

Petaluma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency Advisory Committee Meeting

May 12, 2021 | Summary

Contact: Ann DuBay, Sonoma County Water Agency, PVGSA Administrator
Email: Ann.DuBay@scwa.ca.gov Phone: (707) 524-8378

Next Meeting: June 9, 2021 - 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. - via Zoom
Petaluma Valley GSA website: <http://petalumavalleygroundwater.org>

Welcome and Call to Order

Sam Magill, Facilitator, opened the meeting at 4:32 p.m. and Heidi Bauer, Chair, welcomed the group, said she appreciated everyone for taking time out of their schedule to join the meeting, and gave an overview of the day's agenda.

General Public Comments

None.

Agenda and 2021 Meeting Schedule Review, Approval of Previous Meeting Summary

Objective: Review 2021 schedule modifications as needed; confirm April 14 meeting summary

Ann DuBay walked through the 2021 meeting schedule and mentioned the upcoming Community Meeting.

No changes were requested to the April 14 meeting summary; it will be posted as written.

Questions/Comments

No public comment.

GSP Review Update

Objective: Review feedback received to date on Section 3 of the GSP. Discuss upcoming GSP review deadlines.

Ann DuBay said that Section 3 should be posted on Friday pending remediation, later than originally planned. Staff will be sending out the link and you will have three weeks of review time. A technical editor has been contracted to finalize layout, grammar, etc. of the final draft GSP. Please look at the bigger content issues as you review. Sections 4, Sustainability Management Criteria and Section 5, Monitoring will be available concurrently in June; they are less technical, but we will need your careful review. Three to four weeks also will be allowed for review of Sections 4 and 5.

Questions/Comments

Peter Kiel – A draft Chapter 3 is posted on the website now.

DuBay – The version currently online is the old version. The updated version will be posted soon.

No public comment.

Summary of Preliminary SMC

Objective: Review preliminary SMC for all six sustainability indicators

Marcus Trotta presented the Sustainable Management Criteria for all six Sustainability Indicators' matrix created for Petaluma Valley. The matrix includes the Significant and Unreasonable Statement, Minimum Threshold, Measurement, Measurable Objective, Undesirable Result, and interim Milestones for each SMC. Expect to see the matrix included/at the front of Section 4 in June; that will be your opportunity to comment.

Questions/Comments

John Shribbs (chat) – Is there not enough grant money in budget to find Marcus Trotta more help and support so three basins are not so dependent on one person? Insurance companies like redundancy in safety.

DuBay – Great question. We have a full technical team, including consultants. But Marcus Trotta is the project manager and for quality control, he reads the sections before they are released.

Andy Rodgers (chat) – Helpful table! Maybe add the SGMA symbols in each SMC title box?

DuBay – I like it!

No public comment.

Projects and Management Actions and Scenario Modeling

Objective: Receive feedback on proposed projects and management actions

Marcus Trotta provided an overview of Project and Management Action concepts and phasing for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, an overview of modeling results from baseline scenarios, and an overview of scenario modeling for Group 1 Project and Management Actions. He also mentioned next steps, which include 1) complete and process output from Group 2a scenarios, 2) develop and simulate Group 2b scenarios, and 3) identify and prioritize conceptual projects and management actions for inclusion in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Questions/Comments

Shribbs (chat) – Data for 42 looks like heading south below predictions.

Trotta – There is a declining trend shown for that well that isn't projected to continue within the future projected scenario. These are models based on assumptions. It will be important for us to convey that uncertainty in the Plan. Having projects/actions simulated and described in the Plan will be prudent.

Peter Kiel (chat) – Are datasets for Pet10 and Pet13 too limited to simulate future?

Trotta – For some of the wells we have limited historical data which affects the accuracy. Because of the lack of monitoring wells in the basin, we felt it was important to include them. As we develop longer records in the first five years of the model, we would look to update the model and improve the model's calibration.

Shribbs (chat) - What do wells in Two Rock area show? How fast are Two Rock wells declining?

