

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
 Advisory Committee Meeting  
 MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting date/time: September 10, 2018 | 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Location: City of Santa Rosa Utility Field Office, 35 Stony Circle Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Contact: Ann DuBay, Sonoma County Water Agency

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

**MEETING RECAP**

**Summary of Action Items**

<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Send updated Charter to Advisory Committee.	Rich Wilson	Done
Review GSP work plan/initial draft material and provide any feedback to Marcus Trotta, with copy to Ann DuBay and Rich Wilson.	Advisory Committee	September 24
Inform Advisory Committee how many acres of recycled water are being used in Santa Rosa Plain.	Sally Van Etten	October 15
Check if golf courses use recycled water and report back to Advisory Committee.	Sally Van Etten	September 24
Review Committee Schedule	Advisory Committee	September 24
If you wish to appoint an Alternate, let Administrator know.	Advisory Committee	November 4, before next meeting

**Next Meeting:** November 5, 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., City of Santa Rosa’s Utility Field Office (UFO), 35 Stony Circle Drive.

## **MEETING SUMMARY**

### **Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review**

Rich Wilson, Sacramento State University Collaboration and Consensus 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.

### **Public Comment Period**

No public comment received during this period.

### **GSA Staff and Advisory Committee Updates**

Ann DuBay, Interim Administrator, presented a brief overview of what had been discussed at the June and August Santa Rosa Plain Board meetings. At the June meeting the Board extended Legal, Facilitation, Technical/Outreach/Grant services and Administrative services contracts through October 31, 2018. August topics included Basin boundary modification and reprioritization, appointment of an Ad hoc committee to interview administrator candidates, authorization of a three-year contract for an annual audit with the local firm Pisenti & Brinker, and Board approval for the use of alternates by the Advisory Committee.

Marcus Trotta, Sonoma County Water Agency, gave an update on the technical front. The Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) is working with DWR to get grant agreement for \$1 million that the Basin was awarded, hopefully this will be in place by the next Santa Rosa Plain Board meeting. Sonoma Water and others in the Santa Rosa Plain, submitted comment letters to DWR focusing on DWR's basin reprioritization process and results. Specifically, Sonoma Water addressed issues such as methodology and data sets, and also sent specific letters for each basin pointing out that DWR's data sets for state-wide water use seem too high compared to local estimates. DWR is reviewing all letters received and hoping to have the prioritization final by November of this year. Regarding basin boundaries, DWR has extended the deadline for submitting basin boundary modification requests to Sept. 28. The City of Sebastopol, City of Petaluma, and Marin County are all moving forward with a jurisdictional basin boundary request.

### **Rate and Fee Study Update**

Ann DuBay framed the purpose of the Raftelis presentation for the Advisory Committee. She would like to ensure all Advisory Committee members have a clear understanding of groundwater estimates, where they come from, why GSA staff recommends using the estimates that Raftelis is using, and what potential fees look like. As an informational piece, she added that the Board of the other two GSAs asked to stop the fee/rate study in June; the cost of running the GSA is similar in the three basins but there are fewer people/parcels to divide the costs in Sonoma and Petaluma

Valleys so fees would potentially be much higher. These GSAs are looking at member agency contributions to pay for Phase 1 through end of FY 21-22 and Raftelis is currently working on a summary report. Santa Rosa Plain procured a second legal opinion on the rate/fee study which verified that the most legally defensible charging method is based on actual or estimated groundwater use. Raftelis and staff is spending much time on the reprioritization of basins, more details were presented during Sally Van Etten's presentation.

Marcus Trotta provided some background and context on previous groundwater use estimates by DWR and USGS. He described how USGS estimates were used for developing a computer model of the regional watershed-wide groundwater system to represent the overall magnitude and pattern of groundwater pumping. Developing estimates for rural groundwater use is challenging, no method is 100% accurate. Rural pumping was identified by the USGS as the largest source of uncertainty and biggest data gap. Trotta also noted that refining rural groundwater demand estimates is scoped out as a specific task in the GSP Work Plan submitted as part of the grant application to DWR. He ran through Appendix E, "Approach for Estimating Rural Pumping Using Model" and highlighted certain elements as a primer for Sally Van Etten's presentation. Some differences in the data include USGS census data per capita 2000, service areas of municipalities, and remaining areas of rural domestic groundwater. Data works out to about 170 gallons per person per day or just below .5 acre feet/year per unit/parcel based on assuming the average household size in Sonoma County of ~2.5 people per household.

