

Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Advisory Committee Meeting

July 13, 2021 - Meeting Summary

Location: Zoom

Contact: Ann DuBay, Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Administrator
Email: Ann.Dubay@scwa.ca.gov | Phone: 707.524-8378

Next meeting: August 10 (to be confirmed) and/or September 14, 2021, 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Tim Parker, Advisory Committee Facilitator, welcomed the group and gave an overview of meeting protocol. Fred Allebach, Sonoma Valley GSA Advisory Committee Chairman, called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. and asked Ann DuBay to conduct roll call.

General Public Comments

None.

Agenda and Schedule Review

Tim Parker reviewed the day's agenda. Depending on topics discussed and possible issues, we will continue to hold the August 10 meeting date. Vicki Hill and Jane Whitsett said they wouldn't be available for the August 10 meeting, if held. A public workshop will take place in October to review the GSP public draft. Parker provided an overview of the schedule for remaining draft GSP section reviews. Four weeks are allocated to review the complete GSP, sections 1-7, from early August to early September.

Marcus Trotta apologized for the delay in some of the upcoming GSP sections. He said the SMC/Monitoring Sections will be available on July 16 for a two-week review by the Advisory Committee.

Comments/Questions

Fred Allebach – What will happen to the Advisory Committee when the GSP is done? What does the staff have in mind for what the AC will be doing?

Ann DuBay – There are going to be other things where we will appreciate input from the Advisory Committee, such as the Rate and Fee Study and Implementation of the GSP. Hopefully, you will be able to educate the public on the GSP. Meetings will more likely be quarterly going forward. It will be a couple of years until we hear from DWR on final approval of the Plan.

Greg Carr – It would be helpful to have something laid out by the end of the year – a timeline and a frequency of meetings, as well as a projected sunset date. I wouldn't want to make an unending commitment.

Parker – The final chapter of the GSP will have the Implementation schedule in it and will lay out the proposed meetings. We will also have some of the projects and management actions laid out. I think there will be plenty to do and a good framework in the final chapter of the GSP.

Ken Johnson – I wonder if there is a schedule for meeting in person again?

DuBay – The emergency regulations that the governor issued regarding public meeting act requirements end at the end of September, so we will likely meet in person either in September or October. We will do a poll to see how many people could participate in a September in person meeting.

Jim Bundschu – Did you say that it will take DWR two years to process or approve our GSP?

DuBay – As per regulations, DWR has up to two years to respond once they receive the GSP.

Allebach (chat) – A few YEARS before GSP approval?

Porta (chat) - DWR has 2 years to approve the GSP, per the regulations/SGMA legislation.

Allebach (chat) – DWR won't take years to say if there are issues with the GSP?

Carr (chat) – Does the first 5-year update start with our adoption? or state approval?

Porta (chat) – Submittal to DWR - i.e., January 31, 2022, starts the 5-year clock.

Review Action Items and Approval of Previous Meeting Summary

- ✓ Send AC the Group 2a projects. **Done.**
- ✓ Share drought funding concepts. **Done.**
- ✓ Post recycled water master plan for Sonoma Valley Sanitation District on the website. **Done**, it can be found under *Resources*.
- ✓ Check with Sonoma Water on the work it is doing to prepare for extreme circumstances and prepare narrative in plan introduction to cover what it does and does not do. **Ongoing.**

- Send AC committee the recycled water/Cargill salt marsh update. **There will be a meeting the week of July 19 and an update will be provided following that.**
- Develop talking points/elevator speech regarding whether SGMA can achieve their goals. **Ann DuBay will provide an update at the next meeting.**

Comments/Questions

Bundschu – Two comments. 1)The GSP is due to be reviewed in five years after its implementation and I think maybe three years for the first review might be a little wiser. Five years is a long time to live with something without being able to amend it. 2) Has the water budget been completed, in so far as how many acre-feet the environment is going to need, so we can scale projects to a real water budget?

Trotta – We included the water budget in Section 3 review which was sent out in May. That describes the inflows/outflows and change in storage. The water budget alone doesn't dictate if we are sustainable or not. It would be more expensive to do three-year reviews. We are required to submit annual monitoring reports that evaluate how we're doing in terms of meeting all our minimum thresholds and measurable objectives, so those will be opportunities to look at where we are. You can amend a plan at any time. If we see something, we can amend it before the 5-year update.

Bundschu – Could we have something in writing for stakeholders about there being an opportunity to make changes annually?

