

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Community Meeting Notes

April 20, 2022

1. Meeting Agenda and Purpose

Sam Magill, Facilitator, opened the meeting announcing the purpose of the gathering was two-fold:

1) introduce the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Plan, and 2) receive feedback on the rate and fee study options. Magill gave a brief overview of the agenda and introduced Susan Harvey, Santa Rosa Plain GSA Vice-Chair, who provided opening remarks.

2. Welcome and Background

Susan Harvey welcomed the group and said that today's meeting is to discuss the protection of our groundwater basin as we face ongoing climate change. She noted that an article in yesterday's Press Democrat made it seem like people would be paying MULTIPLE groundwater fees. This is NOT correct. The GSA Board is only considering one fee, which will be discussed tonight. Tonight is the second of four community meetings to inform groundwater users about a fee to ensure that our groundwater basin doesn't run out of water— particularly as we face ongoing droughts and climate change. About 180 people attended the first community meeting and there were more than 200 questions and comments, which are now available on the GSA website.

Thanks to community feedback, at the April meeting, the GSA Board eliminated a couple of the options discussed on March 29th. Tonight, and at the next two community meetings, we will focus on the Board's preferred option, which is fee based on groundwater use. The current fee, assessed on all groundwater users in the basin, is \$19.90 per acre-foot of groundwater pumped annually, equivalent to \$9.95 per parcel annually for rural homeowners. The County and Sonoma Water have covered costs for non-municipal pumpers until June 30, 2022.

The new fee level under consideration to pay for groundwater management is \$36-44 acre-feet per year, which for rural residents would be \$18-\$22 annually for homeowners.

3. Groundwater Basin Conditions and Projects

Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water Principal Hydrogeologist, shared information regarding the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, basin conditions, and projects and actions in the Plan. The GSP was adopted in December 2021, following more than 50 public meetings and input from the GSA Board and a diverse, stakeholder-based Advisory Committee.

Section 3 of the Plan describes the status of five key sustainability indicators:

1. Groundwater Quality – Generally acceptable in the basin for most beneficial uses, no evidence of problems. Quality is measured by looking at three different constituents of concern that are either naturally occurring or the result of human activities: arsenic, nitrates, and salts.
2. Land Surface Subsidence – No evidence of inelastic land subsidence due to groundwater pumping.

3. Interconnected Surface Water – Data is limited on the effect of groundwater pumping on stream flows, it will be important to gain more information as we move forward.
4. Groundwater Storage – Potential problems: modeling indicates that groundwater in storage continues to decline from annual losses of 600 acre-feet to 2,100 acre-feet in the most recent water budget period.
5. Groundwater Levels – Potential problems: in the future, groundwater levels will decline in the deeper aquifer. Without projects to replenish groundwater or actions to reduce pumping, deeper wells could potentially be impacted by these declines.

Section 4 of the Plan sets thresholds and objectives for each of the five key sustainability indicators.

Section 6 includes projects and actions needed to address current and future problems such as water use efficiency and alternative water source projects for rural resident, commercial and industrial users, and agriculture. Other projects and actions include aquifer storage and recovery (ASR), storm water capture and on-farm capture and low-impact development, and policy options including discretionary review of well permits, Farm Plan Coordination, and well metering for non-residential pumpers.

The average annual budget for fiscal years 2022-23 through fiscal year 2026-27 is approximately \$1,074,600 and will be described in the following presentation.

4. Fee and Rate Study Update and Next Steps

Jerry Bradshaw, SCI Consulting Group, gave an update on funding sources, groundwater pumping data, costs, and preliminary options and rates associated with the options.

Funding sources are broken down into three groups: 1) grants from the state, 2) GSA members (water agencies, cities, and towns), and 3) groundwater users (directly benefiting from pumping and/or spreading costs across all properties).

Rate classes include:

- Municipal and other public service providers
- Agriculture and other irrigation
- Rural residential
- Commercial
- Urban wells

Rate category breakdown:

- Municipal and other public systems (approximately 28% of water pumped)
- Ag, turf (approximately 41% of water pumped)
- Rural residential (approximately 23% of water pumped)
- Commercial and Urban irrigation (approximately 8% of water pumped)

The fee based on groundwater pumped is calculated by dividing the average annual cost of implementing the GSP by the average annual amount of groundwater pumped in the basin. If the budget assumes that the GSA will receive grant funding, the fee would be \$36 per acre-foot of groundwater pumped. If it's assumed that no grant funding is received, the fee would be \$44 per acre-foot. The fee study assumes that rural residents (with no commercial water use) use 0.5 acre-feet of water annually. So, rural residents would pay approximately \$20 per acre-foot.

