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Santa Rosa Plain 05.19.21 Community Meeting

Questions and Answers / Poll Results

1. **Do you have a sense of what percentage of groundwater use is attributed to agriculture?**

   Trotta – We estimate close to 20,000 acre-feet of total groundwater uses, so about half of that, 10,000 acre-feet, is what we estimate is used by agriculture.

2. **Can you describe the authority of the GSA to regulate land use?**

   Trotta - SGMA does grant the groundwater sustainability agencies a number of authorities, but land use is not one of them. Land use planning and authority remains with counties and cities. However, SGMA does require that the GSA coordinate and share information with city and county planners, and likewise, city and county planners are required to take into account, data and information and policies that the ground water sustainability agencies develop, as they work towards their land use planning.

3. **Can you speak a little about how the Plan will address the potential future cultivation of cannabis and increasing planted acreage?**

   Trotta - This is something that has been brought up quite a bit and something that we are committing to document in the GSP. Currently, it is based on information we've received from the county through 2019. Permitting of legal cannabis grows in the counties is quite new. The county's estimate of the amount of water usage, based on the number of permitted cannabis cultivation sites within the basin, is low in comparison with the overall amount of groundwater usage -- it is about 20 to 50 acre-feet of water. So currently, based on our database information we have available, is a relatively low amount of the overall water budget. However, in the future as we look to track our water budget over time and improve our projections, we will be tracking cannabis water use. One of the things that is required by the county permit process is detailed requirements for cannabis cultivators to measure and report both their water usage, as well as their groundwater levels in wells where they're using wells for their supply, so we anticipate having some good data sets going forward for us to incorporate into our future water budget.

4. **Are the periods that the water budget has been modeled prescribed by SGMA? You had one slide that spoke to the 2012 to 2018 period, as well as that future out to 2070 period, is that specified in SGMA itself?**

   Trotta - Yes, SGMA specifies that we need to project 50 years into the future for our projected water budget which is quite a bit further than most land use planning and water planning documents generally go. So, we do need to acknowledge that as we're looking out that far into the future, there is quite a bit of uncertainty in terms of what can actually happen. That's why it will be important to adapt to new information as we go forward. SGMA also requires us to submit both annual reports of groundwater conditions and then every five years do a more detailed and focused assessment of where we're in terms of sustainability and any changes that have occurred within the basin, and to make sure that those are incorporated going forward.

5. **Can the projected change in storage be attributed to, presumably, an increase in the amount of hardscape across the subbasin?**

   Trotta – The model does incorporate hardscape, as those urban areas were developed through the period, we simulated from mid-1970s through the current conditions. The amount of pavement increased during that period, and could potentially influence the amount of recharge going into the basin in some areas. I don't know that we could say exactly how much it has reduced the amount of recharge, however, I know there's a lot of requirements in regard to low impact development to encourage "slow it spread it sink it" type projects that allows water it to infiltrate into the basin. Those are the types of projects and actions that would be considered as part of this Plan, encouraging those types of practices.

6. **How is Sonoma Water accounting for water that the City of Santa Rosa is shipping to The Geysers? That water used to be used for agriculture and has decreased throughout the years.**

   Trotta - Our model and water budget does take into account the amount of water that has historically been delivered within the basin to agricultural users and used by the cities for landscape irrigation. Because those amounts are quite well known, we have a good level of certainty on how those have changed over the years. In the current water budget period, the average amount of recycled water that was utilized for irrigation was about 10,000 acre-feet per year and for our projected water budget we have assumed that level of recycled water availability would continue. We haven't projected any increases, and so, whatever amount The Geysers have reduced the availability of recycled water for use within the basin, is has been accounted for within our model.

7. **Suggestion: all the various agencies involved in modern management should work together on these issues.**

8. **Why is Sonoma the only Bay Area county to allow widespread outdoor cannabis grows? I know that Sonoma Water and the GSA don't specifically regulate that issue, but can you speak to that question at all?**

   Trotta – I am not sure how to answer that question.

9. **How interconnected are the three main aquifers of the Santa Rosa, Sonoma, and Petaluma areas and the subbasins? If one is significantly depleted does that impact the others?**

   Trotta - Some of the basins are more connected than others. Santa Rosa and Petaluma Valley basins are certainly connected, just south of Cotati and Rohnert Park. SGMA does require that the GSA coordinate with adjacent Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, where those exist. We also need to demonstrate that the conditions in our basin are not negatively impacting adjacent basins. With basins that also have GSAs and GSPs such as Petaluma Valley, it is going to be important to coordinate, as well as to conduct monitoring along boundaries of other basins and areas that are adjacent to the basin that aren't required to comply with SGMA, including Wilson Grove basin in the west and the Healdsburg area to the northwest. Tracking how changes along those boundaries occur is going to be important. Santa Rosa Plain is not directly connected to the Sonoma

Valley basin, however, the Sonoma Valley basin and Petaluma Valley basin are slightly connected in some areas in the southern portion.

