fits into the unfolding of the application.

Hawkeye Sheene – It will come out in about a month and there will be some capacity for collaboration for input and review.

Andy Rodgers – Given less meetings, we will need to be more creative between meetings and get information out to the Advisory Committee re revised matrix, etc.

Bob Anderson – What is the submittal date?

Hawkeye Sheene – We don't know yet.

Arthur Deicke – Does Sonoma Water have any projects that aren't just in planning stage?

Marcus Trotta – We are in the process of updating two of our wells to help with aquifer storage and recovery wells in the future. I don't think we have any stormwater capture recharge projects at a stage that could be implemented in the next two years or so.

Peter Martin – I am in favor of projects that help us gain a better understanding of the basin such as identified data gaps. Giving conservation tools for users would be good. I am not as keen on recycled water projects; they might be duplicative in the county. Priority should be given to ensure well owners' interests are best served.

Rue Furch (chat) – Good point. We should go after grants that would not be available through other opportunities.

Jessie Maxfield, Member of Public (chat) – I agree.

Matt O'Connor (chat) – 8th St East/Napa Rd pipeline price tag seems like a reach and might be otherwise funded per Peter Martin's comment.

Bob Anderson – My priorities are 1) recharge, 2) closing the gap between what we say in the GSP is in the aquifer, and what is in the aquifer.

Arthur Deicke – We need to focus on the grant scoring criteria and fit our projects in to maximize our point value.

Rue Furch (chat) – GSA Plans should coordinate closely with the other mapping tools the county has and/or is developing.

Matt O'Connor (chat) – Interconnected surface water data gaps need to be filled...all items on the list have merit.

Matt O'Connor (chat) – Conjunctive use projects would be a big accomplishment and need to be tested in our region.

David Noren (chat) – Given that there is now an assessed fee to rural well owners, I would also recommend thinking ahead to develop programs that show benefit to the well users in the GSA so there is progress to show at the five-year renewal. Be realistic in prioritizing these projects in the time of drought and go towards the projects that have benefit to well owners. It will also be necessary to continue to educate the community of the need and benefit of these projects.

Rue Furch (chat) – Yes, if we could do two things, we should close data gaps AND get something done on the ground, so progress is visible. People are not thrilled about paying for more studies - even though they may be necessary.

Ryan Crawford (chat) – Agreed – data gaps priority 1, priority 2 putting to rest the fact that no one has ever proven that we can both efficiently bank and extract groundwater anywhere in the basin. It would be great to find an area without shallow groundwater and significant fines making it actually feasible (like Southern Cal's dry, clean beach sands that will take in water as you give it, jury is still out). Surface water depletion/interconnectivity up there as well.

Andy Rodgers – The Board priorities include making sure we have on- the-ground programs that engage more well users that provide real and perceived value.

David Noren – One project I haven't seen is anything related to water quality conditions/trends. Outreach is very important to make sure people understand it is a regional-wide effort.

David Long – All medium- and high-priority basins in the state are in about the same situation with budget shortfalls and projects. I think it would be difficult for grant reviewers to shut anyone out of a grant that makes a reasonable request. We might not get all the money available but will get some. Part of the strategy of getting \$2-3 million is to find the sweet spot and fill up the \$2-3 million with projects rather than dreaming about what we would like.

Wane Haydon – I agree with the list of technical issues we would like to address. Is the GSA going to come up with our own list of projects or are we soliciting projects from within the basin? Do we decide if they fit into what we would like to address and push a portfolio through to DWR?

Andy Rodgers – We have potential partners in the matrix, partnerships within the basin would be great so we could make a portfolio, like you say. We are bundling projects and programs that address priorities to identify the implementation plan.

Standing Item: Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Implementation Update

Objective: Provide update on key GSP implementation items

Marcus Trotta provided an update on ongoing and upcoming activities. He confirmed that the GSA Board had agreed to authorize the Administrator to enter into an agreement with Sonoma Water to extend technical services for two years and outreach services by one year. Mitch Buttress described the work on Prop 68-funded deep Multi-level Monitoring Well Program (three wells each in Santa Rosa Plain, Sonoma Valley, and Petaluma Valley). Andy Rich gave an overview of Santa Rosa Plain seepage runs funded by Prop 68 and completed from October 2021 to August 2022. Rich provided summarized results, findings, and conclusions from the seepage runs.

Questions/Comments

Arthur Deicke – It seems like you can't account for all the variables to come to these conclusions. I am concerned you are jumping to conclusions of interconnectivity when there are a lot of variables.

Andy Rich – When a stream reach is gaining it is a good indication that the groundwater level is above the surface stage of the stream, and therefore gaining. There is the possibility for other sources of water to enter a reach that we can't account for. We did our best, it isn't possible to measure every contribution, but if you see in the late summer that something is gaining, it is a good indication of interconnected surface water.

Matt O'Connor (chat) – What are relative elevations of nearby stream channels compared to shallow screened intervals?

Marcus Trotta (chat) – They vary by location; we will include that information in the report. Where one of the purposes of these wells was to fill the ISW data gaps, we generally targeted the shallowest coarser-grained materials which were inferred to be saturated. There are also two additional shallow wells planned to be drilled this fall on Mark West Creek through DWRs Technical Support Services program which are specifically targeted to fill ISW data gaps.

David Noren (chat) – Please send reports for both these studies to the TAC members when they are available.

Marcus Trotta (chat) – Will do. The seepage runs report should be available within next two weeks as Andy Rich mentioned. The monitoring well report will likely be available closer to the end of the year. It will contact information from all three basins.

Closing

Andy Rodgers said that action items are focusing on the grant program. Staff will be reaching out to the Advisory Committee with updates. He closed the meeting

Attendees:

Advisory Committee Members (present)

Agricultural representative, Bob Anderson
Agricultural representative, David Long
Business representative, Arthur Deicke
City of Cotati appointee, Craig Scott
City of Santa Rosa appointee, Peter Martin
City of Sebastopol, Ryan Crawford
Environmental representative, Rue Furch
Environmental representative, Beth Lamb
Gold Ridge RCD appointee, Matt O'Connor
Rural Residential representative, David Noren
Rural Residential representative, Marlene Soiland
Sonoma RCD appointee, Wayne Haydon
Town of Windsor appointee, Elizabeth Cargay

Advisory Committee Members (absent and/or excused)

City of Rohnert Park appointee, Mary Grace Pawson

County of Sonoma appointee, Mark Grismer

Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria representative, Maureen Geary

Independent Water Systems appointee, John Rosenblum

Sonoma County Water Agency appointee, Carolyn Dixon

Staff/Presenters

Andy Rodgers, SRP GSA Administrator

Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff

Andy Rich, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff

Mitch Buttress, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff

Hawkeye Sheene, Grant Funding and Management

Indigo Bannister, GSA Staff

Rob Pennington, Permit Sonoma

Other Attendees

Jennifer Klein, Sonoma County

Bill Krawitz, Member of Public

Gail Yamamoto Seymour, Member of Public

Jessie Maxfield, Member of Public

Meeting Summary produced from a recording, by Simone Peters, GSA staff.