

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Advisory Committee Meeting
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting date/time: March 11, 2019 | 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Location: City of Santa Rosa Utility Field Office, 35 Stony Circle Drive, Santa Rosa,

GSA Administrator Contact: Andy Rodgers, West Yost Associates

Email: arodgers@westyost.com | Phone: 707.508.3672

Sonoma County Groundwater Website: <http://sonomacountygroundwater.org>

MEETING RECAP

Andy Rodgers, Santa Rosa Plain GSA Administrator, provided an update and direction of the rate and fee study and an overview of the proposed groundwater user registration program. Committee members made a range of comments, asked questions, and received clarifications from staff.

Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water, gave an overview of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan development. His technical team is currently focused on development of the hydrogeologic conceptual model. He walked through the overall content and informed the Committee members about the selection of proposed principal aquifer systems with the intent to secure their input. Trotta requested feedback from the group about the proposed principal aquifer systems.

Marcus Trotta, presented the current funding status for shallow groundwater monitoring wells and provided an overview of the potential locations of deeper monitoring wells for a future funding request. He requested written feedback from the Committee members about the proposed locations of deep monitoring wells in the basin.

Summary of Action Items

<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Review the GSP hydrogeologic model, draft section 3.1 and provide feedback to Marcus on proposed principal aquifer systems.	Advisory Committee members	April 1, 2019
Provide feedback to Marcus about proposed location of deep monitoring wells in the basin.	Advisory committee members	April 1, 2019
Cross check mailing lists to ensure broad distribution of public meeting notices in the future.	GSA staff	Prior to future distributions.

Next Meeting: May 13, 2019, 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., City of Santa Rosa’s Utility Field Office (UFO), 35 Stony Circle Drive.

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Rich Wilson, facilitator with Sacramento State University's Consensus and Collaboration Program, opened the meeting, suggested a round of introductions then followed with an overview of the meeting agenda.

GSA Staff and Advisory Committee Updates

Andy Rodgers, Santa Rosa Plain GSA Administrator, mentioned most of his updates were in the printed materials, but pointed out, that an important Board meeting would be held later in the week to discuss the rate and fee methodology. He also said he would be updating the 2019 schedule for Advisory and Board meetings.

Ann DuBay, Communications Affairs Manager, Sonoma Water, said there would probably be some joint-GSA Advisory Committee meetings in the future to discuss common topics. The intent of the joint meetings was to cover certain technical topics of interest to all basins and would not be additional meetings. She mentioned such a planned joint meeting on climate change is scheduled on May 22 from 4:00 to 6p:00 pm and asked attendees to save the date. She then asked for input from the Committee members. Rue Furch and Bob Anderson voiced concerns that it might be difficult to get through work with so many attendees and suggested routine subjects would be better discussed with one GSA only. They did agree however, it was a good idea to have joint meetings to cover specific topics of interest to all three basins.

Carolyn Dixon - indicated her interest in this project. She said that If we don't talk about recharge we won't have a resource to fight over. When it comes to the discussion of recharge, she is very interested. If any of this information doesn't end up in a planning group, we are wasting our time. We need to talk about planning, design, and lack of permeable asphalt surfaces. We need to talk about how this benefits everybody. If this is only about the fee study, it is only about money.

Ms. DuBay apologized for an email the county recently sent out regarding Form 700. Filling out Form 700 might not be a requirement for the Advisory Committee. She will confirm to the group by email. She also mentioned she had an interview about groundwater on KBBF earlier in the day. It was about the groundwater in all the basins and the fee/rate study. Lastly, she mentioned the Russian River Watershed Association gave Sonoma Water an opportunity to write and publish a groundwater column.

Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water, mentioned that the proposed basin boundary modifications affecting all three basins, have been completed and formally approved by DWR. The City of Sebastopol and three adjoining mutual water systems are now in the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin. The Basin prioritization will be finalized in the late spring. His other updates were included in his presentations to follow.

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Update and Future Direction of Rate and Fee Study

Andy Rodgers walked through what has been happening with regards to the Rate and Fee Study. There have been four Community Meetings. The January 30 meeting was well attended, with about 350 people, including some staff, Board and Advisory Committee members. There were lots of unhappy people and many raw reactions. Big take-away from the meeting was that we need to do more outreach, so we organized an additional three meetings (Santa Rosa, 100 attendees; Rohnert Park, 30 attendees; and Windsor, 30 attendees) in a smaller format that allowed for a more engaged discussion. Meeting participants were mainly de minimis users, mostly rural residential but also some mutual water companies.

Other general take-aways from the meetings indicated– smaller format works better, more accessible. Don't spend too much time on the background. Having maps, recording the meeting, and cookies are all good ideas.

