

**Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Advisory Committee Meeting
MEETING SUMMARY**

Date/time: Monday, May 13th | 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: Santa Rosa Utilities Field Office, 35 Stony Point Road, Santa Rosa

Contact: Andy Rodgers, GSA Administrator

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MEETING RECAP

Summary of Action Items

<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Provide clarification of where the money Sonoma Water is contributing to the Alternative Plan would come from.	Ann Dubay	GSA staff meeting
Develop an updated fact sheet.	Administrator	Before June Board meeting
Share Hydro-geologic Conceptual Model figures	Marcus Trotta	Before July AC meeting
Send GSP reviewer form shortly after the meeting. Send comments tracker to Members.	Rich Wilson	Following Advisory Committee meeting
Utilize the comment reviewer form to provide comments of the Hydro-geologic Conceptual Model – Draft subsection	Committee members	COB June 3 rd
Review current SGMA Proposition 68 Project Solicitation Package (PSP) and let GSA staff know of any comments that should be submitted.	Committee members	At least one week before June 17 th PSP public comment period deadline
Circulate the Water Rights FAQ to committee members.	GSA staff	With May meeting summary distribution

Next meeting: Monday, July 8, 2019, 3:00 – 5:30 pm, City of Santa Rosa’s Utilities Field Office (UFO), 35 Stony Point Road, Santa Rosa

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Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Rich Wilson, Sacramento State University Consensus and Collaboration Program (facilitator), opened the meeting, suggested a round of introductions, and followed with an overview of the meeting’s agenda and ground rules. No comments were received on the agenda.

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General Public Comment Period

No public comments were received during this period.

GSA Staff and Advisory Committee Updates

April GSA Board meeting activity

Andy Rodgers, Administrator, presented a brief overview of what had been discussed at the April 11 Board meeting. Lynda Hopkins accepted the nomination as Chair, as did Tom Schwedhelm for Vice-Chair. The first reading of the Groundwater User Ordinance was waived and was introduced by title only; Rodgers will provide more detail on this later in the meeting. Board said yes to an agency budget reserve policy; Rodgers will provide more detail on this later in the meeting. A small amendment to Raftelis' contract was approved so they can finish their work. Sebastopol attended the Board meeting to discuss joining the Board; Board would support a prorated membership model. Sebastopol Council will discuss their membership options at their June 4 meeting.

"Plan B", which was introduced by Chair Hopkins, is now being called the "Alternative Plan". The Fee Methodology that was approved in March was reviewed and results summarized. The model was updated to reflect little to no pasture irrigation by groundwater.

Rate and fee study update

Andy Rodgers recapped the approved fee methodology and summarized results of irrigated pastures study, updated status of fee offset grant program and discussed Santa Rosa Plain 'Alternative Plan' Funding Proposal being developed by Sonoma County and Sonoma Water.

The Alternative Plan funding proposal includes supplemental contributions by the County and Sonoma Water (plus if Sebastopol decides to contribute payments to join the GSA) and would result in covering fees for the following three categories for three years: Category 1: Municipal suppliers: The cities of Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa and Sebastopol, the Town of Windsor, and Sonoma Water, would pay annual groundwater sustainability user fees. Category 2: Unincorporated groundwater users: Rural residents, water districts (mutual, public systems and investor-owned utilities), commercial, and agricultural groundwater users in the unincorporated areas would be subject to the groundwater sustainability fee -- but would not be assessed for three years. Category 3: Urban groundwater users: Urban well owners (who live within city/town limits but have a well on their property), mobile home parks using groundwater, and commercial groundwater users within cities/towns would be subject to the fee -- but would not be assessed for three years. Without this contribution, the fees would move forward with the methodology already approved.

The next steps include Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Sonoma Water Board of Directors considers proposal for contributions totaling \$231,000 annually for three years to the GSA on May 21; Sebastopol City Council considers proposal to contribute a total of \$71,400 (in three annual payments of \$23,800) to join the GSA Board on June 4; Sebastopol joins Board (dependent on this City council meeting). At the June 13 meeting the GSA Board will consider approval for Ordinance Requiring Registration of Groundwater Use Facilities, Water User Reporting and Authorizing the Adoption of Groundwater Sustainability Fee and Resolution, and Adoption of the Groundwater Sustainability Fee, and Alternative Plan. The Alternative Plan would not replace all the work that has been done so far around the fee study and methodology.