Alternative funding options include:

- A wellhead fee, which would be between \$70 to \$115 per parcel annually, and which has the disadvantage of not distinguishing between commercial wells and residential wells;
- A parcel tax, which would be levied on all parcels in the basin (not just groundwater users). The parcel tax would be \$8-\$14 per parcel, but requires to be placed on the ballot and 2/3 voter approval;
- A benefit assessment approach, which would be a \$15 to \$25 fee on all property owners in the basin, based on the benefit received from groundwater as a resource.

The current GSA Board direction on the fee options is:

- Retain current structure with updated rate levels.
- Assume 25% funding coming from grants.
- Do not support (hence removed from list of options)
 - wellhead fee (not proportional)
 - parcel tax (extra expense, not likely to pass, cannot fund Year 1)
 - benefit assessment (extra expense, difficult to pass, cannot fund Year 1)

Next steps include discussing community feedback with the GSA Board and asking the Board to narrow the available options; two additional community meetings in April; a meeting with the Advisory Committee in May; a meeting with the Board to consider rates in May; and a potential public hearing on fees and Board adoption in June. The annual deadline for adding billing on tax bills is the month of August.

5. Closing Remarks

Susan Harvey thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Please continue to remain involved, your feedback on the fee study is much appreciated. A meeting summary along with Questions and Answers will be posted soon.

Again, SGMA was not the idea of Sonoma County, it was a law that was passed by state legislature to help protect groundwater resources over the long-term. We are learning as we go. If you are interested in reading the GSP which was submitted to the state, it is on our website. Thank you again for attending.

For more information on the GSA and its Groundwater Sustainability Plan required by the Sustainable Management Groundwater Act, please visit <https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/>.

For more information on the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Plan, please visit <https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/gsp/>.

To find out if your property is within the basin, please visit <https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/user/>.

Attachments:

1. Questions and Answers / Comments
2. List of Attendees

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Questions and Answers

John Hackenburg

How will "Federal Lands", aka Native American Reservations, be treated?

Tribal lands are not subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act but the Federate Indians of Graton Rancheria have a representative on the Santa Rosa Plain GSA Advisory Committee and work cooperatively on groundwater issues.

John Hackenburg

If tribal lands use ground water and are represented on the Advisory Committee, why are they not subject to the same fees as other users?

Tribal lands are not subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act but the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria have a representative on the Santa Rosa Plain GSA Advisory Committee and work cooperatively on groundwater issues.

Tim Carlson

Small well owners need to pay for PG&E power to pump our water. we pay for maintaining and repairs with no support from the water agency. what do we get for the fees you are proposing to charge us?

The fees are to manage the sustainability of the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin in accordance with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Tim Carlson

Are there plans to reduce the amount of water being sent to Marin and East Bay MUD? it seems like this draw on our basin is significant. Eliminating this diversion would help our situation in my opinion.

No local water is delivered to East Bay MUD. North Marin Water District customers pay to support the Warm Springs Dam and pay for water purchased. Marin Municipal Water District purchases water at a premium, and only when available.

Christopher Brooks

Why are these fees not covered by the California general fund? Is there a plan to get more funds from the General Fund?

To date, the GSA has received \$2 million in grant funding from the state. We anticipate receiving additional grant funding in 2023, but grants are competitive, limited and don't cover all the costs.

Christopher Brooks

As an operator of a mutual water company, I **am** paying the state a fee already, so I would be paying multiple fees. Also, you could easily get the usage data for 465 mutual water companies in Sonoma County from the state.

Correct. Additionally, one of our Board of Director seats is a coalition of independent water suppliers. They have been very helpful in providing input and guidance to the planning.

Christopher Brooks - So why charge my mutual water company **anything**? You can get a data dump from the state for almost no effort via the annual reports that show usage.

George Dittle

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The GSA has had several years and spent millions of California dollars to this date. What steps has the GSA taken to sustain our ground water supply?

The GSA submitted a Groundwater Sustainability Plan to the state this past January. You can find the plan here: <https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/gsp/>.

George Dittle – I will try to dissect that document, but you didn't answer my specific question. What is your first step to solve the problem of declining levels? You have had over three years; people are going dry and I'm simply asking what steps have been implemented? Submitting a plan is fine but immediate steps must be available. Example: Why were new wells being allowed to come online?