- Rue Furch- We need to get much better at informing people so that they understand what we are doing and why we are doing it.
- Chris Bates – This is my first public exposure to this input. The most surprising thing is that the people who complain the most, don't seem to read anything and come to the meetings with false facts or without facts.
- Joe Gaffney - Even though we have been doing lots of outreach on the website, even radio clips but there still are people who complain they have never heard about the proposed fee. We didn't just come up with the idea; it is state mandated. Gaffney was unsure what to do to overcome the problem.
- Carolyn Dixon – One thing we can do to overcome this is educate people why it is important, people need to be educated about the water cycle. We could come up with a pamphlet or flyer to send out to educate them about the water above and below their property. Dixon thinks the committee might be scaring the public.
- Wayne Haydon - Everybody seems aware of the problem in the Central Valley but not here. We need to educate the people that we are trying to avoid the problem that exists in the Central Valley. Lots of people at the community meetings had problems with understanding some of the information about water use. The other thing he said, the .5 acre/ft calculation isn't well understood to be an average. He noted that it did seem to help to speak one-on-one with the public.
- Joe Gaffney – Questioned that private well owners currently pay a fee to the state. Does this new fee supplant the fee from the state?
 - Response: The state fee is a discharge fee not a groundwater fee.

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- Wayne Haydon – One person at the Rohnert Park meeting brought up the point that we are selling groundwater and described it as fraud.
- Rue Furch – A suggestion for future meetings, would be to develop the map so we could input an address to determine where the parcel is.
- Carolyn Dixon – She pays \$120 fire fee annually for a home in Lake county. It is not a tax but just as a comparison for what people pay in fees.
- Colin Close – Suggest removing the word “pumping” from Urban residential “pumping” well data.
- Chris Bates - Question about the .6 acre feet use by wineries. Is there any more information about where that number came from?
 - Response – It was originally from DWR’s land use survey and climate information for the Santa Rosa Plain. We also reached out to vineyard managers in all three basins. There were some estimates as low as .3 or .4 acre-feet in portions of Sonoma Valley and west county, but the .6 acre-feet seems a good estimate for average usage.
- Chris Bates -What is the average size of the rural residential parcels? It might be worth knowing the size differences?
 - Response – The average is 3.4 acres about 3900 de minimis users reside on 1 acre or less.
- Joe Gaffney – In one of the earlier generations of the fee study, the rural residential parcels were grouped into three brackets - less than one acre; middle range up to 14 acres, high range 14 acres or more.
- Carolyn Dixon – Most parcels in southwest Santa Rosa are ¼ acre or less. The fee structure should be split by parcel size.
- Colin Close - Look at it from another perspective – are you estimating .1 acre/ft for external irrigation, and .4 acre/ft for internal usage? It would be helpful for people to realize how much water is needed for appliances, etc. in the household. Outreach would be helpful for folks to better understand it.
- Henry Mikus – If you start talking about parcel size there are other things to consider. Some properties have multiple houses on a parcel using sharing one well.
 - Response – If an additional house is reflected in the Assessor’s parcel, an additional .25 acre feet per additional house, is factored into the calculation.

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- Matt O'Connor – There are lots of people saying that the water they use goes back into the ground so they really aren't using any water. What is the SGMA definition for when de minimis rates apply?
 - Response – 2 acre-feet for domestic use.

- Wayne Haydon – There is lots of feedback from people that they don't trust the numbers. So, if we could remind people what they mean and how official they are, it would be helpful.

- Colin Close – What Santa Rosa reports to the state is the minimum, some additional is added on. (Such as parks/rec using water to irrigate, this is groundwater for irrigation and not running through the taps).

- Carolyn Dixon – I am extremely concerned about certain plant populations in Windsor. If we consider future use, is it possible to exclude a specified amount of acreage dedicated to rare plants and ecology sites that should be excluded from the acreage? Are any of the parcels excluded from future use when they never should be irrigated?
 - Response – Conservation of the sensitive habitats is done through the general plan of the local cities and counties so SGMA will require that the plan enforces sustainability and protects those resources.

I would like to add that 95% of plants in the 1985 survey are extinct, so I don't think the process is working.

- Colin Close – The GSA doesn't have land-use authority, correct?
 - Response - Land use authority is with the cities and counties as well as well permitting that resides with the counties/local agencies. There are requirements for sharing information. GSAs are required to share information on their plans and findings to local planning departments. Those planning departments need to consider the information when making planning decisions. Conversely, we need to incorporate the land use planning information into our groundwater sustainability plan. SGMA requires the mapping of groundwater dependent ecosystems and identification of inter-connected surface water and those things need to be incorporated into the plans. It will be part of the basin setting and could play a role how sustainable management thresholds are selected by the Board.