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Rodgers asked that members review the Groundwater Use Summary and Alternative Plan handouts.

Advisory Committee member comments and questions:

- Member Gaffney posed a question regarding comparison of working draft of total actual and estimated groundwater pumping usage total doesn't match with the Page 9 acre/feet.
 - Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water said the higher acre/feet doesn't take into account recycled water use.
 - Rodgers confirmed numbers are still being refined and that is the way the GSA is using ranges.

- Member Mikus questioned of cities that have city water customers, who gets billed?
 - Rodgers said the plan was for the GSA to bill the municipalities.

- Member Furch commented, that if the Alternative Plan is approved, the operating plan will be reduced and this would benefit the member agencies.

- Member Burke provided feedback/comment regarding the categories. She finds them confusing and wanted to know if the users who are not being covered could be named and then say everyone else is having their fee paid for, for the first three years.
 - Rodgers said he can consider making it clearer who is covered (and who is not).

- Member Bertsch suggested the categories be similar to groups discussed in past community meetings: cities, residences and businesses.

- Member Dixon said a group missing is irrigation that is stuck in the middle rural residential in the city limits.
 - Rodgers confirmed they are included in Category 3.

- Member Gaffney wanted to know if Sonoma Water's share for the Alternative Plan will come from the Aqueduct Fund.
 - Ann Dubay, Outreach and Communications Manager, Sonoma Water, indicated that the plan is going to the Board on May 21 and the split isn't final yet. Sonoma Water has budgeted and planned a budget for the next several years — 2/3 from its general fund and 1/3 from Water Transmission Fund because of the wells in the SRP to groundwater. The split from Sonoma Water would be based on that split. Part of what contractors pay for are the ground water wells that Sonoma Water has. Ann doesn't know how that would be reflected in the bills.

- Member Pawson commented that the Sonoma Water wells are metered and there is no reason why the contractor's contribution can't be the rate times the water use that comes from the well; it should not be some random 1/3, 2/3 contribution. She thinks this point should confirm to contractors that they're not being double billed.

- Member Pawson also commented that Category 2 seems extremely broad as it looks like the tax payers of Sonoma County are subsidizing SSU and CalAms investors' ground water use and

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would be a dangerous public policy precedent to set. Andy indicated that the policy makers who proposed this may have considered many factors, and the policy isn't final, but this is what is being presented to the members. Pawson said they can make an attempt to straighten out some of these issues now for Board approval down the road.

- Rodgers welcomed continued comments on the Alternative Plan.
- Member Haydon brought up Category 2 agricultural users as being listed there. Should Category 3 list agricultural within city limits?
- Member Scott commented that the Alternative Plan may have unintended consequences. To minimize these consequences, are there things that can be made to look more like the fee approach as possible? Particularly the three years, it seems arbitrary and only benefits some. Can we make it one year or less?
 - Rodgers responded that the Alternative Plan was well thought out over the last few months, despite it just being introduced to the members just now. The suggestion to have it match the fee structure that was approved is a good one. He confirmed that no one is getting a free pass, they're still part of the fee. The Alternative Plan is a funding strategy for the fee methodology that was approved. Moving it to a one year is not on the table and Rodgers confirmed a year would go by too fast to be able to address any questions and comments that will come through. The three-year period would allow for more time to gather and process the rural residential fees.
- Member O'Conner asked Marcus Trotta where we'll be with the Plan in three years.
 - Trotta said the Plan will most likely be done. Idea is that the closer we get to the GSP being done, another study would be done for how much it would cost to implement and run the agency once the GSP is submitted.
- Member Furch said her question for SSU and golf courses and others similar said that the attorneys had a hard time devising a way to legally distinguish the categories such that is made a better fit.
 - Rodgers confirmed that wasn't the primary reason, but more the ability of the GSA to not have to roll everything out right away, the three years would give more time to finalize the numbers.
- Member Burke wants clarification of where the money Sonoma Water is contributing to the Alternative Plan would come from.
 - Ann DuBay mentioned the pumpage fees (\$12,000) would come from the Water Transmission fund, the remaining contribution would come from two possible sources, the general fund and the other is being negotiated with the County right now. The contribution would not come from the Water Transmission Fund. Member recapped that the County and Sonoma Water are offering a voluntary contribution to pay fees for certain categories and that the GSA is going to be in a position to accept or reject the contribution and what it would offset, not how the County and Sonoma Water wants to spend their money.