The submittal of the GSP is the first step toward implementation. As you will see, it lays out projects, programs, and a timeline.

Deborah Curtis

My understanding is that this fee is related to Prop 68, a Statewide proposition. After the last meeting I became aware that not only are the fees not being charged Statewide but not even county wide. It has something to do with the "risk" associated to a basin. What I was able to determine is that there are at least three risks, low, medium, and high and the Santa Rosa basin is rated a 'medium' and I guess mediums are going to be charged this fee/tax. How many basins are in Sonoma County? in California? How is the "risk" assigned to each basin? Is the Santa Rosa basin a medium due to the Casino? Any information on the criteria for risk assessment and being taxed/charged a fee is appreciated so I can be informed. Thank you.

The fee is not related to Prop. 68, but is related to Prop. 26, which was passed by voters many years ago. You are right: this is a medium priority basin. That determination is made by the California Dept. of Water Resources. You can go here to <https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/bp-dashboard/final/> for the details. In essence, prioritization is a combination of many factors, including population, reliance on groundwater, and groundwater problems.

Deborah Curtis – Thanks for the information. Can you please answer all my questions?

There are 14 basins in Sonoma County of which three are medium or high priority and must comply with SGMA. There are more than 500 basins in the state, of which more than 100 must comply with SGMA. The casino does not factor into the state's prioritization process.

Christopher Brooks

In general, I support the idea of managing the basin. It costs the same amount of effort to gather data for a well producing 400 gallons per day or 4000 gallons per day. If the purpose of this fee is to gather data, then why are you charging by usage instead of charging by usage? I agree that eventually charging by usage is probably in our future, but why charge now, especially when meters are not yet required?

The purpose of the fee is to implement the Groundwater Sustainability Plan: <https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/gsp/>. The next presentation will cover how the groundwater usages are determined."

Justin Morse

Who approves future budgets and future fee hikes?

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The GSA Board of Directors approves the annual budget and budget adjustments. The Board would approve any future fee changes.

Christopher Brooks

Why is an area southwest of Cotati not in the basin? There seems to be a lot of grapes grown there. California defined the boundary of the groundwater basin based on geology.

Christopher Brooks – So, you don't know why that area with acres of grapes has been excluded? Is that area, which is a series of hills at the top of the Cotati grade somehow is an endorheic basin where groundwater is separate from the rest of the basin?

Jeff Weaver

My understanding from the Vice-Mayor's comments is that fees will be based on water usage. Will that require well users to install a meter and somehow report their water usage?

SGMA exempts small residential well-owners from being required to meter their water use, but the new law does give the GSA the authority to regulate and to assess fees on all groundwater users. Larger groundwater users can be required to install meters, but this is a policy decision that the GSA Board will need to determine later.

Elsie Jaenicke

As a rural property owner, when/how should I expect to be billed for the fee?

The fee consultant will discuss this, but the fee would be included on your property tax bill. It would be paid annually.

Elsie Jaenicke – If it will be on our property tax bill, is there any way to remove the tax for the Russian River on properties with wells so, we well users are not taxed twice, especially since we don't benefit from the Russian River tax?

Jeff Weaver

In looking at the groundwater basin map, I see at least one parcel where only a small portion of the parcel is over the groundwater basin. If the well on that parcel is located away from the portion of the parcel that sits over the groundwater basin, can the parcel owner seek to be removed from the groundwater basin area?

Great question. A program designed to collect this type of information is offered on the GSA website. There is a survey which allows new or corrected information to be submitted for consideration. <https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/user/>.

Keith Schoenthal

Is the GSA not subject to the Brown Act? I have received exactly one notice of one meeting and it was just stated here that there have been over 50 meetings! The one notice that I did receive was for a previous Zoom meeting in March while I was not in town.

Yes! The GSA is subject to the Brown Act and follows Brown Act requirements for posting meetings and materials. Board and Advisory Committee Meeting agendas are posted on the website, along with materials and presentation. There is an email list for people who are

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interested in receiving meeting information via a monthly update. You can join here:
<https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/email-updates/>.

Jessica McCready

Is there a program in place to proactively identify and manage older inactive wells on private property to secure viable water quality?

The GSA has requested information from parcel owners that have wells:

<https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/user/>. Otherwise, Permit Sonoma has additional information that may be helpful:

<https://permitsonoma.org/divisions/engineeringandconstruction/wellandsepticssystems/waterwells>

Justin Morse

Will wells serving Indian reservations/casinos also be paying or are they excluded?

