

# Petaluma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency Advisory Committee Meeting

## Meeting Summary

Date/time: November 13, 2019 | 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Petaluma Community Center,

Contact: Ann DuBay, GSA Administrator

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### SUMMARY OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

- Staff to send a reminder email to Advisory Committee, with sign-up to facilitate table top discussions at the Groundwater Recharge Workshop on December 11.
- Staff to send out a spreadsheet to Advisory Committee members to help complete and sign up for outreach activities.
- Advisory Committee members to review the handout on significant and unreasonable effects, and provide comments to staff.
- Staff will resend BMP SMC document or link; Advisory Committee members should review.
- Staff to revise sustainability goal, based on comments.

**Next meeting:** All-GSA Workshop on Groundwater Recharge: December 11, 2019, 4:30 –7:00 p.m.

Next GSA Board meeting: December 19 @ 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

**Website for meeting material posting:** <http://www.sonomagroundwater.org/pv/>

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Chairman Andy Rodgers called the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m., and Sam Magill was introduced as the new Advisory Committee facilitator. The new committee member, Becky Ng, who will serve as the at-large community representative, was introduced and welcomed.

Review agenda: No changes

General public comment: None

#### GSA Staff Updates

Administrator Ann DuBay reported that the December Board meeting will likely be canceled. She asked Advisory Committee members to save the date and plan to attend the December 11

All-GSA basin Recharge Workshop. There will be a Flood-MAR (Managed Aquifer Recharge) project presentation as well as a presentation on local recharge studies. The presentations will be followed by table-top discussions about where recharge projects can happen within the basins.

Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach, asked Advisory Committee members to begin thinking about names of groups and organizations to present to in 2020 for outreach efforts. She will send out a spreadsheet for people to help complete and sign up for outreach opportunities.

Marcus Trotta, Technical staff, noted that the GSA is near completion of a Proposition 68 Grant Funding application. The proposal is due November 15 (the Department of Water Resources – DWR -- extended the deadline because of the fire and power shutdowns). Several of the project components are shared with the other GSA's in the county, including an outreach component to develop agricultural land use, general land use and resources working groups; rural residential outreach campaign; and internal work at Permit Sonoma on databases and well permit applications. Other project components are the construction of deeper monitoring wells to help with the model and to build the monitoring infrastructure we will need in the future. We would be able to monitor two or three aquifers with screens at different levels. The final task is a pilot study using geophysics to help us characterize the geology of the southern part of the basin. There is a big push throughout the state to deploy helicopters to do the study, but we can lay cables to test before the aerial study.

Question: Who will you use for ground imaging?

Response: There is a Danish company, Romboll, they have done a lot of surveying. We would have to do a competitive solicitation if we get the grant.

Question: On the monitoring, there was a volunteer monitor –are we tying that into the new wells?

Response: Yes, we are adding to that but also building permanent sites and still using information from the volunteer program. The Sonoma RCD has been looking to add volunteers to the program.

Questions: Is the MW2 at the Rancho Adobe fire house?

Response: It's not -- I think it's a city park.

Question: Are we going to adopt a well permitting program?

Response: The Petaluma Valley Board voted to include funding to help with development of the infrastructure for the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater User Registration Program. If the Board decides to move forward with it, they want to make sure the registration program will be similar throughout the county so landowners with properties in different basins won't be asked for different information.

Question: When would people need to fill out the well permit program? When people drill them?

Response: People already fill out permit forms when they drill wells. This would add a few more questions, and the change could be done administratively (most likely wouldn't have to be approved by the Board of Supervisors).

The expected award grant award announcement is sometime between March and May.

Sam Magill, facilitator, thanked the Advisory Committee members for responding to the brief survey he sent out regarding process. Magill noted that the group mostly felt good moving forward, and requested more time for conversation and discussion.

## 2020 Calendar

In November, there is a meeting date adjusted for Veteran's Day.

## Groundwater Water Budget Requirements

Staff did a presentation on the water budget (see PowerPoint). Staff reported that they are working on the water budget to develop information for the next phase of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). DWR has a best management practice guideline to account for what is coming in and what is going out of the basin, and what is in the "saving account" in terms of storage.