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- Rodgers confirmed that no decision is being made today, but the comments, questions, and feedback that is happening is helpful. He confirmed the two actions that will happen is approving to adopt the fee, and in order to adopt the fees, to approve/pass the ordinance. Another item is approving Sebastopol joining the Board.
- Member Potter asked if there are other groups that want to strategize on getting their fees waived, is that something that has to go through the GSA?
- Member Pawson, how critical is Sebastopol joining the board to the Alternative Plan? Does it still work if the GSA decides to use Sebastopol's GSA membership fee for something else, like reimbursing other members?
 - Andy said Sebastopol's member fees are not real at the moment, but what is, is the fee methodology that was approved in March. If the Alternative Plan is approved as is written now or some version of it. And if Sebastopol does join, then the GSA will be presented with a plan on how their contribution would be spent.
- Member Burke asked if the County and Sonoma Water would be paying for Category 2 and Sebastopol's fees would pay Category 3 and if there is a range for the County's contribution should Sebastopol not join.
 - Rodgers reiterated that we don't know what would happen just yet in part due to refining numbers.
- Member Bertch asked if we can still list the fee on the tax bill that shows waived (for the next three years). This would ease the shock to folks seeing it on their bill.
 - Rodgers agrees but due to some other logistics, it doesn't look like it would show.

Groundwater user registration program update

Andy Rodgers provided an overview of the free and convenient registration program that will allow the GSA to verify basic information about groundwater use, including how the Groundwater User Registration Program works and why the GSA is proposing a program. The program will provide important information about groundwater use in the Santa Rosa Plain basin and will help identify areas in the basin that may benefit from future programs. SGMA requires some form of regulation to assess fees on de minimis groundwater users (i.e., most rural residential groundwater users). A registration program was determined to be the least intrusive form of regulation for groundwater users, and provide the most value to the GSA (information). He confirmed that the Groundwater User Registration Program is not requiring meters to be installed on wells, requiring groundwater users to monitor their water use (although people are welcome to join the voluntary monitoring program), requiring groundwater users to fill out forms, unless they want to correct or share additional information. Assistance/guidance will be available from Ag Commissioner and Permit Sonoma.

Rodgers also asked members to comment on the name of the registration program, so it better reflects what it is.

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- Member Pawson recommended the language stay consistent with the Ordinance and focused on sustainable management.
- Member Bates commented that Sustainability should be part of the title/language. Make it clear that they're not being "charged to access their own water" but rather we all need to make sure we have water for 20-30+ years from now.
- Member Haydon wanted to make sure we recap groundwater law and how it all works. Rodgers said a fact sheet was developed and is on the website. A request to send this out was made.
- Member Pawson suggested the name Groundwater Sustainability Information Survey. Make it less about an individual but the system. The word "suitability" provides optimism.
- Member O'Conner asked what relevant data would come from the three years waiting that Andy mentioned earlier.
 - Rodgers said more information that is contributed from residents will help refine numbers. There's been no real effort in gathering this type of data before. New use information will come through.
- Member Pawson asked that language stating this is mandated by the state be added to the form. She also wants to know if there is a way to incentivize their participation. Perhaps give context to their participation.
- Member Dixon made the point that the registration program needs to be made available to folks without access to computers. A kiosk someplace? Or school computer labs hours?
 - Rodgers confirmed that yes, there were partnering agencies that will help those with limited access otherwise.
- Member Bertsch said having areas in the registration form where participants can voice concerns or additional comments, like not being able to use well water due to nitrate.

Marcus Trotta provided the following technical updates: DWR came out with their draft basin prioritization. Wilson Grove Basin has been changed to Low Priority and would not need to comply with SGMA. Santa Rosa Plain was bumped back down to medium priority. Water use estimates were higher in May draft but are now in line with current rate and fee study estimates. The Department of Water Resources announced the opening of the 45-day public comment period for the Draft Proposition 68 2019 Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program Guidelines and the Planning – Round 3 Proposal Solicitation Package (PSP). Summer is focused on planning and targeted to GSA's that may not have received funding the first time around or Basins that didn't get enough funding the first time around. After receiving a 1-million-dollar grant, there is a cap (\$200,000-800,000) that the Santa Rosa Plain could apply for, for GSP development. Trotta encouraged members to look at PSP draft material to provide comments or think about what we would want to put forth in a funding application.