Tribal lands are not subject to SGMA or subject to fees.

Vincent Hoagland

We live on a 12-acre parcel on Petaluma Hill Road. We have 5 horses and sometimes allow cattle to eat down the grasses in the pasture. We also have a small vegetable garden. Will we be considered a ranch?

Petaluma Hill Road is close to the basin boundary and goes outside of the boundary. To see if your property is located within or outside of a GSA basin, you can use this tool:

<https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/bbat/>.

Douglas Emery

There are no maximums or tiering of the largest groundwater users so there really is no regulation for a Regulatory Fee. Paying to play, or pump by these largest contractors should not be a problem for them but continues to be a problem for all of us. To lump them under one fee range makes little sense.

We are charging per acre-foot, same rate for everyone, estimated use will determine what they pay. Pump more/pay more.

Douglas Emery

You have left out the out-of-county large contractors which should be curtailed and charged at the highest price tier. Could you include this user tier, in addition to the other larger tier levels to help offset fees that now are planned for rural residential users?

They wouldn't be directly charged.

Marin Municipal would pay their fees through rates charged.

Christopher Brooks

Rather than measuring usage, why are you not measuring well levels? Measuring water levels in wells requires a scientific approach to turn off the pump for the same amount of time in advance of the measurement and taking measurements at the same time and day during the week.

Great point. Monitoring is discussed extensively in the GSP:

<https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/gsp/>.

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Christopher Brooks – Thanks. In general, I support the effort to manage the basin. Tweaking the funding to better match the *current* data collection goals of the GSA would be helpful. Promoting future goals by charging on usage and water levels seems reasonable *in the future*.

Marianne Causley

I live in Roseland where several multi-unit housing projects have been approved. Will sustainability be obtainable with the continuing land development and population growth?

Development within the city limits is supplied by the City, which mainly relies on surface water supplied by Sonoma Water. The GSA doesn't have the authority to limit land use, like new development. Land use is decided by the county and the cities, who have representatives on the GSA Board and Advisory Committee. These representatives can help carry information about groundwater concerns back to their boards and councils. In addition, SGMA requires land-use agencies to consider groundwater resources and the new groundwater plans when they make development decisions.

Deborah Curtis

What is the process for allowing new wells to be dug? Are there any restrictions? Any denials for new wells?

Well permits are issued by Permit Sonoma.

Deborah Curtis – Is Permit Sonoma attending the meetings? Does the GSA have any input to Sonoma Permit to help reduce/lessen the draw on the ground water? If not, why?

Permit Sonoma staff attend many GSA meetings and they work with the GSAs on groundwater issues. Permit Sonoma must consider the GSP when considering growth and development decisions in the groundwater basins. SGMA left well permitting in the hands of the permitting agencies (in Sonoma County that is Permit Sonoma).

Barry Lawrence

Will fees be charged within the contributing watershed area or Santa Rosa watershed area only? Or both?

The fee only applies to the groundwater basin, and not to contributing areas that are outside of the basin boundaries.

Douglas Emery

Sonoma County already charges Small Mutual Well Systems a well head Permit Fee to the tune of \$1200 a year per well for no benefit to the users. The Well Head Fee that the GSA proposes is a redundant fee for these Mutual Wells. Could the GSA perhaps work with the County to collaborate and share this high fee that is already not connected to a service or benefit?

And, the state has water usage data for mutual water systems, which can easily be obtained by this organization. BTW - I was wrong, there are 464 small water systems in the county, not 465, see

<https://sdwis.waterboards.ca.gov/PDWW/JSP/WaterSystems.jsp?PointOfContactType=none&number=&WaterSystemStatus=A&name=&county=Sonoma>

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Douglas Emery – Sorry was that a response by Mr. Brooks? This question didn't have to do with data, although we have kept that since 2004. Why would there have to be a redundant County/Agency Fee for a wellhead?

The GSA fee is to locally implement the Groundwater Sustainability Plan which includes projects and management actions: <https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/gsp>.

George Dittle

My well water level has dropped significantly. What steps have been taken to this point to control this condition? What are your plans for addressing this condition? If you are collecting any fees, we should expect to see some concrete / specific steps you plan to implement? For example, I have seen no attempt of the GSA implementing any user conservation programs. Not even a public information campaign.

