

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2021

Location: Zoom Meeting

www.santarosaplaingroundwater.org

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice-Chair Susan Harvey called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. **Directors Coursey, Harvey, Hopkins, Jacobs, Nagle, Salmon, Slayter, and Stafford** were present. **Directors Dutton and Schwedhelm** were absent. Also, in attendance at the meeting, were Andy Rodgers, Administrator; Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager; Marcus Trotta, Technical Staff; Ann DuBay, Outreach (arrived 1:12 p.m.); Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach staff; and Simone Peters, Administrative Aide (recording meeting minutes); Bob Anderson, Advisory Committee Chair; Rue Furch; Advisory Committee Vice-Chair; Mary-Grace Pawson, Peter Martin, Arthur Diecke (arrived later), all Advisory Committee members; Brittany Jensen, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District; Justin Brandt, member of public.

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

No public comment.

3. Consent Calendar

- a. **Approve Minutes of September 30, 2021 Board Meeting**
- b. **Approve Year-To-Date Financial Report**

No public comment.

Director Stafford approved the consent calendar as presented, **Director Nagle** seconded. Motion passed **8-0-2**. (**Directors Dutton** and **Schwedhelm** were 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** –absent, **Director Coursey** – aye

4. Directors/Subcommittee Report

No report. No public comment.

5. Advisory Committee Report

Bob Anderson, Advisory Committee Chair said that he appreciated the Board Chair's comments at the Community Meeting. There hasn't been an Advisory Committee meeting since the last Board meeting so nothing new to present.

No public comment.

6. Information items

a. Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Public Review Draft Updates

A public review draft of the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was released on October 1, 2021. The public comment period is October 1 through October 31, 2021. Members of the public were invited to attend a virtual Community meeting on October 13 to learn about the Santa Rosa Plain Basin GSP and for information on how to provide comments.

Staff provided an overview summary of the October 13 Community Meeting and an update on public input received since the public review draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan was released on October 1, 2021.

Community Meeting

Jay Jasperse presented a condensed version of the GSP presentation from the October 13, 2021 Community Meeting. Marcus Trotta presented a refresher and update on groundwater sustainability in the Santa Rosa Plain, including sustainability indicators, subbasin conditions, water budget, projects and actions needed, and data gaps to be filled.

Questions/Comments

Director Hopkins – When we talk about interaction between groundwater and surface water, which is identified as an improvement that would be desirable as part of the implementation of the GSP, do we have the policy tools necessary to accomplish the goal? Do we need to advocate at the state level for additional policy tools to go beyond the purview of the GSA to address the nexus between groundwater and surface water and riparian rights as they pertain to California water law?

Jasperse – It is the most complex of the six sustainability indicators from a policy perspective. The GSA's obligation under SGMA for interconnected surface water is only for the portion of surface water that produces an undesirable result due to groundwater pumping under the GSA's authority. You could have wells that are riparian or surface water rights or direct diversions of water that could cause those impacts but are not under the purview of the GSA. It is a two-fold complex issue. What are the depletions and what are the negative impacts to beneficial users? Of that, what are the depletions caused by? From wells that are under the purview of the State Board, or surface water depletions from surface water diversions, or from wells managed by the GSA. I don't think any GSA has great solutions for this. We are still trying to collect and get enough information. Ultimately, when we come back in five years, we will have better data. At the state-wide level, getting the state to come in and more formally acknowledge a partnership with the GSAs will be important. The GSAs can't tackle this by themselves.

Director Hopkins – So, things are very siloed on the policy side. Ultimately, will we be able to tell whose fault it is if we are seeing the surface water depletion?

Jasperse – Possibly. The first step is knowing there is a problem. Then it is figuring out what the problem is caused by and it will probably it will be a combination of things. It will be difficult to assign responsibilities, the models are only as good as empirical data. It will be a continued challenge. We can't work in a silo; we will need policy and interface between the agencies to come up with solutions.

Director Slayter – Regarding permitting and accounting of water hauling. We have discussed this at length recently. Difficulty around this is trying to make sure water isn't being hauled off for wasteful reasons. Do you have suggestions for an agency like this one, is there any functional way that can be put into place?

Trotta – That is an example of a policy option. The GSA would be more in a recommendation situation and the County would be the implementer. I think the County has a requirement for potable water haulers to have permits, and they are tracked.

Director Slayter – So there aren't any magical ways to regulate and follow the water to make sure it is going where it is needed. It seems simple but really isn't.

Director Slayter – I have been asked by residents about recharging groundwater. One person asked me about why we are sending water that could be used to recharge groundwater to the geysers. Is recharging groundwater using wastewater even possible?

Trotta – It is done in other areas. Agencies in water districts in LA have studied that. It requires significant investment for water treatment and implementation. There are a whole set of requirements from the state. In our region, we have other sources of water, we have more opportunities for recharging our surface water. The way we have been proposing projects related to recycled water is to use it for irrigation purposes. This has helped the basin historically. The use of recycled water has offset use of groundwater.

