

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Advisory Committee Meeting Meeting Summary

Date/time: Monday, November 9, 2020; 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: <https://csus.zoom.us/j/92070363373>

Contact: Andy Rodgers, Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Administrator

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Next meeting: January 11, 2021, 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Call to Order

Sam Magill, Facilitator, Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program, opened the meeting, welcomed the group and covered meeting protocol. Sam Magill conducted roll call then ran through the day's agenda.

General Public Comments

None.

Agenda and 2020 Meeting Schedule Review

Sam Magill reviewed the remainder of the 2020 annual meeting calendar. Andy Rodgers said staff is intending to keep the same pattern of meetings in 2021 and is considering adding two to three additional meetings (which would be held the second Monday of alternate months) as there is a lot of work ahead of us. Dates will be confirmed.

SMC Board Action Reports Out

Objective: Provide overview of Board decisions on Water Quality and Land Surface Subsidence SMCs

Andy Rodgers provided an overview of the October 29 special Board meeting; Water Quality was the main action item for consideration. The Board supported staff recommendations for what determines an Undesirable Result with the understanding it will be revisited in total before final adoption, and selected Option 2 (two consecutive years) for defining minimum threshold exceedances. The Board also discussed emission scenarios and gave direction to staff to work with the RCP 8.5 scenario. Land subsidence was considered at the October 8 meeting; the Board unanimously recommended the draft SMC based on a minimum 25-acre area for determining undesirable results.

Marcus Trotta added that the draft Water Quality section in the packet represents a revision of a previous version provided to the Advisory Committee in September. Staff is also working on the draft SMC section for Land Subsidence and will be sending it out for review before finalizing.

Questions/Comments

Bob Anderson – When we dealt with the emissions at the Advisory Committee meeting, it led to a discussion about extended drought in the future. What are the implications of that in terms of scale of projects necessary to meet that?

Trotta – Both the RCP 4.5 and 8.5 include periods of drought. In terms of projects and actions, we won't be able to conclusively respond until we start running the scenarios.

SMC for Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water

Objective: Provide introduction to the SMC for Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water and receive initial Advisory Committee feedback on the Significant and Unreasonable Conditions statement.

Marcus Trotta introduced the Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water sustainable management criteria. SGMA requires the identification of interconnected surface waters, and of groundwater dependent ecosystems. The GSA must set Minimum Thresholds and Measurable Objectives to prevent further significant and unreasonable impacts. The GSA must define Undesirable Results based on a combination of minimum threshold exceedances.

Trotta mentioned key challenges for Surface Water Depletion SMC including data limitations; technical complexities in identifying fraction of surface water depletion caused by groundwater pumping; and surface water rights.

Questions/Comments

Joe Gaffney (chat) – The slides are not in my packet. It would be helpful to be able to zoom in on the graphs.

Furch (chat) – Joe, try this: http://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/wp-content/uploads/11.09.20-SRP-AC_SWdepletion-SMC_ada.pdf

Magill (chat) – Thanks, Rue! If you have any trouble accessing the presentation via the Santa Rosa link, you can also access the complete set of slides online here: https://mysacstate-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/s_magill_csus_edu/EUQnGsvTJGZBqb29Dbt0fF4Bb9Wf_EPiQwKV74iDt5LUw?e=6bZc8e

Wayne Haydon (chat) – SoCoVegMap (SonomaVegMap_5_1_Delivered) Classifications simplified from which attribute; Lifeform? Or Forest Lifeform?

Trotta – We will need to get back to you with that information.

Furch (chat) – Steelhead may not be the best fit for an indicator species in the Santa Rosa Plain given the variety and types of streams/wetlands.

Haydon (chat) – Very cool map! I agree with Rue Furch, how do Steelhead habitat show wetlands?

Trotta – The wetlands will be identified through the vegetation mapping where you have the riparian habitat as well as freshwater marshes.

Furch (chat) – Bi-annual evaluations would give us a better sense of trends in sustainability Spring & Fall Did they suggest significant & unreasonable criteria? As scientists, it might be useful conditions ... sorry. I would like to reinforce the concern we have for 2015.

Trotta (chat) – The chats are included for the workshops. SGMA says we don't need to address issues prior to 2015. Workshop discussed it a bit. In our analysis of the data, we are going past 2018.