I'm sorry to hear about the drop in water levels. The GSA has been focused on developing the groundwater sustainability plan that Marcus Trotta mentioned (it was submitted in late January 2022). Now, we're turning to projects and programs. One of the projects mentioned (Aquifer Storage and Recovery) is designed to help recharge the aquifer. One of the other projects he mentioned is a user conservation campaign. We will be actively working with partners on seeking grant funding for the conservation project, and it's included in the budget.

Share information with the GSA if you are experiencing problems. The GSA can look to see if it is a common experience in periods of drought, if it will recover. On the website, GUIDE, good mechanism for well owners to share information with the GSA. Note, not all well problems are caused by basin conditions, problems could be older wells that are clogged and condition of the wells.

Tim Carlson

Are there plans to reduce the sale of water to Marin and East Bay MUD? This is a significant draw on our basin and would help our situation here.

Sonoma Water provides water to North Marin Water District and to Marin Municipal Water District. It doesn't provide water to the East Bay. A vast majority of the water provided is from the Russian River (Lake Sonoma). North Marin contributed to the construction of Warm Springs Dam and the water supply system and Marin Municipal pays an additional fee for its water (which it receives only when available).

Tim Carlson – Thank you for this, I was concerned that North Marin Water was getting groundwater.

Rue Furch

Hey Tom ... you're out of your basin!

Tom (Conlon) – I 'm talking RATES! Didn't the County and Sonoma Water pay for this startup to date? Or were these levies somehow limited by GSA geography?

Rue Furch – I'm not sure I understand the question. The "Background on Groundwater Fees" slide is up now ... maybe that will help. PS ... if you are really in the Sonoma Valley Basin - you'll want to attend that meeting. It won't be identical. Check with Norman Gilroy too.

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Barry Lawrence

So, to confirm, only that area within the blue dotted line will be charged?

You can utilize an interactive map to see exactly where your address is relative to the basin boundary: <https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/user/>.

Barry Lawrence – You didn't answer my question. You are using different terms than your map is using. You are saying "the basin" your map says "Water shed". I only want to confirm that if your property is within the Grey boundary, no fees charged. If you are within the blue dotted lines, you are in the "basin" and will be charged. Am I correct?

Yes, that is correct, the GSA only has the authority to charge groundwater users within the basin (blue dotted line). It can support and fund monitoring or projects in the surrounding watershed areas that provide a benefit to the "basin" but can't levy fees in those areas.

Tom Conlon

Marcus Trotta provided an "average annual cost" estimate. How much has the GSA spent to date (i.e., prior to the implementation of well owner fees)?

\$377k to-date. * Gross and Net of grants from other sources.

Tom Conlon

Once this new funding mechanism has been established, will those of us who DO NOT HAVE WELLS but are customers of Sonoma Water and/or live in the Unincorporated County receive REIMBURSEMENT of the GSA startup subsidies that were given to Well Owners?

I think you are asking if the agencies that have contributed to the running of the GSA to date will be reimbursed? No, they won't be reimbursed. The funding from the county and Sonoma Water came from general funds (property tax) revenues.

Tom Conlon – Thank you, understood. We all enjoy the benefits of a sustainable groundwater resource. Startup expenses <\$400k are a small price to pay locally to set up a sustainable funding stream for aquifer management. Thx for this explanation.

Douglas Emery

Groundwater is a necessity, not a milkshake, please. As a necessity for life for Sonoma County rural residents there should be no fee or tax at all. Groceries are not taxed as a necessity by law. At the very least an allotment of water for life of a rural family could be determined. If this allotment is exceeded, then a fee could kick in. Right now, the estimated well use is still high by my data with neighbors on rural one half- acre and acre parcels. This no fee system for rural residential users was adopted by the Agency Board for the development of the Plan. Could you please extend this consideration going forward? Keeping with the SRGSA precedent of not taxing rural"

Thank you for your comment. It will be included in summary feedback for consideration by the GSA.

John Hackenburg

We are part of an HOA. The residents of the HOA use municipal water for their homes, but the HOA has a well that provides all the irrigation needs for the community owned and maintained landscaping. How will this well be covered under the proposed fees?

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Good question. Using mapping, the fee would be based on the areas that are being irrigated. The fee would be charged to the HOA (not individual property owners).

John Hackenburg – We have a meter on the HOA well and have kept records for over 30 years. Would we be assessed based on our usage or acreage irrigated?

George Dittle

I attended the initial GSA meetings years ago. I offered my well for monitoring. I was told directly by a GSA member "Not interested because you are too conserving"!