- Henry Mikus – What is the population of Santa Rosa sub-basin?
 - Response - 242,000. (Staff will confirm whether that is the basin or watershed population.)

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- Craig Scott – Third to last slide. He recommends the word “data” is added to “What remains to be incorporated?”
- If folks meter wells, can their data override the estimate?
 - Response - Right now, it is not something we are basing this on. When we get to the three year mark, we will be looking at things like that. Maybe we will have tiers of different information. Whatever we do, it will have to be fair.
- Bob Anderson – Could a property with multiple agricultural types on it receive multiple bills for various usages applied per parcel?
 - Response - There will be one bill but it will be a composite number based on all the uses that apply.
- Colin Close - What do you mean by “Establish agency collaborative to support/assist with staffing anticipated initial wave of inquiries”, is that cities supporting staffing?
 - Response - We want to set up something, possibly a phone bank, to respond to folks over a relatively short period of time. We want people to understand the registration program and we need people to talk about it.
Will there be any discussions with the people who are collaborating on this? Will the Board approve it?
 - Response - At the April meeting, there will be the first reading of the ordinance with more details about the program. The registration program would be approved at the June meeting.
- Carolyn Dixon – Not any neighbors in my community, which was annexed into the city about 20 years ago, ever received any postcards or notices about any of the past meetings. I didn’t receive any information either. It is important to cross-check your mailing list!
 - Response - Good idea, we will do that.
- Craig Scott - On the registration program, I thought it was a prerequisite to have the program before imposing rates in July? That it was an opportunity for well owners to opt out before the fees are attached to the tax roll? Isn’t this so?
 - Response – A registration program is required only if we assess fees on de minimis users. If we don’t assess de minimis rural residential we would still do a registration program because it is an opportunity to correct data, it just wouldn’t be a regulation through an ordinance. It is one of the reasons for the significant amount of study going on, so we can get the best numbers, and is why we are still working with a fee range. The registration program would be rolled out simultaneously as the fee. We would look at correcting numbers going forward. My recommendation is to continue to refine the list in-house internally and provide the GSA with the best information you have.

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- Rue Furch – The small farmers would like the opportunity to offer input on the crop fee structure.

Groundwater Sustainability Plan Development – Basin Setting Draft Materials

Marcus Trotta introduced draft material that will be included in the basin setting section of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. His technical team is currently focusing on the hydrogeologic conceptual model. He walked through the overall content and asked the attendees to review it and provide written feedback to him by the end of the month. He was especially interested in input on the selection of principal aquifers. He walked through what they are proposing for principal aquifers - 1) shallow aquifer system – Alluvium & Glen Ellen Formation and 2) deep aquifer system – proposal is to group Wilson Grove, Petaluma Formation and Sonoma Volcanics together. Data shows they relate to each in the subsurface and have connections and groundwater flows between the formations.

- Comment/Question – I am concerned about the contrasts between the three geologies in the deep aquifer and inconsistencies in trying to get specific standard targets. Could we sub-divide the principal aquifer with different criteria?
 - Response - There could possibly be an overlay with management areas that allows for different sustainable management criteria and different thresholds if we have information to support it.
- Mark Grismer – Another way to look at that is the economic production value.
 - Response – There are a lot of wells in the deep aquifer system and we will be able to put some metrics to that when we get to the water budget section.Will there be some detail on the interconnection between the two aquifers?
 - Response – There will be additional discussion on vertical gradients, and water quality, etc.
- Carolyn Dixon – I am particularly interested in what you come up with regarding the Clear Lake clay cell series which are impermeable.
- Rue Furch – You said that we didn't have enough information to come up with accurate data about groundwater loss. I know the planning department has collected well information for a long time. Even if we can't be numerically precise, could we establish trendlines for the level of wells? The trend lines would be informative.
 - Response - The next section on current and historical groundwater conditions will include hydrographs.Trend lines moving forward will provide lots of information even if we don't have the elevations.
 - Response - We have been working with Permit Sonoma to incorporate data from wells that have been monitored for years.

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The context will help us determine how to create a sustainable future.