Haydon (chat) – Include recreational uses. We need water to fish or float!

Furch (chat) – What if recharge isn't occurring as a result of drought? Then, could we say it isn't the fault of groundwater pumping - and sustainability is then redefined or? If we don't have rainfall and recharge isn't occurring and we aren't responsible for sustainability when it isn't raining, how can we say it isn't our fault?

Trotta – Having contingency planning in Groundwater Sustainability Plan, preparing for periods of drought, so if you experience Undesirable Results you would have some projects that could be implemented.

Haydon (chat) – I prefer the Eastern San Joaquin version. Point is; must maintain stream flows to protect beneficial uses and users, including humans and the flora and fauna, throughout the active stream and riparian corridor. Include future target flows to benefit uses and users, as above.

Rosenblum (chat to Rue Furch) – Without measurements, no conclusions. Without looking before 2015, no observable trend.

David Noren (chat) – 2015 was a drought year in which the SWRCB required reduced pumping from domestic wells due to stream depletion. What criteria were used to base these orders? What was the hydrologic response? Are these criteria useful now?

Furch (chat) – Could you expand on this choice: Steelhead may not be the best fit for an indicator species in the Santa Rosa Plain given the variety and types of streams/wetlands

Colin Close (chat) – I don't believe the GSA can go beyond the Plain boundary.

Rosenblum (chat) – The draconian response to not examining recharge areas of Wilson Grove Highlands could be that DWR again lists Wilson Grove as a new GSA.

Rue Furch (chat) – I expect a deeper dive into projects as criteria are developed. The GSA Board had a good discussion of what this might look like and the kinds of decisions that might be made.

John Rosenblum (chat) – SGMA "allows" consideration of pre-2015 conditions, if there are issues that occurred before. It is a choice to ignore.

Furch (chat) – Current and accurate mapping will be critically important. Seasonal changes will play an important role as we try to determine trends. This emphasizes the role land uses play in our desired outcomes.

Bob Anderson (chat) - Does it change if a well has a 50-foot seal? Is there a requirement for a well to have a 50-ft seal?

Trotta– A 50-foot seal is a common requirement for public supply well. For private wells, it is usually 20 feet, it depends on local geology if the 50-foot seal is sealing off a very shallow water bearing zone.

Anderson (chat) – What's the distance from stream to DWR monitoring wells?

Trotta (chat) – I don't know the exact distance of this monitoring well. They vary from about 50 - 200 feet, depends on the logistics of the monitoring sites.

Anderson (chat) – How do the earthquake faults affect the surface water flows?

Trotta (chat) – The faults can form barriers to groundwater. Rodgers Creek Fault has such a feature. Santa Rosa creek on the east is gaining, the west side is more variable.

Magill (chat) – Are there similar statistics for the Sebastopol fault?

Trotta (chat)– I haven't seen such data.

Joe Gaffney (chat) – "MO", "MT"?

Trotta (chat) – Measurable Objective and Minimum Threshold.

Rosenblum – About the western boundary, the Wilson Grove Highlands – the depletion/impact on fisheries in Atascadero Green Valley water shed was severe enough long before 2015 for a report commissioned in 2016 showing that even though Atascadero creek has a significant clay underlay, there still are stream reaches that seasonably become dry. Although there were no concrete solutions, DWR recommended there be a separate Wilson Grove Highlands GSA because of some of the concerns. There is a lot of vineyard conversion that happened in that area. It would be good for members of this GSA to know what is coming. Regarding the 2015 cutoff, there were impacts with the droughts, pretending nothing happened before 2015 isn't good. The model is good, it includes analysis of stream reaches and inter-connections. We have come to understand that natural vegetation is drying out, there are limits. The model should be extended with the knowledge of ag and residential growth in the Wilson Grove Highlands.

Trotta – We are looking at data beyond 2015 in our analysis, we are looking at all available data we need to help us assess the sustainable management criteria. With respect to the model, we don't have the resources or direction to extend the model currently. It could be discussed during the implementation phase of the GSP.