Sorry about that! Generally, for the voluntary well monitoring program, we were looking for wells in areas where we didn't have much coverage or there were data gaps. Since then, for purposes of SGMA, there are very specific requirements for monitoring wells (they need to be dedicated to monitoring and not used for pumping, and some other requirements).

King Wayman

Does the Oakmont Village Community in East Santa Rosa fall into the Santa Rosa Plain Basin? According to the map online it looks like it falls within the Kenwood Valley Basin. Can you please confirm.

If you have a specific address, you can find out if you're in the Santa Rosa Plain Basin by visiting <https://santarosaplainingroundwater.org/user/>.

King Wayman – If located in the Kenwood Valley Basin would that fall under the Santa Rosa Plain or Sonoma Valley GSA?

George Dittle

Why do we need to wade through your "Plan"? You know who we are, you can apply fees to us. Why are you not sending out specific applicable information directly to us users?

I'm not sure what you mean regarding requiring people to wade through the Plan. There are about 9,000 users in the Santa Rosa Plain, so I'm not quite sure how we would develop information relevant to each user and what exactly you would be looking for. I'm happy to discuss this with you offline tomorrow. You can email me at ann.dubay@scwa.ca.gov and let me know if you have some ideas regarding information that would be helpful to people. Thank you!

Christopher Brooks

If you are set on charging by acre-foot, then what is your plan for water usage being reduced by conservation? How would you make up the difference? How about just getting *all* the money from the state general fund?

Conservation is an important component of implementing the GSP, but there are many other strategies outlined in the plan. The GSA plans to apply for state grant funding.

Marianne Causley

Is there any consideration of adjusting water use estimates (i.e., fees) for a single person in residence as compared to a large or multiple family household?

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Water use for all rural residential users is a fixed amount per year based on an average of large and small parcels. The Groundwater Sustainability Plan includes implementing programs to incentivize conservation.

Keith Schoenthal

While they can't be charged fees it would be nice to include in the tables (the current one being the amount of acre-feet being used), the amount that the Casino uses especially with the proposed expansion!

Thank you for your comment. The groundwater levels monitoring outlined in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan is basin wide.

Keith Schoenthal – It is not clear to me how much water the Graton Casino uses, you might ask Greg Sarris :-). Appendix D of the EIS says 250 gallons per minute “firm” water (24 hours per day) which is 131 million gallons per year or 484 acre-feet per year, see https://www.gratoneis.com/documents/final_eis/files/appendices/vol1/Appendix_D.pdf.

That number is a guess from the EIS, my guess is that the real number is probably lower. The Santa Rosa Basin annual is purported to be 78,720 acre-feet. So, the casino is probably not a huge player, but better data would be useful. At the original county casino meetings, years ago, the casino was expected to use as much water as another Cotati. That was before the expansion plans.

perrettd@sutterhealth.org 46

A portion of the 35 billion in excess taxes collected last year will pay for your employment act for the rest of our natural lives.

Christopher Brooks

What is turf irrigation, and will they pay this fee?

Turf irrigation like golf courses and school yards are types of things we look at. Turf is estimated to use 3.5 acre-feet of water annually for every acre irrigated. Yes, turf is included.

Christopher Brooks – Thank you. I must have missed his explanation of turf, could you briefly restate it? Thanks, golf courses, school yards make sense for turf irrigation. Are public parks included in turf? Ann DuBay wrote that turf is 3.5 acre-feet annual? Is that per acre? Or total for the county?

Keith Schoenthal

It is hard to imagine that Santa Rosa / Windsor / Rohnert Park ONLY use the same estimate as the rural residential users.

Local cities rely heavily on water supplied by Sonoma Water rather than groundwater. This is a strategy called 'conjunctive use.' The cities use Russian River water when it's available and significantly reduce groundwater use to allow the aquifer to recover. They increase groundwater use during droughts and in emergencies. So, on average, cities get more than 90% of their water from Sonoma Water (which is almost entirely Russian River water).

Keith Schoenthal – Will this be reevaluated if (when) the Eel River diversion dam is removed?

Lisa Van Hoesen

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We are in the contributing watershed area; will we be metered? Why are we being charged when we need to pay for all our well costs, the state should pay the fees.

If you live in the area outside the basin boundary, you are not subject to fees. You can look up your address here: <https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/user/>. If you use your water for only your home, garden, etc., the GSA **cannot** require you to install a meter. As Marcus Trotta noted, the fee is required to protect the common groundwater resource and isn't related to well costs.