10. **Has climate change been a part of your planning going forward? It seems that we had less rain in the past decade and our changing climate could greatly affect the amount of groundwater.**

    Trotta - We are including a future projected climate that was selected after input from the Advisory Committee, as well as the GSA Board. We've chosen one specific future climate scenario for the purposes of this GSP that we're developing. We're using that projected water budget to compare how different projects and actions could benefit the basin in the future. In the future, as we implement the GSP there's certainly been a lot of interest in testing and seeing the impact of a variety of different climate futures, because we really don't know what the future is going to hold.

11. **What role does coordination with other agencies charged with groundwater management play in GSP implementation (local state and federal agencies)- The thing that keeps coming up is the development of the cannabis ordinance and its potential impacts, but can you speak a little bit about that coordination with other agencies.**

    Trotta - SGMA does require that the GSAs coordinate with the land use agencies. And, and that the land use agencies incorporate information from the GSAs into their planning. We are also in the GSP identifying certain agencies that have jurisdiction overlapping areas. And we're also going to be building in routine coordination with other GSAs, as well as with the county which we've already been engaged with very closely with Permit Sonoma. We were successful in obtaining a million-dollar grant. Some of that will go towards work that Permit Sonoma is doing to improve their data sets and develop a data sharing platform, so that will be an important component of implementation going forward.

12. **There's been several additional questions about recycled water being moved to The Geysers. Do you have any sense what the effect pf moving that water is having on the Santa Rosa Plain water table and aquifers?**

    Trotta - In terms of the amount that historically was made available versus the amount that is currently available, I know this year in particular there's very little available due to the drought and there's been less and less available for water users within the basin because of both the amount that's going to The Geysers as well as conservation within the urban areas, which is reducing the total amount of recycled water that's available. Based on our current monitoring today, we're seeing generally stable groundwater levels and increasing groundwater levels over time.

13. **Can you speak a little bit about funding?**

    Rodgers - In 2019 the GSA was exploring ways to fund the GSA so it could comply with the law, develop a plan, and implement that plan to achieve sustainability. And what that included was a lot of the calculations that Marcus Trotta shared on what was estimated to be pumped out of the basin and what's available. And so, basically dividing that amount of water by the cost of the Agency, as it stands now, each year, comes up with a per acre-foot dollar amount. Currently, only metered users, which is the municipalities and Sonoma Water are charged that amount per acre-foot fee. For those

that aren't metered (and I will just say for the record here through SGMA, the GSA is not allowed to meter rural residential groundwater users), the plan is to use an estimated amount, but what we're doing is revisiting this whole thing and updating the structure that we approved in 2019 after we get our GSP sent to the California Department of Water Resources early next year. And the projects and management actions that we're talking about today are going to be big pieces of how much the GSA costs going into the future.

14. What role does self-reporting play in the implementation of the GSP?

Trotta - That's something that we have developed, particularly in the Sonoma Valley basin, where we had a longer history of having a volunteer groundwater management Program. A number of private well owners have volunteered to have their wells monitored so that can really help us fill data gaps in the basin without having to drill expensive groundwater level monitoring wells, or limiting the number of wells that we'd have to drill, provided they're there in areas where we have data gaps as well as whether there's information on the actual construction of the well when we monitor. Hopefully, we'll have something in place in the early stages of GSP implementation and I think we could also consider ways to track anybody who is willing to provide self-reported data as well.

15. How will estimates for homeowners be determined?

Rodgers - The study we completed in 2019 included an assumed average groundwater use for the small residential users. Twenty-five percent of the groundwater use total is from those kinds of users and that number was arrived at based on five prior studies that were conducted looking at what is an average user and it really is a big range, as there are some incredibly conscientious low water users and then there are ones that have perhaps very large gardens, and they use quite a bit more, so it's really an average that's applied to everybody. The fee associated with that was calculated to be just $9.90 per year for producing what was a half-acre foot yearly. On our santarosaplaingroundwater.org website there's a button called the GUIDE program, (Groundwater User Information Data Exchange). I highly recommend you go there, because on a map, you can see where your parcel is and you can click on it, and if you want, provide us more information about your well and water use. The more folks that can contribute to that the better.