Noren – We have a model. 2015 was a drought year and there were water restrictions by order of the State Water Board. Have you looked at how that worked from a regulatory standpoint but from the outcomes of what happened there? Did we see a stream flow increase as a result of a change in pumping condition? Maybe SGMA could work towards something like that.

Trotta – I haven't seen any studies of stream flow response to that order. I don't know if any reduction of groundwater usage has been estimated or reported through that work.

Noren – It would be good to look at it. It was significant enough that the State Water Board and CA Water Action Plan is doing work and specifically named Mark West Creek and Dutch Bill in its watershed. It seems it would be a very good thing to review and come back and inform the Advisory Committee and Board. It was a significant move by the State Water Review Board to impose here.

Trotta – We have Val Zimmer from the State Water Board in our workgroup, I can follow up with her on that.

Rosenblum – I want to register in my comments, that everyone who is part of this from Sebastopol to Graton will be impacted. I wasn't fully in agreement with DWR's decision that all of Wilson Grove should be included. When we joined the Santa Rosa Plain GSA, it was in order to include protection of our water sources without having the expense of an additional GSA. I am looking for staff to make a meaningful recommendation that the model include our recharge area.

Colin Close (chat) – I don't believe the GSA can go beyond the Santa Rosa Plain boundary set at the State level.

Trotta – The GSA's jurisdiction is limited to the Bulletin 118 basin area. We have extended our analysis to include the entire watershed. In terms of future changes to the model, we will have a list of items that need to be improved during the implementation phase of the GSP. We could

include that as a recommendation to expand the model for the AC to consider once we have the other data gaps identified so the Advisory Committee can prioritize the list for Board consideration.

Peter Martin – How sensitive would our modeling be with our mapping of groundwater dependent ecosystems? Can the mapping be pulled out over a larger area?

Trotta – A vernal pool is an example of this. For other stream reaches, it depends on geologic information we have. In most areas of the Santa Rosa Plain, because we don't have large areas of low groundwater levels in a deeper aquifer system, we don't have lots of situations where the upper aquifer and stream portion would be considered perched.

Furch – Could you please describe the difference between the basin and watershed?

Trotta – The Bulletin 118 basin is the jurisdictional area of the GSA. The watershed extends to the surface water divide, it has been included in our maps and analysis in terms of data collection. The watershed can be an important contributor to water within the basin itself.

Furch – And the general approaches to each?

Trotta – The jurisdiction ends at the boundary. The GSA could promote projects outside its jurisdiction.

Marcus Trotta said it would be very helpful to get Advisory Committee feedback on the four below questions on the significant and unreasonable statement, so staff can bring something back to the workgroup.

- Who or what is impacted by significant and unreasonable condition?
- What kind of impact constitutes significant and unreasonable?
- Over what time period are conditions significant and unreasonable?
- Over what geographic area are conditions evaluated?

Peter Martin – With regards to the timeframe question, sounds like with the shallow groundwater data, there might not be longer datasets.

Trotta – For many of the monitoring wells we would be limited but we would also be looking at stream flows and records.

Rosenblum – Could there be more communication between the Advisory Committee and workgroups? Some of the participants in the practitioner workgroup have statewide and national experience on some of the issues we are trying to deliberate. On the other hand, the Advisory Committee has local knowledge.

Magill – The goal is not for the workgroup to finalize anything before it is discussed/reviewed with the Advisory Committee. Maybe we could see if some work group participants could be available for a future Advisory Committee.

Haydon (chat) – I would appreciate a presentation from the workgroup.

Furch (chat) – I'd love to hear from the scientists on the Work group.

Martin – I think of some of the worst-case scenarios that constitute unreasonable conditions include depleting streams like seen in the Central Valley. We can take comfort in that we have set a 'no change' goal for groundwater levels.

Sam Magill said the questions would be sent out to obtain additional feedback.

Conceptual Projects and Management Actions Introduction

Objective: Provide overview of potential GSP project types. Receive initial Advisory Committee feedback on projects and management actions.

Marcus Trotta introduced GSP requirements for Projects and Management actions to address Undesirable Results. He presented the general process for Projects and Management actions used to achieve sustainability as needed, a time schedule, and examples.

Questions/Comments

Furch (chat) – To consider projects, we should know most likely predictable impacts within the basin that will need addressing.