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- Member Furch questioned funding planning. Is there a way to get funding for watershed analysis?
 - Trotta said there is language that he interprets as no, this analysis wouldn't be constrained.
- Furch also asked - Did DWR make any comments that would enlighten how they review jurisdictional boundaries vs scientific analysis statewide or here?
 - Trotta said no, they did not.
- Member Bertsch suggested a fact sheet that shows what the County has done to prevent more bureaucracy and millions in other costs if the state took over.
- Member Pawson asked that this be put together.
 - Marcus Trotta said the next July meeting will focus on the historical groundwater conditions subsection and reviewed the Board and Advisory Committee Meeting Schedule in more detail. Marcus confirmed they brought in a couple of sub-consultants, per Sonoma Water's contract with the GSA Board, to help with certain areas of the GSP, including Parker Groundwater and Montgomery Associates for the computer modeling and the water budget work.

Sonoma Water presented on Outreach efforts. A request was made to the members to provide ways the GSA can reach out to stakeholders during the summer and going into the fall.

Public Comment - GSA is not interested in the fee schedule and members should give thought to exempting de minimis users in general. He is looking into legal arguments for rural residential de minimis users.

All-Basin SGMA Climate Change Workshop

Andy Rich of Sonoma Water talked about SGMA requirements for incorporating climate change into the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Plan. He reminded committee members about the upcoming May 22 climate change workshop. He focused on how climate change will affect future water budgets and described DWR climate scenarios that must be considered during the GSP development process.

Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Development – Basin Setting

Current and Historical Groundwater Conditions – Draft materials

Marcus Trotta provided an overview of the revised draft of the Plan Area sections. Highlights of the revisions were discussed. The figures are still being worked on the Hydrogeological Conceptual Model. Trotta requested that Advisory Committee members send in any additional comments. Unless there are substantial changes, these sections will not be shown at the next advisory committee meeting. Input on these sections will be helpful to receive over the next two weeks. The majority of changes are more comprehensive referencing (documents used to compile the section). Streamlined Section 3.1.4. Main changes this round was in Section 3.1.5 and describing the principal aquifers and DWRS requirements to have them well defined.

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This GSP is going to be recommending additional information gathering at a minimum and as new information becomes available in the future, we may want to reconsider how we're defining these aquifer systems, it may make sense to add a system or to combine some in the future, depending on what they're seeing.

Advisory Committee member comments and questions:

- Member Furch asked that the water basin setting be worked on so people understand what imported water means, either through figures or language in the text.
 - Trotta agreed that figures that show the story is going to be worked on by his team.

Public comments and questions:

- Michael Hilber wanted to have better communication on the water budget and do we have any estimates of the volumes that go behind some of the concepts that are described in the conceptual model pumping and recharge?
 - Trotta said that will be part of the water budget section.

Meeting Attendees

Advisory Committee Members (present)

Agriculture, Bob Anderson
City of Cotati, Craig Scott
City of Rohnert Park, Mary Grace Pawson
City of Santa Rosa, Jennifer Burke
City of Sebastopol, Henry Mikus
Environmental, Sebastian Bertsch
Sonoma RCD, Wayne Haydon
Business, Joe Gaffney
Environmental, Rue Furch
Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Maureen Geary
Gold Ridge RCD, Matt O'Connor
Independent Water Systems, Chris Bates
Sonoma Water, Carolyn Dixon
Town of Windsor, Sandi Potter
Rural/residential, Doug Beretta

Advisory Committee Members (absent)

Rural Residential, Marlene Soiland
County of Sonoma, Mark Grismer
Agriculture, David Long

Staff

GSA Administrator, Andy Rodgers
Sonoma Water, Marcus Trotta
Sonoma Water, Ann DuBay
GSA Administrative Assistant (minute taker), Sabrina Marson

Facilitator

Rich Wilson, Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program

Public

Approximately 8 members of public