The water budget looks at historical conditions, documents current conditions and projects what will occur over a fifty year planning horizon. Climate change must be factored into the water budget. The water budget must include surface water inflows and outflows, diversions (known or estimated) and groundwater budget inflow and outflows.

## Groundwater Modeling

Hydrological model helps account for all of the components. The U.S. Geological Survey has delivered a draft model. Staff is testing the model with a subcontracted consultant. The USGS model is an integrated hydrological model, climatically driven. It will help evaluate climate change impacts and identify recharge areas.

Question: Does the USGS model go into Wilson Grove?

Response: Yes, it does go into Wilson Grove.

We will need to get the output for the DWR Bulletin 118 basin that goes into the Wilson Grove and it will need to be evaluated separately. In addition, the model can also be used for other components of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Question: Are fifty-year models common?

Response: The further out you go the more uncertain the model becomes. Fifty years is a long way out. In the water industry, twenty year models are more common. Most general plans go out twenty years for projected growth in cities. But SGMA is set up to be adaptive. As you go, there are updates every five years to revisit and see how plans

are doing. If you look back at projections and the actuals are different, you can reconsider and adjust.

### Groundwater Use for Cannabis

Chris Dillis, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, discussed a study that he did using 2017 data from a program that started back in 2015. Our program was set up to encourage cannabis growers to sign up. Hopefully it is reflective of growers joining the regulated industry. What it found is that small farms cluster in the upper reaches of the watershed and not in groundwater basins.

Question: Where do these numbers come from? These seem low.

Response: We survey growers every year. This is not a broad survey, but it is of those growers who are enrolled in the Regional Board's program. Because these are regulatory questions, the growers are required to report information accurately or it would be a violation of permit.

Question: What is considered mixed use?

Response: A hoop house.

Question: Should you have a third category for indoor grows since it is year-round?

Response: Indoor growers are mainly in Santa Rosa's industrial areas and attached to municipal water sources.

All sources are included in report data. All reports are prepared by professional consultants. They are not just self-reporting. A majority of the sites using wells indicate that there is a necessity, and it is likely tied to the lack of surface water availability. People have difficulty storing the amount of water that is required to get through the dry season, and find it is easier to drill wells. They could offset some usage by water storage.

Question: What is an alternative to develop storage?

Response: It is not that easy to store water – it is much easier to drill wells. In the peak of drought, we were seeing more near-stream wells outside of groundwater basin boundaries. They tend to be shallow wells that cluster around streams. Farms are not mainly located in groundwater basins where there are fewer permitted farms.

Question: How many farms are there?

Response: Region-wide we have 3,000 enrolled farms. Fewer than 200 of the 3,000 enrolled are in Sonoma County. The statistic used for Sonoma County for the total number of grows is about 5,000 farms – worst case would be about 4,000 -5,000 farms based on our conservative estimate. In the future, the Regional Board will be counting farms based on satellite imagery and artificial intelligence.

Robert Pennington, Permit Sonoma, hydrogeologist, discussed the county process and the estimates used for cannabis farms. The county assumes that 4-acre feet of water is used

annually per acre for indoor grows and 2-acre feet for outdoor grows. This estimate is similar to DWR's irrigation rate for similar crops. The county prefer to use higher numbers to be conservative.

Robert noted that cannabis water use relative to total water use is tiny. Currently, 11-acre feet of water is being used for permitted cannabis in Petaluma Valley, compared to 18,000-acre feet of total groundwater use. Even if that 11-acre feet is underreported by 100 times, that still only equals 1,100-acre feet of water use.

Question: Hemp is just as big or bigger?

Response by David Kuszmar, with the Regional Board: Hemp is going to be regulated by the Ag Commissioner. On November 21, there will be a first hearing of a draft that will be released this month. It remains to be seen if hemp is viable in Sonoma County. Tony Linegar is recommending hemp be permitted subject to pollination and some neighbor constraints. Expectation is that it wouldn't be grown for fiber but for oil. Ag Commissioner encourages hemp to be part of the diverse agricultural commodity. It's a seasonal crop. Tony's suspicion is that if permitted, we would see the market dive as people swap out other forage crops to try hemp. However, people are less likely to swap out vineyard for hemp.