Furch (chat) – Who are the “stakeholders” to review proposed projects?

Trotta (chat) – The Advisory Committee and as part of our larger public outreach, community workshops centered around Projects and Actions.

Furch (chat) – We need a matrix to determine priorities for projects.

David Long (chat) – Any project development beyond the conceptual level before a true problem emerges is putting cart before horse.

Marcus Trotta asked for feedback on the following questions:

1. What are the most important criteria to consider for project concepts and management actions?

Haydon (chat) – Addresses a problem, does no harm, benefits exceed cost.

Haydon (chat) – 1. ASR projects don't cause shallow and undesirable groundwater level shallowing down gradient; 2. How get recycled water to site; 3. Cost of recycled water to user; 4. With “Redistribution of pumping” and “Pumping demand reductions”, where will I get my water and what will it cost; 5. With “Continued and enhanced conservation and water use efficiency programs”, will I get enough water? How will I need to modify my operations and who pays for that; 6. With any ASR or stormwater capture project, how much of my land will be taken out of use for infiltration ponds or galleries? Can use land during dry season?

Peter Martin – There are areas we are lagging data, that should rise to highest priority. Matching needs in the basin with priorities at the time.

Noren – The outreach to rural well owners is coming soon. The initial thing is an education process/ outreach to the stakeholders, whether from ag, rural, private or public. From the standpoint of gaining acceptance and buy-in from the criteria of the average well owner would be very important to go through the process. I advocate education first and foremost.

David Long – The educational component is very important.

Craig Scott (chat) – I agree with David Long. We need to manage expectations and don't necessarily need an expensive list of projects.

Anderson (chat) – How much infrastructure is needed to add wintertime recharge?

Trotta (chat) – It depends on technique and scale of a project.

Furch (chat) – Priorities should be based on projected negative impacts - short term & then long term. Wayne Haydon asks good questions. I agree with David Noren and David Long. Early warning and transparency is important.

Rosenblum (chat) – Monitoring (starting with volunteers) would be needed to justify any physical project. There are monitoring gaps that would improve the modelling, and there are Ag subscription programs that could be used by those that cannot afford them now.

Martin (chat) – Projects and Management Actions should also include additional wells, gages or other data collection points to improve data understanding and improve the model in the future.

2. What project concepts and management action examples do you think would generally be supported by the community?

Furch (chat) – Collecting data would probably be supported in general. Passive recharge likewise. Agree with Peter Martin - replacing with recycled water has historically been a problem.

Beth Lamb (chat) – I think use of recycled water will have a lot of negative public comment.

Scott (chat) – Replace mandatory conservation with increasing conservation incentives for less heavy-handed approach.

Furch (chat) – I agree.

Rosenblum – Any monitoring will always be able to find support in the community. I am sure there will be enough volunteers to support the extensive monitoring we need.

3. What concerns would you and other similar stakeholders have with any of the project concepts and management examples?

Long – I like all the concepts but, I would like to halt right there. I was very concerned with the three-tiered timeline carrying process forward and starting to put dollars to them on a parallel timetable with cementing the SMC, I don't get it. Defining the problem is important before defining the solution.

Rosenblum – Recycled water presents several practical issues. Most of the cities with lots of surface water are contractually bound to the geysers. How do you get out of those contracts to get significant quantities? I guess these are contractual and legal problems that need to be considered.

Haydon (chat) – Not all recycled water goes to geysers.

Matthew O'Connor (chat) - There is nevertheless some need to identify potential solutions to potential problems in this process.

Gaffney (chat) – Recycled water for ag requires reservoirs. In 1998, expansion of the Santa Rosa system was effectively blocked by the opponents.

4. Are there any other project concepts or management actions not listed in this presentation?

Rosenblum (chat) – Expanding the modeling to Wilson Grove would be an excellent conceptual project.

Haydon (chat) - I agree with John Rosenblum, it would seem we should look further at the Wilson Grove Highlands, at least to a western groundwater flow divide. Screening might include, the benefit exceeds the cost.

Sam Magill said they would get the questions on Management actions as well as the ones on the SMC to the Advisory Committee for feedback.