Rue Furch

Is it true that a well user could provide actual water use to change the fee that is based on estimates, so to amend their fee?

Should they move forward with the extraction-based estimates, the GSA Board will need to consider other parameters and details of the fee structure, such as:

- How to incorporate new information, such as better estimates of parcel-specific groundwater use from metered or other data sources. Specific protocol or standards will likely need to be developed by the GSA to consider amending the fee through its appeals process
- Whether and how to incorporate any incentive-based credits for things like recharge projects, information sharing, voluntary metering etc."

Tom Conlon

Are the error bounds on the crop types comparable, or are some types (e.g., pasture, grain with irrigation) subject to MUCH wider error bounds than say vineyards? Another consideration should be irrigation type (spray, drip, monitored use, etc.), and soil type / season of use. Any/all of these could make a big difference in amount of water used.

I'm not sure there are higher error bounds for the different crop types. The crop-specific applied water estimates represent the best available information on average usage for each crop type. Irrigation for crops on individual parcels does likely vary quite a bit based on soil type, irrigation practices etc. as noted by Rue Furch.

Tom Conlon – Please see my follow-up question below.

Deborah Curtis

When will the decision on how to calculate fees/tax and who will be charged, be finalized?

Approval of a groundwater sustainability fee will be considered on June 9 or a subsequent meeting in July.

Rue Furch

Board decision on June 9th is for ALL basins or only the SRP? I know there are folks from other basins on the call tonight.

June 9 is the Santa Rosa Plain hearing. Please check with the other GSA websites for other meetings:

Sonoma Valley: <https://sonomavalleygroundwater.org/meetings/>

Petaluma Valley: <https://petalumavalleygroundwater.org/meetings/>

Rue Furch – Thank you. That isn't clear to some folks who are on this Zoom I suspect. It may be hard to understand that each of the three basins will have different dates for meetings and

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decisions and possibly different fee structures. Can someone be sure to let folks know that dates/rates and other discussion in the presentation tonight are ONLY for the Santa Rosa Plain .. find information on other basins online.

Tom Conlon

Is recycled water metered at the end-user level?

Yes, recycled water deliveries are metered at the parcel-scale and is used to offset estimated groundwater use for those parcels.

Lance Iwanaka

If located in the Kenwood Valley Basin, would that fall under the Santa Rosa Plain or Sonoma Valley GSA?

The Kenwood Valley Basin is separate from both and is considered a "low-priority basin" by the State and therefore not required to comply with SGMA. Portions of the Kenwood Basin are located within the contributing watershed areas of the Santa Rosa Plain and Sonoma Valley and voluntary monitoring programs have been in-place in the southern portions of the Kenwood basin, but the basin is outside the jurisdiction of the Santa Rosa Plain and Sonoma Valley GSAs and could not charge fees to groundwater users within the Kenwood Basin.

John Pfeiffer

So as a rural residential well owner, I will be charged \$20-something per year to support an agency that monitors groundwater availability and quality. I am fine with that. It's cheap insurance for continued groundwater access for all of us.

Rue Furch

How will changes in jurisdictions' well uses be charged? There may be more well uses by cities and/or other jurisdictions as Sonoma Water may need to reduce delivery.

If the same methodology for calculating municipal groundwater use is applied as was done for the 2019 fee study, it would be based on a 5-year rolling average – as Jerry Bradshaw just explained. The public agencies need to download information. If Rohnert Park has to pump more and Sonoma Water supplies more, the fee will change.

Douglas Emery

Why are the largest users-large, largest, and PLUS sized users lumped under the same range? And why is the out of county contractors, e.g., MMWD missing? Should this be curtailed, and fees increased? And this will regulate use?

We are charging per acre-foot, same rate for everyone, estimated use will determine what they pay. Pump more/pay more.

Deborah Curtis

If the tax/fee will be on our property tax bill, is there any way to remove the tax for the Russian River tax on properties with wells so we well users are not taxed twice, especially since we don't benefit from the Russian River tax?

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No, the voter-approved Warm Springs Dam tax will not be removed from tax bills. The groundwater basins have benefitted from years of cities using water from Lake Sonoma rather than pumping groundwater from the basin. The dam also provides flood protection and recreation benefits for the community.