16. Can you provide a 50,000-foot overview of The Geyser program?

Rodgers - There aren’t options year-round for wastewater to go somewhere, so essentially, it is a program to take recycled water produced at the regional wastewater treatment plan in the Laguna up to The Geysers where they produce steam energy by injecting the water into geothermal formations. It's a green energy alternative.

CHAT Q&A

MARCUS TROTTA, TECHNICAL STAFF
The Healdsburg Area Subbasin is adjacent to the northwestern boundary of the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater Subbasin.

ANN DUBAY, GSA STAFF
You can view the slides from a more detailed presentation on basin geology from last summer here: https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/gsa-activities/. Scroll down to "Community Meeting: GW Sustainability in Our Basin"

How do you know how much water is used from Groundwater if there is no monitoring?
ANN DUBAY, GSA STAFF
Good question. There are a lot of monitoring wells, which we will discuss in this presentation.

Has population growth and new housing construction been considered in the 2021-2075 models?

I am impressed by the thoughtfulness and completeness of your work. Thank you for a very informative and hopeful scenario for the future.

What do you mean by stakeholders' advisory committee? Why are you not talking about the cost of GSA is going to be seen as a fee on our property tax?

SAM MAGILL
A stakeholder advisory committee was formed with resource managers and others to provide input and advice on Groundwater Sustainability Agency and Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) work products. More information on the Advisory Committee is available online here: https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/ac/

ANDY RODGERS, GSA STAFF
The future cost of the GSA will depend on what projects and management actions are determined to be necessary to achieve sustainability in 20 years. The GSP currently being prepared and the Projects and Actions Marcus Trotta is talking about right now important factors.

So, the advisory committee are stakeholders? I know that the voting seats of the GSA make up of those that had 50,000 dollars. But there are also stakeholders? And who are they? Are they also made up of persons that have vested interest, such as Tom Dutton, Bob Anderson, and Linda Hopkins?

ANDY RODGERS, GSA STAFF
Rain gardens are wonderful ways to offset the need to use other water sources.

Rainwater capture would also reduce hydromodification

Have the monitoring wells been identified and if not, can a domestic well volunteer to be a monitoring well?
MARCUS TROTTA
We will be considering developing a volunteer monitoring program for the basin as we implement the GSP. Monitoring of private wells can be very useful to us in understanding basin conditions and trends,

particularly in current data gap areas and if information on the depth and construction of wells is known.

PETER MARTIN, CITY OF SANTA ROSA
The Geysers deliveries have been consistent since 2003. While we do everything we can to maximize offset of groundwater use with recycled water, agriculture can only take water during the irrigation season. The Geysers takes water year-round and offsets discharges to the Laguna in compliance with our NPDES permit. Recycled water is supposed to be applied to match agronomic rates and not overapplied that might lead to recharge the basin. The Geysers is the most cost-effective solution for disposal of wastewater when ag users can't take the water.

ANN DUBAY
Here is a link to the Geysers program: https://srcity.org/3544/Geysers-Recharge

ANN DUBAY
Here is information about the GUIDE program: https://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/user/

Thanks to Peter for this info. Agronomic recycled water may not create recharge, but it does affect habitat and carbon sequestration from growing pasture and crops.

Recycled water is also currently used at many parks and public lands (golf courses) within the basin.

POLL 1

Do you have a well?
A large majority have a well on their property, a few don't.

What do you use it for?
A lot are reliant on their wells for everything in their house. A number of people are using it for landscaping purposes and agriculture.

What part of the basin do you live in?
The largest number of people are from the Santa Rosa area, quite a few from the Sebastopol area, as well as Rohnert Park, and a couple from the Larkfield and Mark West Springs area.

Has the water level in your well gone up, down, stayed the same, or don't know?
A lot of people said they aren't sure if their water level has gone up or down or stayed the same. Some said their water level had remained constant, and one mentioned that the level has gone down.

Has your well ever one dry?
Vast majority of people who responded said their well hadn't gone dry, but a couple folks had.

POLL 2

Which Sustainability Indicators are of the greatest concern to you or which are the most important from your perspective? Rank the six sustainability indicators, with 1 being the greatest concern and six being the least concern:

Groundwater levels
Groundwater storage
Water quality
Subsidence
Seawater intrusion
Surface water depletion

Groundwater levels was the biggest concern. Groundwater storage, water quality, and surface water depletion were all key items as well.

Which Project Management actions might be the most effective and best in the near term in the basin

Voluntary conservation
Stormwater recharge
Aquifer storage and recovery
Mandatory conservation

A majority suggested that aquifer storage and recovery should be a major area of focus. Voluntary conservation also received many votes, as did storm water recharge and mandatory conservation.

Are there projects or management actions that concern you?
Many said they have concerns about projects and management actions.