Updates

Objective: Provide relevant updates that inform the Advisory Committee - AC to ask questions if needed.

Andy Rodgers – The online beta test launched September 27 and ended October 18. Thank you for the comments (we received over 100). We organized the comments and put together list of changes and proposed changes: Clarify the program’s purposed and simplify the overall, experience; identify better/clearer ways to ask questions and describe information; and Clarify what data is being collected and the use or reason for collecting the information. Rodgers presented the development and launch schedule. Staff aims to bring something to the Board on Dec. 10 and to launch the program in January 2021. We would like to launch ASAP to improve datasets for our next fee study.

Noren (chat) – Is the beta site still available? I was out of town when it was available. And will a second version be tested?

Andy – The beta site is available, but we have downloaded all the feedback forms at this point. If you have comments, please email them as I am not sure the feedback from will be available now.

Noren – Thanks, will do.

Marcus Trotta gave a quick update on the rural residential water demand projection practitioner work groups. He said Pete Parkinson gave a presentation to the Board on October 29, he is hoping to have a memo with projection ranges, available in the next week or so. We will provide it to the Advisory Committee as it becomes available.

Sam Magill mentioned the ag water demand projection practitioner work group. We hope to have a more robust report out at the January meeting. Based on your feedback we asked all the workgroup members to provide their thoughts on our final approach. A memo will be put together for Advisory Committee consideration. Marcus Trotta added that staff had given the Board an opportunity for input on our methodology. Final percent changes for crops, etc. are being refined.

Andrea Rodriguez – We worked with the three Board liaisons on the Rural Residential Outreach program to review/finalize the eight-question survey and information sheet about the basin, both put together by SCI. The survey seeks general high-level information and provides an option for joining focus groups in 2021. The survey will be sent out by early December. If you need help with any stakeholder outreach, contact Andrea Rodriguez.

Review Meeting Action Items and Discuss next Meeting Agendas

Sam Magill said the next GSA Board meeting is December 10, 2020; the next Advisory Committee is January 11, 2021.

- Staff will send the SMC Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water and Projects/Actions questions including deadlines to the Advisory Committee by email – provide feedback to staff.
- Staff will send the Rural Residential water demand memo from Pete Parkinson when it is finalized and becomes available.

Questions/Comments

Martin – Thanked staff for all their work over the past months.

Furch echoed Peter Martin’s thanks. She mentioned Andrea Rodriguez has been very diligent in pursuit of outreach opportunities. Furch encouraged everyone to think about how they could participate in outreach to their community. It behooves everyone on the Advisory Committee to be in meaningful conversation with the groups they represent.

Anderson – Thank you for hanging in until the end, see you next year!

Andy Rodgers thanked everyone for their attendance and continuing with the virtual format. The meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Attendees:

Advisory Committee Members (present)

Agricultural representative, Bob Anderson
 Agricultural representative, David Long
 City of Cotati appointee, Craig Scott
 City of Santa Rosa appointee, Peter Martin
 City of Sebastopol appointee, Henry Mikus
 County of Sonoma appointee, Mark Grismer
 Environmental representative, Beth Lamb
 Environmental representative, Rue Furch
 Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria representative, Maureen Geary
 Gold Ridge RCD appointee, Matt O’Connor (arrived late afternoon)
 Independent Water Systems appointee, John Rosenblum
 Rural Residential representative, David Noren
 Sonoma RCD appointee, Wayne Haydon
 Business representative, Joe Gaffney

Advisory Committee Members (absent)

City of Rohnert Park appointee, Mary Grace Pawson
 Rural Residential representative, Marlene Soiland
 Sonoma County Water Agency appointee, Carolyn Dixon
 Town of Windsor appointee, Sandi Potter (vacation)

Staff/Presenters

Andy Rodgers, SRP GSA Administrator
 Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff
 Ann DuBay, Sonoma Water, Outreach
 Andrea Rodriguez, Sonoma Water, Outreach
 Simone Peters, GSA Administrative Aide (*recording meeting summary*)

Facilitator

Sam Magill, Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program

Other Attendees

Chelsea Spier, DWR

Christopher Watt, Regional Water Board

Colin Close, City of Santa Rosa

Rob Pennington, Permit Sonoma (arrived 3:30)