

Petaluma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Advisory Committee Meeting

November 10, 2021 | Summary

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Welcome and Call to Order

Sam Magill, Facilitator, opened the meeting at 4:35 p.m. Heidi Bauer, Chair, welcomed the group and said today's meeting was the last Advisory Committee meeting before submitting the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. "We did it. Good job everyone!"

General Public Comments

None.

Agenda Review, Approval of September Meeting Summary

Objective: Confirm September meeting summary

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

No public comment.

GSP Review and Discussion of Comments

Objective: Inform AC of new comments that have come in and how they have been addressed.

Ann DuBay confirmed the GSP public comment period closed on October 31; there were 10 commenters. Comments from organizations generally focused on Interconnected Surface Water SMC and quite a bit on stakeholder engagement and outreach to disadvantaged communities. Comments from individuals generally focused on the climate change scenario. The final revised Plan will be posted at the end of November/early December. The Board will hear public comments and consider potential adoption of the GSP on December 8 at 5:30 p.m. (most likely a virtual meeting). If the Board adopts the Plan at that point, it will be submitted to the Department of Water Resources for their review to make sure we're not missing anything and, if acceptable, DWR will open it up for a 75-day public comment period. Then DWR has two years to review and approve or not approve the document.

Marcus Trotta followed with detailed information by section on comments received and how they were addressed.

No public comment.

Questions/Comments

Clayton Engstrom: Could you explain the public trust plans, you referred to it a few slides back.

Trotta – There was a request that the GSP identify how public trust resources are considered within the Plan and that's something mostly related to the surface water depletion SMC to, make sure that the GSP is considering public trust resources.

John Shribbs – Overall, good to see all the comments made. They were a lot more consistent with some of the things I have been thinking, especially about climate change/modeling.

I just went to a webinar, which is the MIT model, and the folks are working on a global basis with modeling for sea level rise. Their expert panels are telling them that we can probably expect a three-foot rise that's going to happen here, probably sooner than later and most of the models are looking at 50 years. Once we hit the three-foot mark, there is a cascade effect that will happen. And then the following 100 years we're going to be looking at a 10-foot rising sea level rise. I know, very few people are thinking that long term, but we need to start thinking that way because our city is only 150 years old and we're now talking about a whole cycle of several generations from now. Overall, I am seeing a lot of comments, but there are a few things I do not see, that I think are important. One of the comments is about thresholds and the GSA only taking action if the GSA is the cause of the problem. The concern is about the language, even though we may not be the cause, we should be participating and advising; there needs to be proposals or a plan for helping even when we're not the cause of the problem. Groundwater interactions were another problem. Our Plan is inadequate regarding environmental issues and interactions with surface water as per Fish and Wildlife, and I agree.

Altogether, I am not quite satisfied with the responses in this presentation. I don't want to see what you plan to do but rather what you will do. Lastly, how are you going to be funded? Who's going to pay fees and how are those fees going to work?

Trotta (chat) – For the projected baseline scenario in the GSP the following assumptions were used for sea level rise: "Sea level rise guidance provided by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA 2018) was used to provide identify the sea level rise trajectory to be simulated. The PVIHM was modified to simulate the 1-in-200 chance, (0.5 percent probability) sea level rise trajectory under the high emissions scenario, which results in a projected sea level rise of 3.5 feet at the end of the projected 50-year simulation (WY 2070)"

DuBay (chat) – You will be able to see the revisions in the plan that will be released in early December. Funding is a question that we don't need to specifically address in the GSP – but of course, it is a big question. GSAs that submitted their GSPs two years ago are just now working on funding options.

Trotta – Thank you for your thoughts and comments. I think with respect to potential issues that aren't the direct result of GSA activities or are under their jurisdiction, some of the coordination that we have planned with the regulatory agencies information sharing, I think, will help with that. The GSA is not going to assume responsibility for something that it is not responsible for. We've been trying to be clear in the GSP as to what the GSA's authorities are. Some of those things are going to change over time and based on new information that comes available. That process and coordination on those issues will be adaptive. I put in the chat that the sea level rise change that we have simulated in the model shows three and a half feet by the 50-year horizon. I put in the chat that we are providing detailed responses with the comments. The comment period just closed a little over a week ago, so we're still in the process of crafting responses. As soon as they're ready they'll be available for you to see.