#### Advisory Committee member comments and questions:

- Comment – One member pointed out that 170 gallons per person per day usage is possibly still a bit high. Healdsburg has highest use rates at up to 150 gallons and Rohnert Park, the lowest at up to 90 gallons. Santa Rosa and Windsor usage lies in between. The biggest variable is outside water use. The member thought the data source from the State Water Resources Control Board approximating per capita water use from 1984 is probably overstated as it doesn't take into account water saving measures of recent years.
  - Response – Raftelis is looking at data available for water use from mutual water companies - data that is more similar for rural parcels. .5 acre feet/year per year is consistent with data we are seeing.
- Comment – A lot of assumptions are going into the estimates.
- Question – Lots of pumping is considered surface water near creeks. How do we define the difference?
  - Response – It is done by the State Water Resources Control Board. It is tied to the individual's water right, and some are using shallow wells. The model doesn't differentiate between a well pumping groundwater and one pumping under a surface water right. Any pumping in the model is simulated as pumping groundwater.
- Comment – Would be helpful to have the numbers the USGS had for the watershed in the whole Bulletin 118 area.
  - Response – We will see some of the information in the Raftelis presentation.

Sally Van Etten, Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc., followed with the Rate/Study presentation. She mentioned there had been quite a pause in the study as the GSA Board, staff and Raftelis grappled legal constitutional issues. Sally reviewed the methodology but warned it is still a work in progress. She said they are getting closer to final numbers, there is still room for comment, but cannot deal with every detail and question.

Raftelis compared/contrasted local groundwater use estimates with DWR and USGS - local numbers are the lowest. Van Etten noted that the rate/fee study is focused on a more granular approach at the parcel level, while the other studies are looking at regional-level groundwater issues. Raftelis' data includes estimates for rural residential groundwater pumping, urban residential wells, agricultural groundwater pumping and recycled water use. Raftelis is aware of DWR and USGS numbers but wants to show all the numbers and how their study estimated groundwater use, they are not just re-allocating numbers. USGS approach uses population in census tract for basis of estimates, it was never intended to be a parcel by parcel approach.

One area particularly difficult to estimate is rural residential. Raftelis identified parcels that fell into the category. They also assumed a parcel that wasn't in the service boundary of municipal was being served by a well. Still, not all wells are identified and some parcels have multiple units on a parcel. Raftelis assumed a rural residential groundwater pumping estimate of 0.5 acre feet/year for units on a parcel, and smaller additional units another 0.25 acre feet/year. Urban residential groundwater estimates were obtained by applying a factor of 0.1 acre feet/year to each well on a residential parcel within urban boundaries.

#### Remaining Questions and Comments from Advisory Committee members on Fee methodology:

- Question – Regarding water usage for growing cannabis – is it being considered?
  - Response - Yes, this was raised as an issue at all community meetings. Only recently being regulated so there is no current/available data.
- Comment – Every permit for cannabis operation that goes to Permit Sonoma requires a hydrologic review/report so it should be a good source.
  - Response – Initial reviews of these is that there is a large range of estimates. Once numbers become available, they will be used.
- Question – How are we capturing processed industrial water (beverages, etc.), commercial landscaping in hospitality and event locations?
  - Response – Commercial companies have permits so data is reported but might not yet be included in DWR data. It is possible that some data isn't being captured.
- Question – With regards to residences on agricultural/mixed land, is this data included?
  - Response - We have captured that data.
- How did DWR guess irrigated vs not irrigated parcels?
  - Response – We believe the data has been captured. 2012 DWR land use survey for Sonoma County includes both aerial and on-the-ground field checks. Assumes the data is pretty accurate.

- Question – What variation is there between DWR vegetation maps and our data on different agricultural types?
  - Response - Some of the categories are condensed.
- Comment – Regarding data sources and response to basin boundary modifications, Raftelis should make sure the data the SRP GSA recommended to DWR is being considered.
- What about recycled water usage in golf courses?
  - Response – A few data sources are still being chased to include Rohnert Park.
- Question - How are you handling Sonoma State University?
  - Response - Separate reporting data exists for them and has been used.
- Question – Can you provide more detail on spreadsheets – what information/assumptions/data sets were used for each category?
  - Response - Part of the process shows how we arrive at the data, data will be made available.
- Comment – Granular information is both good and bad.
- Question – Helpful to have a reminder for what the data will be used. How adaptive and flexible can information be?
  - Response – Defensible fee that will recapture enough funding to move the GSA towards the next step and keep the agency running. There is a balance between credible data sources and getting detailed enough to get the fee done – the goal is to get something in place for Phase 1 funding. We are looking at how to assess a fee on people that have wells. From a legal perspective, it needs to pass a reasonableness test. Trotta – Other data sources that might need to be considered would include the City of Sebastopol and nearby mutual utility companies, if they are successful in modifying the basin boundaries to be included in the Bulletin 118 basin. Currently, the Raftelis numbers don't include these areas in and near Sebastopol.