Trotta – The Two Rock area is outside the groundwater basin and is not included in the model. I know that groundwater conditions there are limited in terms of water availability. The area doesn't have much alluvial aquifer material and is more susceptible to drought conditions.

Shribbs (chat) – Would slowing urban growth be included as group 1 low hanging fruit?

Magill – The GSA does not have the authority to manage growth.

Trotta – One of the things we are proposing and could be considered is an assessment of policy options that the GSA could enact or support if it doesn't have authority such as in the land use realm. On the urban side, because the City uses primarily surface water, the urban growth doesn't have as big an impact on groundwater sustainability in the Plan area as conditions outside the urban area.

Shribbs (chat) – We can include groundwater in the hazard prevention plans. In the GPAC we are doing. (adding verbally) – All the seminars I attend on climate change, it seems we have a good opportunity in Petaluma to work together and advise across the board even if there isn't a mandate. If we can strongly suggest to those that have a possibility to curb urban growth, this could be a low hanging fruit, and make this advice upfront. We need to have it as an option.

Magill – We should keep that in mind as we get to the upcoming GSP implementation topic.

DuBay (chat) – Some helpful information about urban water use: Regionally, urban per capita water use has declined 37% since 2009. Also, between 2010-2018, Petaluma's population has grown by .67% annually. These factors combined mean that Sonoma water delivers LESS water to the City now than in the first decade of the 2000s.

<http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/SMSWP-Annual-Report-2020-FINAL.pdf>

<http://sonomaedb.org/PDF/Data-Center/2019/2019-Petaluma-City-Report/>

For water delivery:

<https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/Water%20Delivery%20Data/Water%20Billing%20History.pdf>

No public comment.

Introduction to GSP Implementation Plan

Objective: Provide overview of GSP implementation plan contents, including identified data gaps and recommendations for addressing during GSP implementation.

Marcus Trotta gave an introduction of implementation plan contents:

1. GSA Administration (Board/AC meetings, Finance, Operational, and Legal support)
2. Communication and Engagement (maintain/improve website and GUIDE interface, roll-out and maintain groundwater data dashboard, community meetings, focused stakeholder group briefings, and engagement and coordination with other agencies and regional partnerships)
3. Routine Monitoring, Data Evaluation and Annual Reporting (groundwater level and quality monitoring, subsidence monitoring, streamflow measurements and groundwater storage calculations)
4. Addressing Data Gaps (such as amounts and locations of groundwater pumping, role of faults with and along the boundaries of the basin, basin boundary characteristics, interconnection of streams to the shallow aquifer system, aquifer characteristics)

5. Maintaining, Updating and Improvements to Model (including focused calibration of surface water and groundwater interaction, assessment of model boundary conditions, improve how model represents groundwater pumping, assessment of aquifer properties assigned to model)
6. Refining, Study and Implementation of Potential Projects and Actions (assessment of conservation and groundwater-use efficiency opportunities, managed aquifer recharge studies, assessment of additional recycled water irrigation opportunities, study of potential policy options for future GSA consideration)
7. Five-year update to GSP (first updated scheduled for 2027, include any new information or changes that have been made after submittal of 2022 GSP, updated 50-year projected water budget)
8. Five-year budget, schedule, and funding strategy (focus on initial 5-years of GSP implementation, pursue potential funding sources).

Next steps include 1) prioritize activities and recommended studies, 2) further develop descriptions of activities, 3) develop cost estimates and funding strategy, and 4) refine implementation schedule.

Questions/Comments

Shribbs (chat) – Tree ordinance for Sonoma County is having a workshop next Tuesday. Will GSA or Sonoma Water be giving a statement about the need of groundwater for trees and how trees save water?

DuBay (chat) – The GSA doesn't plan to give a statement but thank you for letting us know about the workshop.

Shribbs (chat) – A three-part webinar on sea level rise in San Francisco Bay and how to mitigate, starts tomorrow. It is led by SFEI.

Magill (chat) – Thank you for the workshop information. By any chance do you have a meeting link available in case anyone else is able to join?