Johnson – With the one-year annual opportunity, it makes sense for us [the AC] to stay. There may be projects that will be added to the agenda, new technologies, etc. They are good reasons to not wait five years before addressing issues.

Parker – Your comments are well received. I will ask staff to draft something in the Implementation Plan in terms of annual submittals.

Allebach – The SMC every year will provide a profile of the vital signs. If the public is paying attention to the vital signs, then they will be able to have some good feedback.

Carr – Regarding the previous meeting summary, the last paragraph (middle of paragraph) before *Updates*, says “electives”, it should say “elected”. Jane Whitsett made the motion to approve the previous summary with the one mentioned correction, Fred Allebach seconded. The Advisory Committee approved the motion.

DWR GSP Review/Summary

Objective: Review DWR findings for recently submitted GSPs in other basins; discuss applicability of Sonoma Valley

Lisa Porta, Montgomery & Associates, provided a brief review of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) comments on four GSPs submitted for critically over-drafted basins; two were approved – Santa Cruz Mid County and the 180/400 Foot Aquifer Subbasin. Two other GSPs have not yet been approved due to lack of specific details: Cuyama Valley Basin and Paso Robles Subbasin. Montgomery & Associates was involved with three of the GSPs (the two approved and one of the other ones). Porta provided links to the reviews and general DWR feedback on GSPs. DWR’s motto = Show your work, provide your rationale, tell your story.

1. GSP should tell the story. Thoroughly document your basis and rationale for developing SMC - there shouldn’t be discrepancies between overall data analysis and the SMCs. Be consistent – if you describe something, the SMC should reflect this.
2. It is important to consider all beneficial users of groundwater. Importance of SMC development. Describe why we chose certain Undesirable Results and how they may affect beneficial users. (Example, why 20%, need rationale behind it).
3. Implementation: Provide an explanation for the specific significant and unreasonable conditions that the GSA intends to avoid the Basin through implementation of the GSP.
4. Data Gaps. Don’t shy away from stating data gaps, work around them and describe what they are and how they will be filled.
5. Public outreach. DWR takes public comments seriously, they have 90-day comment period. They read all the comments and then verify if the GSP addresses the issue(s). Catalog all comments and provide answers. There should be comment matrices for each section, with attachment, or all comments in appendices.

Porta also mentioned corrective actions noted in deficient GSPs, highlights from the 180/400 Foot Aquifer Subbasin, and observations for Sonoma County GSPs.

Comments/Questions

Johnson – Thank you for the presentation. You mention how important it is to tell the story and how we arrived at some of the things in the SMCs. How much detail do we need to provide?

Porta – We have a draft that will be available for review soon. It isn’t about all the iterations, it is about describing the process.

Carr – The story in this county is, what is it, and what is it not? There are aspects of the GSP that are not satisfactory to folks who don’t live in the basin or who can’t figure out why we would want to restrict someone when we could bring in water from Illinois. Maybe some of that comes out of the fee discussion where we are asking people to pay for something. I agree with Marcus

Trotta's comment, that our basin is in pretty good shape. The one area of the DWR review we should pay attention to is how the GSP affects the users. I hope that when we get the final Plan, the narrative will have been developed, and it will reflect that.

Allebach – I agree with the basin looking like it is in good shape and the importance of a narrative explaining how the SMC affect beneficial users.

Allebach – I made a lot of comments on the GSP and process along the way. I wonder if along with the public comments, that the AC written comments could be referenced with the GSP chapters, so that when DWR looks at it, they can see what the Advisory Committee said, and if they wanted, could key into the background process. Has DWR made any comments that some of the SMC bars are set too low?

Porta – As long as you can show you are sustainable with the management actions in the 20-year timeframe, they are OK. Sometimes the projects don't look feasible. There are so many specific items in the GSP requirements, that you can't cheat because they are connected to each other.

Allebach – My concern is that since the locals can define what sustainable is, there needs to be some ground-truthing about whether it is sustainable or not. I have a concern about the GSP with the rural residential wells, and the de minimis that makes up about 30% of basin use and it doesn't seem like there's any real way to work with that high percent of use other than voluntary conservation, so I was wondering if that would somehow end up as a weak point in our GSP.

Porta (chat) – Humm, interesting nuance - I think this is right, but I suppose, the GSAs need to officially submit the GSP update to DWR for them to know to review it.

Allebach (chat) – Will the Advisory Committee GSP development process comments be available to DWR and referenced to GSP chapters?

DuBay (chat) – Yes, that's correct.