Tom Conlon

Maybe my question is misunderstood. "Best available estimate" must be based on more than one observation, right? I am inquiring about the statistical robustness of these "best available estimates". I am concerned that the current "presumed usage" method provides no disincentive to users WITHIN any given crop/usage type to pumping more water. For example, if both me and my neighbor dry-farm grain, but I now decide to increase my well water usage (because climate change is drying my crop out too much), I continue to pay the same assessment on a per acre-foot basis. Is this scenario plausible?

With a modelled estimate, it does not provide an incentive to pump less. We have proposed provisions for a process for appeal if someone uses less and can prove it, there can be relieve into the rate. Not built into the rate but built into the process.

Tom Conlon – Thank you for this response. I appreciate this is just getting started.

Deborah Curtis

It's tax code 06700 WS DAM-RUSSIAN RIVER PROJ on tax bill.

To reduce chronic and devastating flooding to communities along the Russian River, in 1937 growers in Sonoma and Mendocino counties organized to promote a federally developed flood control project. In 1948, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a study of the Russian River Project. Warm Springs Dam, which created Lake Sonoma, was the second component of the project (Lake Mendocino was the first). Lake Sonoma was developed for three purposes:

- Flood control (particularly for the lower Russian River communities)
- Water supply
- Recreation

Prior to the construction of the Russian River Project, most cities and water districts relied primarily on groundwater to meet residential demands. The availability of year-round water has allowed Sonoma Water's contractors (the cities of Cotati, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, and Sonoma; the town of Windsor; and Valley of the Moon and North Marin water districts) to significantly reduce groundwater pumping. From 2017 to 2021, Sonoma Water supplied 90 pe"

Christopher Brooks

I guess I'm too late, Ann wrote: "Turf is 3.5 acre-feet of water annually". What does that mean? 3.5 acre-feet for the entire county? 3.5 acre-feet per acre?

3.5 acre-feet per acre.

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How are you measuring gw levels across the basin?

There have been several different monitoring programs developed through private wells. DWR has provided records that goes back years. Also monitoring wells that monitor conditions.

Will urban users/municipal water users be charged?

No, they will not, but they will see a little bit of this charge through the billing on the water bill. For most of the average homes in the district, it would be approximately \$1 a month.

How do you differentiate between small hobby farm and larger agricultural enterprise? House and some animals?

Might be considered both – home and pastureland.

Rue Furch

Could we have a copy of this PPT? I'm seeing some good info here. Thanks!

The PPT is available online here: <https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/meeting/rate-and-fee-study-community-meeting-virtual/>.

Rue Furch – Thank you. Saves me scribbling. Lots of good comments and questions - they'll be captured?

Jessica McCready

Will this be recorded and emailed out to attendees?

The meeting will be recorded and if you contact me at ann.dubay@scwa.ca.gov and I will send it to you.

Duncan Matheson

Can I have permission to record this?

The meeting is being recorded and you are welcome to email me at ann.dubay@scwa.ca.gov and I will send you a link to the recording.

Christopher Brooks

Many thanks to the staff/presenters. I'm all for the management of the basin, I just question how the funding is being done. Many thanks for your time.

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Attendee List

Panelists/Staff

Andrea Rodriguez
Andy Rodgers
Ann DuBay
Jennifer Burke
Jerry Bradshaw - SCI Consulting
Marcus Trotta
Ryan Aston – SCI Consulting
Sam Magill
Simone Peters
Susan Harvey, Vice-Chair, GSA Board

Attendees

Barry Lawrence	Kathy Hennig
Bob Anderson, Chair, Advisory Committee	Keith Schoenthal
Brandon Ingersoll	King Wayman
Carol Muelrath	Lance Iwanaka
Chris Gaston	Lisa Van Hoesen
Christina David	livingvedas@gmail.com
Christopher Brooks	Madolyn Bemis
Christy Siojo	Marianne Causley
Deborah Curtis	Nancy Horton
Douglas Emery	Pam Stafford, GSA Board Member
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Elsie Jaenicke	Peter Martin
Eric Kindseth	Raymond Muelrath
George Dittle	Rhonda Smith
George Gambonini	Robin Casadidio
Greg Harder	Rue Furch, Vice-Chair, GSA Advisory Committee
Harry Skandera	Stephanie Hoobler
Hgruendle	Tiffany Seder
Jeff Weaver	Tim Carlson
Jerry McCartan	Tom Conlon
Jessica McCready	Tony Casadidio
John Hackenburg	Vincent Hoagland
John Pfeiffer	Wayne Haydon, Advisory Committee member
Justin Morse	