Shribbs (chat) – https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_act.sierraclub.org_events_details-3Fformcampaignid-3D7013q000001lL81AAE-26-5Fga-3D2.15100470.1880944930.1620238038-2D2030195798.1614276428&d=DwMFAg&c=L93KkKsAC98uTvC4KvQDdTDRzAeWDDRmG6S3YXlIH0&r=W3VihGM-3NXpaB-hTwQaun7wQO6iF01GER1_B6oBFY&m=rg1FPADFlpZ2xpH48CElldou6FmqKfVlwhEG_uee6mY&s=7FWrNMDYVQbSi4jHohUosd9W0K18rNXqyaclHkmUOw&e= Sponsored by Sierra Club.

Heidi Bauer (chat) – I think the list of data gaps is quite thorough and comprehensive, but I recall at one meeting we wished we had better data on land use throughout the basin (i.e. ag use, cannabis use, grazing areas). Sounds like you just answered that in the presentation! Thank you!

Shribbs (chat) - Include all water use, not just groundwater use.

Trotta – You mean in the water budget?

Shribbs – In the first statement of Primary Data Gaps slide #23, “Amounts and location of groundwater pumping...” – getting all the data collected as much as possible, we also have a need to include the total water picture, as we are just one part of it and I don’t think we have a good enough description of the total water use yet throughout the basin. What are we working with as a total system, not just groundwater focused?

Trotta – I think in our basin setting we describe the amounts of imported water brought into the basin and our best estimates of surface water diversions and recycled water use. Certainly, there is uncertainty on surface water diversions in the basin that will be important to better understand; I think we have it flagged as a proposed study.

No public comment.

Updates

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

Marcus Trotta gave an update on the funded Prop 68 Monitoring Well Program. He said that we are in the process of developing the Request for Bid package that will hopefully go out early summer. Staff is currently wrapping up details on easements, public right-of-ways, etc., and in the process of doing environmental reviews. Additionally, staff is working with construction management, technical writing staff, and a consultant on the design of the wells. The goal is to complete construction of the wells by January 2022. Mitch Buttress, Technical staff, has been in contact with member agency staff looking for locations for the wells. When we have a schedule for drilling the wells, we will let you know.

Jay Jasperse gave an update on drought conditions. This is emerging to be a critical drought and rivals 1976/77 in lack of rainfall. The 2020/21 water years are third and fourth driest in the last 120 years. Although there are similar amounts of rainfall as 1976/77, we have warmer temperatures now, so we have more extreme conditions. Given the low rainfall the last few years, the most noticeable thing is the surface water impact. In terms of surface water supply, Lake Mendocino (built 1958) is currently just under 37,000 acre-feet and Lake Sonoma (built 1983/filled 1986) is at 148,000 acre-feet. Both reservoirs are the lowest they've ever been on May 12.

Lake Sonoma is the primary water supply for our water contractors/600,000 people, Petaluma Basin relies on Lake Sonoma. We are not yet too concerned about this year but are worried about next year being another dry year.

Lake Mendocino is much smaller and is a bigger concern as it has historically not been a reliable water source. This year there are reduced flows from Potter Valley, and we are very concerned that the reservoir will go dry. Sonoma Water is managing the Russian River system. We are working with stakeholders from Healdsburg, Ukiah and the State Board trying to come up with a plan to preserve water until it hopefully starts raining next winter.

With the Governor's recent emergency declaration, the State Board is looking to go to their Board and activate curtailments as needed. As part of the emergency, the County will have a public agency task force to ensure coordination, communication, and resource sharing. We all have water contingency plans; it is required by the State Board and provides the plan for how the agencies are going to make the reductions. There is currently a lot of activity in Sacramento on drought measures. Yesterday, we gave a drought workshop (Sonoma Water Directors and Board of Supervisors). A resolution was passed for a 20% voluntary water use reduction for the areas outside of the urban areas in Sonoma County.

Until now, there hasn't been much focus on groundwater but the expectation is that more groundwater will be pumped during the drought so we will monitor the situation.