#### Public Comment

- Michael Hilber, Santa Rosa—As a baseline, rural residential water usage is probably closer to ¼ acre/foot. To be fair, use ¼ acre foot/year per house until you have justification to go above that number. Discussed several exceptions to that number.

Sally Van Etten continued her presentation specifically covering the Categorical Benefit Fee. She provided budget numbers and specified that the five year operating budget is not finalized but the bottom line is expected to be quite close. Charge calculation – Year 1 and 2 of operations have been funded by member agency contributions, totaling \$992,000. To repay member agencies, all expenses must be covered. Ms. Van Etten walked through slides of acre feet/year breakdown and dollar responsibility by source of usage.

#### Questions/Comments from Advisory Committee

- Comment – Re-categorize the member agency re-payment. It should not appear as “pay” or

“not repay”, but “repay later”, put a timeline to it, make it a realistic option. Be careful so it doesn’t appear as if agencies are paying more.

- Comment – Concern there might be a circular wired into the repayment option and the agencies are paying more to repay themselves.
- Comment – People are worried about setting a standard for the future. Must emphasize these numbers are evolving. It is not going to set a standard, it is an evolving reality. Emphasize this every time you give a presentation. Concern about it being well advertised and understood.
  - Response – Both the process and numbers are evolving. These are Phase 1 numbers for the first five years of the GSA to get through to the completion of the GSP. Phase 1 and 2 funding may be distinctly different both in method applied and costs.
- Comment – Legally, can some of these be applied as a fixed charge?
  - Response – Yes, it has been discussed and considered, the attorneys are aware of the interest in it. Part of the challenge is determining how many wells there are. Once calculated by consumption, it can be levied as a fixed charge.
- Comment – The fee model is getting to what the community is requesting. Close to use-base fee structure that we suggested, could be groundwork for Phase 2. It is equitable and a publicity opportunity for Phase 2.
- Comment – When enacting a fee, the GSA should consider the situation where the property owner has the possibility to refute the groundwater use estimate by providing their own pumping data.
  - Response – Would be beneficial and give us more data. It also provides the rationale for a well registration program.
- Question – How many acres of recycled water is used in Santa Rosa Plain?
  - Response – We are still looking into that but numbers from DWR already exist.

## **Groundwater Sustainability Plan – Chapter Development**

Marcus Trotta provided an overview of the Work Plan for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. At the next advisory committee meeting, GSA staff will provide the group with an initial draft of the Plan Area section, along with supporting figures.

### Questions/Comments from Advisory Committee

- Question/Comment – What are the projections to Russian River flow if PG&E doesn’t make changes? Concerns that may need to be considered when we start to talk about uses and density classes. Methods of application of water relative to uses. Consider agencies (Fish and Wildlife, etc. that deal with water) as resources and also sources for help to define undesirable results.
- Question – Is there any kind of timeline for the GSP Work Plan?
  - Response – The advisory committee meeting schedule is outlined through the middle of

2019 based on one of the handouts received at this meeting. A public workshop may be scheduled in early 2019.

- Comment – If there is anything new that comes out of DWR on basin boundaries, please let Advisory Committee members know.

As a last item, Ann DuBay, mentioned that if an Advisory Committee member wishes to appoint an Alternate, let the Administrator know. The facilitator reminded the group to that agreed upon language in the charter provides guidance to the process.

### **Meeting Attendees**

#### ***Advisory Committee Members (present)***

Agriculture, Bob Anderson  
Business, Joe Gaffney  
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  
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  
Sonoma County Water Agency, Carolyn Dixon  
Sonoma RCD, Wayne Haydon  
Town of Windsor, Sandi Potter

#### ***Advisory Committee Members (absent)***

Agriculture, David Long  
County of Sonoma, Mark Grismer  
Rural/residential, Doug Beretta

#### ***Staff***

Interim GSA Administrator, Ann DuBay  
Sonoma County Water Agency, Marcus Trotta  
Center for Collaborative Policy (facilitator), Rich Wilson  
GSA Administrative Assistant (minute taker), Simone Peters  
Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc., Sally van Etten  
The Reed Group, Bob Reed

#### ***Public***

Approximately six members of public.