Ken Johnson (chat) – Given what I have heard about some of the more challenged basins – the state will be looking for politically driven plans versus those that are technically focused.

Projects and Management Actions

Objective: Provide overview of Projects and Management Actions model scenarios, and AC opportunity for clarifying questions

Marcus Trotta introduced the topic before handing off the presentation to Andy Rich to share the results of Group 2b project scenarios for storage and recovery and stormwater recharge, on top of the previous Group 1a and 2a projects that were simulated in some of the earlier scenarios.

Questions/Comments

Vicki Hill – On page 35 of the packet, you talk about Group 1 and assuming 20% reduction in well use and 10% on irrigation. Why are we not assuming reduction for other uses (wineries, production)? Is the assumption of 20% reduction based on mandatory requirement or voluntary requirement of irrigation and rural residential users?

Trotta – Group 1 projects – the intention is to show what the results would look like based on what we can get with our modeling tool doing dispersed projections through groundwater use. In terms of the categories we used, it was more of ease of use in the model, vineyards account for over 90% of all agriculture. Commercial users are more difficult to simulate in the model, whole volume is much lower, and they are more dispersed. We are assuming the reductions will be voluntary at the beginning. The GSA does a study of what kind of incentive would work best based

on patterns of use for the different user groups and what levels of conservation bay already be achieved.

Carr – In the packet we received a while ago, there was talk about modeling a 2c scenario, which would include more regulatory approaches to some of the areas. Is that still to be modeled?

Trotta – It is something we discussed recently. It might be something relatively straightforward.

Carr – It would be useful to look at for a few of the depleted aquifer areas; 8th Street East, and the golf course area. I hope we can combine if we're going to do ASR in those areas and we're going to ask people in the valley to pay for those ASR. I feel it's a little bit contradictory to allow people to continue to develop wells and increase the demand for the individual wells, while we're paying to artificially increase the amount of water in the aquifer. One of the political difficulties in the Plan is to convince people that we have done everything we can to increase the water supply before going down a regulatory path.

Allebach – I had quite a few questions on the June 21 slide packet, and the one we received today. The material is complicated and there is no way we can address all the details in one Advisory Committee meeting. It seems we need the August meeting.

Johnson – On the comment that Fred Allebach made about the model results, this is something I have been thinking about for a while. There were some places in the initial model results presented, that looked a bit unusual, like there are places where there is recharge happening, but water levels are going down, and things around the edges of the model where interaction between different layers was not making a lot of sense. How are anomalous areas that may have impacts on the outputs – how are they being evaluated? Is there a QAQC process or reconciliation that the modeling group are engaged in and what can we look forward to?

Rich – Models are always to be improved upon. Having developed this model, I know of some ways we could make small improvements at this time and can help with the 5-year updates. At this point we aren't going to be looking at model deficiencies.

Porta – We look at the results to be sure they make sense either from a physical natural perspective or from a modeling perspective. We have a list of things we will be looking at again. As you learn about the model quirks, you can refine it.

Trotta – During the process of reviewing the model results, one of the things we caught and corrected were the irrigation well depths in that one area of the basin.

Parker – Data gaps are identified in the Plan. Getting new data is going to improve the model, it will take some years.

Matt Stornetta – Stormwater recharge assumptions, on the map we have five points of diversion identified. Are the 150 acre-feet, are all those pulled from just five points of diversion?

Rich – Yes.

Stornetta – Are the recharge areas fallow, open space, or ag use?

Rich – They're projected to be active farms, kind of what's called FloodMAR.

Stornetta – And those points of diversion have appropriate water rights, and that is the only way they can divert that water? Are water rights going to be treated the same way?

Rich – These points don't have water rights at this time.

Porta – They are very specific to this particular beneficial use; right now it is a proof of concept approach.

Bundschu – We might consider making closing data gaps and updates, a project. Another thing – vineyard irrigation asked to cut back 10%. 10% of what? This needs to be discussed in further detail.

Parker – It sounds like an action item – have a further conversation and follow up on it.
Porta – At this point in the projects, we are trying to identify what it would take to get to sustainability. It is a way to show DWR there are projects worth following for implementation.
Bundschu – 10% of 5700 acre-feet of water using irrigation is the last figure I saw, so that 10% is trying to save 570 acre-feet of water. I can tell other growers that's the goal, how we accomplish that we don't know yet, but it's helpful on the street when people ask that question, to have an answer.
Carr – To add to that point, that's true across the board. There's needs to be a way to make it effective that people can accept.

