

Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board Meeting

Regular Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2021

<http://sonomavalleygroundwater.org/>

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Gorin, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. She asked Ann DuBay, Administrator, to conduct roll call. **Directors Ding, Gorin, Mulas, Rogers, and Sangiacomo** were present. **Director Rabbitt** arrived at 4:30 p.m. Also, in attendance; Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager; Marcus Trotta, Technical Staff; Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach Staff; Simone Peters, Administrative Aide (recording minutes); Fred Allebach, Sonoma Valley Advisory Committee Chairman; and Tim Parker, Parker Groundwater, Sonoma Valley Advisory Committee Facilitator.

2. Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board

None.

3. Consent Calendar

- A. Minutes, September 27, 2021
- B. Year-to-date Financial Report
- C. Year-to-date Member Agency Contributions

No Board questions or comments. No public comment.

Director Ding moved to approve the Consent Calendar as presented, **Director Rogers** seconded. Motion passed unanimously **5-0-1** (**Director Rabbitt** was absent).

Roll call Vote:

Director Ding – aye

Director Gorin – aye

Director Mulas – aye

Director Rogers – aye

Director Sangiacomo - aye

4. Directors/Subcommittee Report

- a. Rural Community Engagement Program

Director Sangiacomo reported that there is an ad in the Sonoma IT, Sonoma Sun, and The Press Democrat about the Groundwater Sustainability Agency and GSP. The landing page on the website is updated and staff received a list of sign locations from the Advisory Committee members for the rural road sign project to raise awareness of groundwater. There are some additional signs, so if you would like to put some on your property, please let staff know. We will be monitoring the hits to the groundwater landing page to see if the additional outreach is making an impact. The consultant's work is almost complete; there will be some funds left in the budget, and they will be putting together options to share with the Board liaison.

b. Rate-Fee Study

Director Ding reported that the contract with SCI is completed with a final signature date of October 12. A kick-off meeting is scheduled with staff and consultants. Consultants have been working closely for several weeks with PRMD. In November, they will be looking at what the other GSAs are doing with the fee study and hopefully, develop options for the Board to consider.

No Board questions or comments. No public comment.

5. Advisory Committee Report

A written report is in the packet. No public comment.

6. Action Items

a. 2022 Calendar: Adopt 2022 Meeting Calendar

The Board annually adopts a meeting calendar for the year. The proposed 2022 meeting calendar follows the current Board schedule of meeting at 4:00 p.m. at the Valley of the Moon Water District boardroom, virtually, or both virtually and in person (hybrid meetings).

The 2022 calendar will focus on the rate and fee study, Groundwater Sustainability Plan implementation, and future contracts for services.

Ann DuBay mentioned there are three extra "on-hold" meetings in addition to the regular six dates scheduled. Meetings will be focused on the fee study, annual budget, and GSP implementation items.

No Board questions or comments. No public comment.

The calendar was adopted unanimously as presented **5-0-1 (Director Rabbitt was absent)**.

Roll call Vote:

Director Ding – aye

Director Mulas – aye

Director Rogers – aye

Director Sangiacomo – aye

Chair Gorin – aye

- b. **Support for grant proposal:** Consider authorizing the Administrator to sign a grant proposal for funding for Aquifer Storage and Recovery

The California Department of Water Resources is accepting applications for its 2021 Urban and Multi-benefit Drought Relief Funding. The funding for this competitive grant program is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The City and Valley of the Moon Water District (VOMWD) are preparing a grant application for a project to address drought impacts in Sonoma Valley. The proposed project includes Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells and rehabilitation of existing non-productive wells to provide sustainable and reliable drinking water to Sonoma Valley.

Ann DuBay said that groundwater projects in SGMA basins must include a support letter from the GSA as part of the grant application and staff recommends authorizing the Administrator to prepare and sign a letter of support for grant funding for the proposed ASR project to be developed by the City and VOMWD.

Jay Jasperse added that the state hasn't yet finalized their guidelines, when they do, they will start accepting applications. It is a \$200 million grant in total, and each project needs to be at least \$2 million.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Rogers – I thought it was \$4 million.

Jasperse – It is \$2 million minimum. You can ask for more than that.

Director Rogers – If we have trouble meeting the minimum, can we mix in another project such as a monitoring well that would dovetail into that?