Questions/Comments

Shribbs (chat) – On a news story, one of the water engineers said that even if Sonoma Lake dries down there is a groundwater reservoir that would be used that is large. Would like to hear more about that

Bauer (chat) – Can you go a little deeper explaining how Lake Sonoma relates to our basin.

Jasperse – The City of Petaluma is one of our water contractors. We supply almost all their water. In general, most of the supply comes from the Russian River system operated by Sonoma Water. They generally rely on groundwater only during drought/emergency back-up.

Chelsea Thompson – We don't plan on using our groundwater for local production except for emergency back-up use. We haven't started well production yet this year. Sonoma Water has asked contractors to voluntarily reduce use by 20%. We are committed to a combination of well production and implementation of the water shortage contingency plan. We committed to using 7% of water use from wells July through October as needed. If we can meet demand reduction based on measures of the water shortage contingency plan, we will not need to use as much well water. Fires would be another factor.

Shribbs (chat) – What will happen if get two more years like this one? Are we prepared for a 5-year drought like this year? Is that part of our modeling?

Gary Mickelson (chat) – What about all the water that will need to be hauled out of the City water systems to support the properties in the county that their wells run dry?

Thompson – Right now we have a hauler that hauls water outside the service area to those that are not on potable water. There are no plans to increase that right now and we won't increase the allocation to each water hauler or take on new accounts. If we get to a mandated stage of the water shortage contingency plan, we will do outreach to the customers of the water haulers.

Jasperse – At the Board workshop yesterday, Supervisor Rabbit requested us to investigate the potential for activating one of the Santa Rosa Plain wells for water to become available to ranchers and other folks in need.

Camozzi (to Chelsea Thompson) – You say you are going to use about 226 acre-feet? If the City is using 8,000 acre-feet a year, that only represents 3% of the water. I heard earlier you are going to use 7% pumping from wells. Do you feel your number is a little low?

Thompson – It isn't 7% of the annual water supply from Sonoma Water, it is 7% demand of the four months July to October.

Camozzi – Do you feel you have to extend it until December?

Thompson – There are no plans to extend it right now.

Camozzi – So the 226 acre-feet is the minimum right now, it could be higher than that?

Thompson – It depends on the reduction in demand through outreach and voluntary measures. In the last drought, we had a 21% reduction in demand.

Camozzi – 20% is a lot to ask for with low flow showers, toilets, etc.

Thompson – Yes, water use is a lot less now than in the previous drought. We need to wait and see. We plan to go back to council on June 7 to implement a mandatory stage. This will determine how much well production is needed for the coming months.

Engstrom (chat) – 226 acre-feet is nearly 74 million gallons.

Shribbs (chat) – If City uses 8000 acre-feet then what does ag use?

Trotta (chat) – We can circulate that information and those relative percentages will be included in the forthcoming water budget section for the basin setting Section 3.

Camozzi – Following the last drought of 1976/1977, Lake Sonoma reservoir was built in 1983. What is the long-term plan for droughts in future?

Jasperse – Good question. It is integrated water management, conservation measures extended to unincorporated areas, and recycled water. You need to balance the remaining water demand between groundwater and surface water. We want to get to a point where we take our winter water and resupply our aquifer system so we can get through the dry periods better. Another program is changing the way we operate our reservoirs.

Camozzi – Is there any plan to make Lake Mendocino bigger?

Jasperse – It has been discussed. The cost of doing it would be immense. It isn't found to be feasible at this time.

DuBay (chat) – Sonoma Water has a drought dedicated website page dedicated to the drought; it is updated daily. <https://www.sonomawater.org/drought>

Thompson (chat) – The City of Petaluma does too. <https://cityofpetaluma.org/drought/>

Camozzi – Can you explain that urban areas are outside of the boundary. I feel the City isn't part of the GSA program. We all know that the City is going to be pumping when there is a drought. So, when it comes to the water budget, I feel like we are hiding urban. Could you explain a little bit?