Carr (chat, regarding ASR) – Why winter?

Parker (chat) – Because of Russian River water availability and conveyance capacity.
DuBay (chat) – That's when there is plentiful Russian River water, and low demand from customers. There is also room in the aqueduct.

Allebach (chat) - A public project would pay to offset golf?

Trotta (chat) – We are describing that location as golf course more to convey the general location, which was selected based on areas with low groundwater levels and relatively high localized pumping. The ASR well locations we are showing for Group 2b are very conceptual in nature and would require further study to select the most feasible locations and work out cost/benefit issues etc. As I will describe in the Implementation Plan update, we propose to recommend a feasibility study of potential ASR locations as part of the Implementation Plan, to further evaluate.

Allebach (chat) – I'd rather see the El Verano depletion area get an ASR well that would benefit municipal water at Valley of the Moon Water District.

Porta (chat) – Group 2a has an ASR well at Verano.

Whitsett (chat) – How long will these deep aquifer increases last?

Whitsett (chat) – The ASR wells go online in 2030 but the plots show levels well above baseline.

Porta (chat) – The initial increase is due to Group 1 projects, which start earlier.

Allebach (chat) – As I read these slides, the well depth assumptions were updated and that reduced the impact on deep aquifer impacts by 8000 acre-feet, how can I know what these assumptions were about?

Trotta (chat) - The changes to the well depth assumptions were described in slide 3 of the slide deck that was sent to the Advisory Committee on June 21, and included with the meeting packet distributed on July 2, which described the Group 1 and 2a scenarios.

Carr (chat) – Would stormwater diversion be more effective if the diversion locations were near the target recharge areas?

Allebach (chat) – Or targeted at GDEs?

Porta (chat) – As they are simulated currently, they are quite close to the recharge areas: see yellow diversion points on streams, and grey cells where recharge is applied.

Norman Gilroy (chat) – It would really help with comparing and understanding if these graphs and charts always have the primary roads marked on them. Would provide a consistent point of reference for the viewer and should be an easy overlay to include.

Jane Whitsett (chat) – I agree. It would be very helpful to add main roads and towns.

Carr (chat) - What happened to the idea that ag landowners could recharge the aquifer through their own reservoirs?

Hill (chat) – To follow up to my comment about why just Russian River reduction assumption. I understand modeling complexities, but when it comes to public review, people will be concerned that Russian River may be regulated but other uses won't be regulated.

Whitsett (chat) – I believe ASR projects rely on water from Russian River. Have we vetted this such that we know with confidence how much water we can assume from Russian River?

Johnson – I want to encourage that we focus on the big picture. We're relying on Russian River water for a lot of the ASR stuff and given what is happening in the Russian River right now, how confident are we, that there's going to be something there to pull from? I don't know how to address this within the risks in the Plan, but it seems to be significant, and from my perspective, it should probably be reflected.

Trotta (chat) – One of the recommendations we have in our Implementation Plan for assessing ASR is that we update our 2012 Feasibility Study, which would include a revised assessment of availability of Russian River source water.

Carr (chat) – Would it be worthwhile to explore other water sources than the Russian River?

Hill (chat) – The modeling assumed conservation (10 and 20 percent reductions) by 2025. Is that feasible given a study must first be done, and it will take time to implement potential mandatory conservation?

No public comment.

GSP Implementation Plan

Objective: Provide implementation plan, schedule, budget, and AC opportunity for clarifying questions

Marcus Trotta provided an update on the Implementation Plan for some of the projects that could be moved forward with minimal additional studies and lower amounts of funding. Staff is proposing to start with Group 1 projects in Section 5. Trotta said next steps include completing processing of Group 2 and 3 results, developing cost estimates and funding strategy, refining implementation schedule, and further developing descriptions for activities for Sections 6 and 7.

Questions/Comments

Johnson – There is a lot on the plate! Great to see the breath of engagement. Seems like the GSA has a lot of work to do to reach out.

Whitsett – Our GSP implementation doesn't start until 2022. We should start reflecting that in all our graphs and presentations instead of the way they currently are from 2020 to 2070; it is a suggestion to reflect the real schedule.

Carr – I agree. I would like to see a little more forward thinking. We still have some depletion areas that aren't being fixed by the current Plan. We should put it in the study and make it more of an active statement of what we want to do. I would hope we would be more active in pushing for some of those areas where there's the data. At least the current data shows there's a clear need to come up with a solution.