Director Slayter – So, technically feasible, technically possible, regulatorily problematic, and financially almost impossible.

Director Salmon – With regards to testing ponds and streams in projects, Will the GSA be giving direction to people who may be interested? We may have opportunities; how might that roll out in terms of projects?

Trotta – As part of our implementation plan included in the GSP we will conduct studies of areas where it might be feasible and implement pilot projects on where and how the projects can be best implemented.

Director Nagle – [To **Director Hopkins**] – You asked if we have policies. Through the Russian River Drought Steering Team, DWR is specifically asking for water agreements through the upper and lower river in response to drought but also as a credit program. They are also seeking that those water user agreements involve habitat and instream issues; DWR is already looking at that. Fish and Game is reinitiating a voluntary drought initiative/agreement that can be stacked on top of the water user agreement. And now there is the GSA's requirement that groundwater pumping not affect riparian zones. All these different programs are focused on what we need to do with the GSA around the

riparian impact. All these things can be stacked on top of each other. We are positioned to get things done.

Director Jacobs – I second what Marcus Trotta said. California American Water is involved with potable reuse projects on the Central coast. They are difficult and expensive. We have a much better option in Santa Rosa Plain to do “in lieu” recharge. In response to **Director Hopkins** there is an active enforcement action right now at the State Water Resources Control Board that has to do with groundwater that may be coming up as surface water. They are serving rights to permit that water. It is a big new direction for the Water Board to go. As a result, you will see many new legislative proposals next year.

GSP Comments Received To-Date

Andy Rodgers presented the Groundwater Sustainability Plan budget estimates and how the GSP implementation may affect stakeholders.

Questions/Comments

Director Stafford – When you talk about fees, couldn’t folks argue that everyone will benefit from a healthier groundwater system? How do you specifically say who that applies to?

Rodgers – That is the result we arrived at in 2019; everybody who is a groundwater user, is a groundwater user and therefore, a beneficiary. Now that we know more through the technical work, through monitoring, and from GUIDE, our numbers are better than they were. The assumption of rural residential using one-half acre-foot, is that still the number we are going to use going forward?

Director Coursey – I urged that you use the slide [current groundwater sustainability fee]. Folks who have a well and are not steeped in the process will ask what is this new bureaucracy going to cost? Even if these costs will go up some, it puts this conversation in better context with people. It is worth including and talking about this earlier.

Rodgers – Point well taken. We have lots of outreach information from 2019 that summarizes user categories and amounts, and what the assumptions were; we could make them more visible on the website. We also, need to set expectations correctly, it is a balance.

Director Coursey – I appreciate that all the numbers will change. But, if information is missing, people will fill the gap with their imagination.

Director Harvey – In reality, many people don’t realize that municipal users who use groundwater, are contributing and will be impacted by what happens with the Groundwater Plan.

No public comment.

7. Action Items

a. 2021 Calendar: Adopt January-June 2022 Meeting Calendar

The Board annually adopts a meeting calendar for the year. At the January 28, 2021 Board meeting, a calendar was adopted establishing meeting dates through December 2021.

Andy Rodgers said the proposed 2022 regular meeting dates follow the current Board schedule of meeting the second Thursday of every other month at 1:00 pm. Alternate month dates are ‘meeting hold’ dates, in case one or more extra meeting is needed. The dates will complete the Board meeting calendar for the current fiscal year. Prior to July 2022, the Board will consider the meeting schedule for the next fiscal year.

No public comment.

Director Stafford moved to approve the January-June 2022 Meeting Calendar as presented, **Director Nagle** seconded. Motion passed **8-0-2**. (**Directors Dutton and Schwedhelm** were 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** –absent, **Director Coursey** – aye

8. Administrator and Plan Manager Report

No report from Legal Counsel.

Andy Rodgers mentioned that November 10 is still a “hold” date in case an additional Board meeting is needed. Staff is looking at the December 9 meeting for approving the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Jay Jasperse mentioned that the SRP Drought Resiliency Project, the Todd Rd. well, is in start-up condition. For the other two wells, Sonoma Water is developing preliminary designs to get them operational. We are including recharge capabilities in the design so they can be groundwater banking wells. If there is anything good about this drought, it is the opportunity to get state funding to come in and put forward some resiliency projects. We will propose to the state for the emergency drought funding in November, and hope to get a good amount of funding, minimum \$2,000,000. It has SGMA benefits as well as drought resiliency. This drought will help this groundwater sustainability basin get funding. A letter of support will be put forward at the November 10 meeting for Board consideration.

SGMA has opened a review of draft guidelines. The first round will not apply to us. Later in 2022 and in 2023 there will be over \$200,000,000 for basins in our categories.

At long last, we are going to the Sonoma Water Board on Tuesday, October 19, for consideration of approval of the Climate Adaptation Plan. If you get a chance, tune in or comment. Hopefully, when approved, it will be available to everyone.

No public comment.

9. Adjournment

Vice-Chair Harvey thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 2: 29p.m. The next Board meeting will be November 10 and/or December 9, 2021.