- Andy Rodgers – Is there enough information to map isotopic signatures in the basin by aquifer?
 - Response -There is a fair amount of isotopic information covered. It doesn't cover the entire basin but it gives a good idea and illustrates some distinctions.
- Wayne Haydon – If we are going to give you a more informed critic, we might need more information from you. It is a lot of work to reinvent what you have already done.
 - Response - We would welcome any detailed review you can do. If you require additional information that would help you do that, let us know.
- Sandi Potter – Will the principal aquifers be defined in 3-dimensional space as a volumetric thing or will they be defined as you get information as they come in?
 - Response - We are proposing to use the 3-dimensional model going forward. We would use that database to look at which aquifers the different wells are in based on where they are. It is adaptable but initially based on the model.
- Matt O'Connor – When you get the comments at the end of March, is this the point where there is no turning back or is it fluid for the time being?
 - Response – For the basin setting section, we would like to use the hydro-conceptual geological model, water budget, current historical groundwater conditions, and the management areas as a framework and foundation. We project we will wrap up the basin setting and the water budget at the end of summer/fall timeframe to finalize. We would like to have a version reasonably complete and agreed upon. We plan to bring it to the Board and give them a description of it, get agreement that it is good enough to move to the next phase – sustainable management criteria. We might get more information that needs to be incorporated. The GSP wouldn't be final until it is adopted and submitted to DWR. It can be updated periodically as new information becomes available.

DWR Technical Support Services

Marcus Trotta presented topic. He said there is an opportunity that DWR has available for technical support services for the construction of monitoring wells. Eleven shallow groundwater monitoring wells – 50 ft deep – have been approved by DWR, a draft agreement is being worked on with Sonoma Water. DWR will be funding the contractor and logging the wells. Hopefully, will get started this summer. They also still have some additional funding available in the program, so they are looking at possibly getting some funding for deep groundwater monitoring wells – 300-400 ft.

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- Wayne Haydon – Is there a write-up about the rationale for doing the deep wells monitoring?
 - Response - Not yet. They tie in to the last section of the hydrogeological conceptual model and data gaps.

- Matt O'Connor – This is about where we left off on the voluntary planning basin. Have you already taken that information into account?
 - Response – Yes, that is a good point.

- Bob Anderson – On the deep well map - between Sebastopol and Cotati - there are two red dots on each side of the fault line.
 - Response - That is to look at potential differences on the Sebastopol fault. There are uncertainties if there is a barrier to the groundwater movement and to what degree, and what depth it is. The purpose of those wells is to get better data about the flow across the fault zone.

Is there potential for adding a pair of wells on the Rogers Creek fault on the east of Windsor?

 - Response - We have some data in the Santa Rosa area on the Rogers Creek fault, but it could change from one area to another. It could be something to look at.

- Carolyn Dixon -There aren't a lot of wells on the map around the old naval air station. Lots of shallow well toxic testing has been done in the last 20-30 years, so it is sad to see it is excluded from the map. If nothing else, we deserve to have some recent water quality testing. The area is an integral part of the watershed.
 - Response – This map shows existing dedicated monitoring wells. It doesn't show wells installed for monitoring contaminants. Overall monitoring network includes "geo-tracker" for monitoring wells, we selected a representative network of wells from that site. The network we are showing on the map isn't the full monitoring network we are considering.

- Rue Furch – The wells being used in southwest Santa Rosa are very polluted. We should be sure to address the issue without displacing people. My question is about some "potential areas" where you might want monitoring wells in the future. Do you have landowners that are interested to do this, or do you need them? If you need them, is there some way we can get closer to them? What would be required of the land-owner to do this and would they have to pay for the well?
 - Response – That will be the next step when we decide on the general area of the wells. The shallow zone wells are located on public right-of-ways or publicly owned parcels, we would also target these types of areas for the deep zone wells. We could also target private property, if the landowner agrees, but there must be an easement agreement. It is our next phase.

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Public comment

No public comment.

Advisory Committee Members:

Colin Close is now officially the alternate for Jennifer Burke.

Meeting Attendees

Advisory Committee Members

Agriculture, Bob Anderson
Business, Joe Gaffney
City of Cotati, Craig Scott
City of Santa Rosa, Colin Close
City of Sebastopol, Henry Mikus
County of Sonoma, Mark Grismer
Environmental, Rue Furch
Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Maureen Geary
Gold Ridge RCD, Matt O'Connor
Independent Water Systems, Chris Bates
Rural Residential, Marlene Soiland (arrived 3:05)
Sonoma County Water Agency, Carolyn Dixon
Sonoma Resource Conservation District, Wayne Haydon
Town of Windsor, Sandi Potter (arrived 3:50)

Absent

Agriculture, David Long
City of Rohnert Park, Mary Grace Pawson
Environmental, Sebastian Bertsch
Rural/residential, Doug Beretta

Public:

Noelle Johnson, Gold Ridge RCD
Elizabeth Cargay, Town of Windsor
Two additional members of public

Staff

GSA Administrator, Andy Rodgers (West Yost Associates)
Communications Affairs, Sonoma Water, Ann DuBay
Sonoma Water, Marcus Trotta
Administrative Assistant (notes-taker), Simone Peters

Facilitator

Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program, Rich Wilson