Comment: Hemp is now federally legal, there are medical uses for hemp; Prop 64 passes and now look at what has happened – we are about to lose land value because of odor.

Question: Any impact on groundwater use?

Response: No, it would be the Ag Commissioner who would be regulating – but if hemp replaces a forage crop, it would likely be a one to one swap.

Robert noted that projections for cannabis is flattening out. In 2017, there was a large number of applications' increase, but now applications are trending toward a plateau. We are concerned about groundwater use in specific areas (none in Petaluma Valley). We do have concerns in the upper watershed where critical habitat for Coho is. These areas are zero net use. In Sonoma Valley basin, the projects also must meet zero net use standard.

### [Sustainable Management Criteria Update and Request for Input](#)

Marcus Trotta discussed Sustainable Management Criteria. He noted that feedback was compiled from all basins and committee members to learn where priorities fall. It is likely that SMC discussions will start with groundwater levels. A community meeting early next year to review the first section of the GSP, and to start the conversation on SMCs, will coincide with the USGS release. We will present what we know about the basin to the community and discuss the SMC process. A lot of information is needed for surface water depletion areas. We see this is one of the more challenging SMCs, as it's very complex.

At our last meeting, we talked about six sustainability indicators. We asked you – from your interest/stakeholders perspective – to share some of the key indicators that you are worried

about. We then talked about significant and unreasonable effects. Lindsey provided some good examples. We've compiled this information in a handout. Please review and send to staff any updates/corrections/modifications.

Question: Regarding the example statements that Lindsey provided, how many wells do we currently have and what would a 5% increase represent?

Response: We have about 600 wells, so 5 percent is 30 more wells.

Comment: It's hard to believe that 30 additional wells would lead to a degradation in the basin. That would be insignificant. But losing 10% of ground to recharge would be significant.

Question: What is most useful for moving forward?

Response: Staff will resend the BMP SMC document or link; Advisory Committee members should review.

Question: Does the Board have any comments on what they wanted to see in Sustainable Management Criteria?

Response: Not at this point. The last meeting was pretty high level. We will get into more detail at the upcoming meeting, and provide your feedback.

Comment: We got a great data set over a period of time where the area changed a lot, things look to be in pretty good shape. Overall, we need to stay stable, and need criteria to reflect that. That would be an easy goal to give it context.

Comment: When the east side of the city grew, about 20-30 agricultural wells were abandoned, and the city hooked up homes to city water. So, there used to be a lot of groundwater pumped that has been replaced by city water supplying homes.

[Sustainability Goal:](#)

Staff discussed a draft goal provided in the packet.

Comment: The goal should include the ability to allow for growth in a reasonable, controlled manner.

Comment: Agree with growth statement. If we have best practices in play we could accommodate change.

Question from public: Could there be something about minimizing the burden put on well owners?

Comment: Maybe the word efficient? To address concerns that well owners might have.

Comment: Can we add something about respecting the environment.

Question: Can we use the term “future users” rather than “generations to come”?

Question: What about uses? “Beneficial uses” is very broad and is that more toilets and sinks or should we try to put commercial, agricultural, residential to represent the personality of our area?

Question: Instead of “beneficial” could we use the term “necessary”?

Staff will take comments and send out a revised sustainability goal.

### Update on Technical Support Services well drilling

Staff provided a quick update on the Technical Support Services project.

Question: Did you drill any fifty-foot wells?

Response: Here in Petaluma we drilled three of five proposed wells. At one site (Adobe Road) we hit very dense rock. We are waiting on Adobe Fire station site on Old Redwood Hwy.

Question: How many deep wells?

Response: Four deep wells are proposed in the Prop 68 grant. That is the most we can install with the budget.

A geologist may present at the next meeting with an update on the Technical Services project. The next meeting is January 8, 2020.

### Attendees

#### Advisory Committee Members

Andy Rodgers  
Eugene Camozzi  
Drew Buechly  
Gary Mickelson  
John Shribbs  
Clayton Engstrom  
Rebecca Ng  
Lindsey Strain

#### Staff

Ann DuBay  
Marcus Trotta  
Andrea Rodriguez  
Sam Magill