DuBay – We are taking all the comments seriously.

POLL on Advisory Committee Recommendation for GSP Adoption

On a scale of 1-5, what is your general opinion of the GSP as modified by the comments discussed (with 1 being “needs improvement” through 5 being “I believe the GSP addresses SRP’s needs under SGMA”)?	Please describe your response to the previous question.	Are there any items in the GSP as modified based on the comments that might raise concerns with the group(s) you represent?	Do you recommend adoption of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan by the GSA Board?
<i>Rating (1=low -5=high)</i>	<i>Open Text</i>	<i>Open Text</i>	<i>Multiple choice (Single answer)</i>
5	I believe the GSP addresses Petaluma Valley's needs under SGMA because the plan is appropriately comprehensive and is adaptable to future information and changes. Framework is solid.	Modifications are not likely to raise concerns. Constituents' biggest concern is cost, and changes do not appear to require increased GSA tasks that could cause increases in user fees.	Yes
5	This been a thorough, transparent, and exhaustive planning effort. Looking forward to implementation!	Cost and value of ongoing compliance	Yes
5	I believe the additions described by Marcus will address most of the comments and any shortcomings that may have existed in the first draft of the GSP. It will be a better document when completed.	It was mentioned several times about the climate scenario that was chosen. I assume more language will be added to address this.	Yes
5	It was a very thorough, comprehensive, and detailed effort.	None that I saw.	Yes
5	Important to keep this effort in context. We are doing our best to comply with state law. I think the effort has been thorough and transparent and beyond the cause!		Yes

3	Will need to see actual responses to comments. Would also like to see GSA go beyond what is legally "required" and give more back to the public, like Coop Ext. service.	Impacts on ecology of system combining surface water and groundwater modeling. Raising funds should be in report even if not required.	Yes
3	The report is the kitchen sink. It could be halved and still meet the goals.	Mandatory cutbacks on water use.	No

John Shribbs – Great work by the team, well beyond my expectations. My compliments! A huge effort has gone into this Plan. To the Advisory Committee and the technical team doing the writing and investigating, it's well above and beyond my expectations.

But, given the current comments that still need to be addressed, I would want to see how we respond first, then I would probably go through with an approval.

Ann DuBay said that anyone who might have concerns should reach out to Marcus Trotta or Ann DuBay to let them know what those concerns are. Marcus Trotta added that the concern about potential fees is being worked on now with the fee study and will be ongoing after the GSP is submitted.

Advisory Committee Roles, Responsibilities, and Next Steps

Objective: Assess Advisory Committee member perceptions of the GSP after review comments received.

Ann DuBay said that staff is hoping that Advisory Committee members will be willing to participate, at least for another few months to a year, as we get into GSP implementation. There are a lot of things in Sections Six and Seven particularly regarding projects and management actions and implementation that are needed, that's what we want to give you some information today so you can make the decision as to whether you would like to continue. And of course, some of the appointments come with terms. DuBay showed a slide of proposed tasks. She said that we would like to meet every other month this coming year with the aim to meet quarterly thereafter. We also anticipate having Community meetings for stakeholders on the fee in early spring followed by larger Community meetings.

Questions/Comments

Bauer –I think it looks pretty good and you laid out a schedule that seems doable, so that we can keep track of things and be of use to you and will be beneficial to the Board. I am excited to keep going. Thank you for the opportunity and I hope everybody else here will join me in doing that. We all have a lot of institutional

knowledge, and I think we could be very helpful in making sure this Plan is implemented, the way we want it to be.

Clayton Engstrom – When we start talking about rates and fees, does this include incorporated and unincorporated areas? If it's not going to include the people in the incorporated areas, they shouldn't have a say on what the fees should be for me. The voting members of the fee should be the people who pay the fee.

DuBay – You raise great points, that is the kind of information we would like to discuss in January with the fee consultants. In the last study, we looked at a lot of options. We have these fee consultants to help us understand the legality as to what can be done. Santa Rosa Plain ended up with the groundwater user fee based on estimated groundwater use, and that applies to the city, so the cities are the largest payers right now. That amount is shared with their customers, the water ratepayers.

There is also an option for a parcel tax; there are many options. We don't have the answers yet.