Trotta – I didn't mean to characterize it as the City's growth isn't important in terms of groundwater sustainability. At this point it is a smaller user being outside the boundary. It is included in the water budget. For the 50-year projections, we have included the City's projected future pumping. In the 50-year water budget where the climate future is estimating there will be dry years, we have included pumping from the City's well fields up to the 600 acre-feet threshold. Any future growth that would happen in the City would be included in the five-year updates.

Camozzi – I don't think it is an accurate statement to say the City is a small percentage, it isn't right. The only one who could pull us down, is the City.

Trotta – Based on current conditions, it is a smaller component of the water budget.

Jasperse – The City used to pump more groundwater than they do today.

Camozzi – Correct, but it was the years when the basin was a 'minus 100 acre-feet deficit'. The City controls the basin.

Magill – Maybe we could get that information and circulate it to the Advisory Committee specific to Eugene Camozzi's question and John Shribb's question about ag estimates.

John Shribbs (chat) - Is there a lot of groundwater feeding into Lake Sonoma?

Engstrom (chat) – What is the limit of groundwater Petaluma can use?

Bauer (chat) – How is it determined when the City will need to use more of its groundwater supply?

Shribbs (chat) – 300 acre-feet does not sound like a lot of water. How does it compare to total water use?

DuBay (chat) – For comparison, last year, Sonoma Water delivered 7,701 acre-feet of water to Petaluma.

Shribbs (chat) – Israel has one of the best low water-use plans. Can we start to use their model of water use?

Bauer (chat) – Is the Water Shortage Contingency Plan publicly available to look at?

Engstrom (chat) – City used to use the Sonoma Mountain Lafferty ranch system.

Becky Ng (chat) – How can the City control the basin if they do not pump unless it's necessary?

Ann DuBay provided an update on the Rate and Fee Study that will be done in coordination with the other two basins in the county. A Request for Qualifications was completed, and we have received three proposals from qualified firms. The GSA staff reviewed the three proposals; and interviews were done today. We feel we have three good consultant options. The Board liaisons and GSA staff will help select a firm for consideration by the Board in June of July. The Board liaisons are Mike Healy for Petaluma Valley, John Nagle for Santa Rosa Plain, and Jack Ding for Sonoma Valley.

Andrea Rodriguez – The Rural Community Engagement focus groups wrapped up last week. SCI and SGA are compiling the feedback and we hope to have a report at the June meeting. Please ask your stakeholder groups to attend the Community meeting on May 26, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Questions/Comments

Shribbs (chat) – Do we have a role in the Community Meeting? Will we be part of breakout rooms?

Magill (chat) – We certainly encourage everyone to attend if possible! There is no specific roll, but it would be great to get your input and presence. One of the major goals of the Community Meeting is to provide the public the tools/information they'll need to provide comment on the GSP itself when it is available.

Review Meeting Action Items and Discuss April Meeting Agenda

Sam Magill mentioned the next Board meeting will be May 27 at 4:00 pm, and the next Advisory Committee meeting will be Wednesday, June 9 at 4:30 pm.

Action items:

- Keep an eye out for the invitation to the Community Meeting.
- Keep an eye out for an email with link to Section 3 of the GSP.

Heidi Bauer thanked everyone for attending and their valuable input on the Plan. She encouraged everyone to attend the Community Engagement Meeting on May 26 and said she will be absent for the June 9 meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members - Attending

Andy Rodgers
Clayton Engstrom
Eugene Camozzi
Gary Mickelson
Heidi Bauer
John Shribbs
Peter Kiel
Rebecca (Becky) Ng

Advisory Committee Members - Absent

Drew Buechley
Lindsey Strain

Staff / Presenters

Ann DuBay, PV GSA Administrator

Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager

Marcus Trotta, Technical Staff

Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach Staff

Simone Peters, GSA Administrative Aide (recording meeting notes)

Facilitator

Sam Magill, Sacramento State University – Consensus and Collaboration Program

Members of Public

Chelsea Thompson, City of Petaluma