Johnson (chat) – I would hope the GSA Board and Advisory Committee will have a role and can help support goal alignment, values, and benefits for the potential pilot ASR studies from the City of Sonoma and Valley of the Moon Water District.

Gilroy (chat) – Can local well owners still provide updated information on their wells on an ongoing basis, or is the process closed?

DuBay (chat) – In Santa Rosa Plain, people can continue to update their well information. We haven't launched in Sonoma Valley yet. We will give well owners a specific window to provide changes.

Public Comment

Roger Peters – The last couple of slides were compelling in terms of amount of work that needs to be done. At the last meeting, there was discussion about the modeled wet cycle – I don't know if we circled back to that. A lot needs to be done to confirm the wet period and actions to be taken to rectify it. My suggestion is when you frame projects going forward – have near term and long term. It conveys to DWR that it is a fluid situation and needs to be rectified accordingly.

Updates

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

Ann DuBay – In June, the Board received an update on Projects and Management Actions modeling and overview of Implementation Plan. They approved funding for the next drought drop-by in August and authorized the Rate/Fee study. There is some money for marketing the drop-by to well owners. The July Board meeting will cover Implementation Plan review and a Projects and Management Actions update.

Permit Sonoma and GSA staff have discussed studies and actions needed to implement Advisory Committee recommendations. Permit Sonoma is assessing the Santa Rosa Plain GUIDE program and making suggestions for changes to approach for Sonoma and Petaluma Valleys. DuBay presented details on well owner responses to the Santa Rosa Plain GUIDE program.

Andrea Rodriguez, on Rural Residential Outreach, said staff is moving forward with test messaging and materials are expected late July/August. A refresh landing page will be available in August. If you need any help with outreach, contact Andrea Rodriguez. Ann DuBay said outreach focus is currently on making sure that people understand that the Groundwater Sustainability Plan will be available for their review and comments.

Tim Parker covered Section 3 Comments received do date. He said staff has received a few compliments as well as suggested changes (data questions and references, typos, grammatical and formatting errors, etc.). He included examples and how the comments were handled. An editor will do a full editing of the document so everything will be corrected. Parker thanked the Advisory Committee for their comments.

DuBay (chat) – Special call out to Caitlin Cornwall, who presented information on the SMCs at the community meeting. She did a great job discussing them in plain English. Thanks to the many Advisory Committee members who attended the meeting!

Carr (chat) – Is there a way to do both in-person and Zoom simultaneously for future meetings?

DuBay (chat) – The Zoom/in-person option is challenging without a professional level camera, and audio. We will talk to Valley of the Moon Water District about this option.

Review Action Items and ask for any Closing Comments

Tim Parker thanked everyone for attending and their comments. He reviewed the list of action items:

- Poll Advisory Committee members for an August meeting and ask if September would work as an in-person meeting. (Note from staff: Given the Delta variant and the rapidly changing public health guidelines, the September meeting will be virtual.)
- Work on an action plan for future goals and schedule for Advisory Committee.
- Make small change to previous meeting summary as requested by Greg Carr.
- Create narrative for 10% conservation.

Bundschu – 10% reduction if done properly, will be good. If not done correctly, it could be painful for some.

Carr – That is true across the board. There is a ‘bang for the buck’ issue, there needs to be a way to make it effective that people can accept.

Allebach – Avoid people coming out of the woodwork to say they never heard of the Plan.

Fred Allebach mentioned that he sometimes feels overwhelmed with all the slides and content. He thanked the Advisory Committee members for their participation and ongoing feedback. The next AC meeting is August 10 (to be confirmed) and/or September 14 (confirmed), 2021.

Allebach adjourned the meeting at 5:27 p.m.

Attendees:

Advisory Committee Members (present)

Craig Lichty (until 4 p.m.)

Fred Allebach

Greg Carr

Jane Whitsett

Jim Bundschu

Kenneth Johnson – joined a little late

Matt Stornetta

Norman Gilroy

Vicki Hill

Advisory Committee Members (absent)

Caitlin Cornwall (vacation)

Steve Wolf

Taylor Serres

Staff/Presenters

Ann DuBay, Sonoma Valley GSA Administrator

Marcus Trotta, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff

Andy Rich, Sonoma Water, Technical Staff

Andrea Rodriguez, Sonoma Water, Outreach Staff
Lisa Porta, Montgomery & Associates, Technical Staff
Simone Peters, GSA Administrative Aide (recording meeting summary)

Facilitator

Tim Parker

Members of Public

Robert Pennington, Permit Sonoma
Roger Peters – joined later