Bauer – The City is going to be paying a lot of money which will be passed as fees to rate payers. Everyone will be paying, whether a fee or otherwise.

John Shribbs – Something else that was brought up is the structure of the GSA and how many people are going to be employed full time or part time and where they're housed. And what that agency, since it's a full-blown regulatory agency will look like, including the personnel involved. It should be addressed soon.

Andy Rodgers – I hope the AC members who have diverse expertise, will come up with creative efforts, maybe subcommittees. Maybe we could have less big meetings and more small progress meetings on specific topics.

No public comment.

Updates

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

Ann DuBay – We received good questions and feedback at the Community meeting in early October. There was a lot of concern about the drought and other water issues. Thank you to the Advisory Committee members who participated. The Rural Residential Outreach consultant has provided their deliverables to us and it is now up to us to incorporate those in the messaging moving forward. When we start talking about fees, it will be especially good for us to have their messaging.

Marcus Trotta – Prop 68 funded work from DWR to construct up to four Representative Monitoring Points (RMP) in the basin. Staff put out a bid a few months ago; we received one very expensive bid, so we went back for a re-bid. We did get more than one bid this time and one appears to have come in within our budget so hopefully we will be able to construct three wells. The total number of RMP will be less than four because of costs related to equipment. Bids are due tomorrow, there will be more to report in terms of next steps after that. We hope to start drilling in April timeframe, there is lots of pre-planning work to be done (easements, etc.).

The electromagnetic surveys that DWR is doing can help provide information on distribution of fault zones within the basin and thickness and distribution of different geologic units. That work is currently scheduled for next week.

Questions/Comments

Eugene Camozzi – How deep can electromagnetic surveys go?

Trotta – They say up to 3,000 feet in some settings; it depends on local geology and interpretation of data they collect. It is somewhat contingent upon the availability of actual data from well logs and other sources that they can use to calibrate their geophysical signal. 500-1,000 feet is the range we should expect.

Camozzi – If they are up in the air 500 feet, do they lose the 500 feet that they are above the ground as part of the electromagnetic imaging?

Trotta – No, I don't think so. The actual sensing device is closer to 100 feet. Another important consideration is how it will be capable of picking out 20-foot-thick sand and gravel units that are quite common in aquifers in our region.

Camozzi – Where are they from?

Trotta – The technology originated in Denmark, it is a cooperation between Denmark and the State of California. The consulting firm is based in Denmark. I think that Information is on our website. I will share the link.

Peter Kiel (chat) – Can the GSA share recommendations for well level monitoring equipment and step-by-step instructions that I can share with other private well owners? I am interested in monitoring my well. This is an area where the Advisory Committee can help distribute information to parties not engaged in the GSA process.

Trotta – I am just adding some language related to that in our Implementation plan for the GSP.

One of the things that we currently have is a voluntary well monitoring program that Sonoma RCD has been helping with, they have been under contract with the GSA to help identify well owners that are interested in volunteering their wells for monitoring.

No public comment.

Questions/Comments

DuBay – I just again want to thank you all for working with us, this has been a very technical process, and we really appreciate your work.

Trotta – We have all had to learn quite a bit as we go, this is all rather new, so it's been it's been great to have you provide your perspectives and input as we've gone along. I think it's made the Plan a lot better and more responsive to our local stakeholders' needs, so really appreciate all that. I also want to acknowledge everybody else who's been working on this Plan. The team has been working some crazy hours recently getting the GSP finalized. Thank you also to the consulting firms and other partner cities and member agency staff who have helped quite a bit on this, it's been a real team effort. I appreciate all the support and good work that's been done.

Heidi Bauer thanked everyone for participating and being there for the long haul. She said that the work started long before the pandemic and the group has been through a lot of things together, so she is looking forward to staying in touch and continuing to work on this together going forward. Many thanks also to staff, it was a Herculean effort for sure.

John Shribbs thanked everyone as well and mentioned that he had finished an improved, second edition of the wetlands field guide, available at Copperfields and a couple other locations around town.

The meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m. The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. The Board meets virtually on December 8 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members - Attending

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

Advisory Committee Members – Absent/Excused

Gary Mickelson
Lindsey Strain

Staff / Presenters

Ann DuBay, PV GSA Administrator
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 – arrived later
Mario Ghilotti – attended for a short period