Jasperse – You can't have a variety of options; you can do either if you make the link to drought relief. Or you could combine it with Sonoma's projects under one application, or there could be two applications, or two projects under the same application.

Director Rogers – My understanding is that it is going to be one application for both.

Director Gorin – It has been challenging for Sonoma Water to find a location for infiltration to recharge the aquifer. Do you have a location in mind about where that project might be?

Jasperse – Marcus Trotta and I have been working with Matt and Fergie. I think it will be aquifer storage and recovery, so it won't be an infiltration type recharge. Valley of the Moon already has a well that is constructed that can be modified for ASR.

Trotta – The well has been constructed to be compatible with ASR so there would be some modifications to the facility and piping to get it fully set up for aquifer storage and recovery. The City of Sonoma would include a new well specifically designed for ASR because the City's existing well #6 is over 60 years old.

Director Gorin – How deep do the wells have to be to 'hit' the aquifer at each location?

Trotta – At Valley of the Moon, the well is producing from depths of about 400 feet, the location of the well is at about 700 ft. At City of Sonoma, the aquifer is a bit shallower, the well is between 200 and 300 feet.

Director Gorin – The Valley of the Moon well is close to the distribution system. Council

member Ding, please pass our thanks to Fergie for this grant and our good wishes for her retirement.

Public Comment

Fred Allebach – This is a good idea to replace what you use. Groundwater banking makes groundwater in the valley sustainable.

Director Rogers moved to authorize the Administrator to prepare and sign a letter of support for grant funding for the proposed ASR project to be developed by the City and VOMWD, and **Director Ding** seconded. Motion passed unanimously 5-0-1 (**Director Rabbitt** was absent).

Roll call Vote:

Director Ding – aye

Director Mulas – aye

Director Rogers – aye

Director Sangiacomo – aye

Chair Gorin – aye

7. Information Items:

- a. **Groundwater Sustainability Plan:** Sonoma Water staff will provide a short overview of the GSP, and discuss public comments received to date.

The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is due January 31, 2022. A public review draft of the Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was released on October 1, 2021. The public comment period is October 1 – October 31, 2021. Staff will provide an overview of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, a summary of the October 12 Community Meeting, and an update on public input received since the public review draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan was released on October 1, 2021.

Jay Jasperse gave an update on the GSP schedule, and overview of the basin conditions:

- Groundwater quality is generally acceptable.
- No evidence of land subsidence due to groundwater pumping.
- Limited data available on seawater intrusion due to groundwater pumping.
- Limited data on the effect of groundwater pumping on stream flows.
- Groundwater levels are declining in the deep aquifer.
- Groundwater storage is declining in the deep aquifer by about 900 acre-feet annually.

Marcus Trotta presented an update on the water budget, projects and actions needed, and data gaps to be filled.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Gorin – How do we interpret the public comments from the Community meeting and what do we do with those comments?

Jasperse – For the comments that focus on the regulatory tools, we will revise the implementation plan to consider those earlier in implementation. We need to start having those discussions and developing what those tools could look like.

Trotta – Looking at the comments received to date, comments are mostly related to the climate scenario that we selected. We are forming answers to those kinds of questions and developing a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

Director Gorin – Is there anything that has given you pause?

Trotta – Having a slightly more aggressive schedule on the policy options.

Director Gorin – Normally in an EIR, we have the chance to circulate the draft, receive the comment, and then have responses in the final plan. Will we have that?

Jasperse – This is a long-range planning document, there is no CEQA associated with it.

Director Gorin – Are we including the six or seven pages of public questions and answers as an appendix of the Plan?

DuBay – We are including previous questions received in appendices. The new comments and answers will be added to that. For the Community meeting, it was a ‘Question and Answer’ session. We don’t have the names of the persons who asked the questions so maybe we could include that as a separate page in the appendices.

Director Gorin – It is important to track the questions and comments. Maybe in a year or two we might have some hindsight.

DuBay (chat) – Comments are in your meeting packets, and also available here:

<https://sonomavalleygroundwater.org/meeting/community-meeting-groundwater-sustainability-plan/>.

Director Rogers – I would like to commend the folks who put on the last Community meeting. It was much better than the first one. Good questions and answers.

Director Rabbitt – I thank staff for their work and for including the comments in the meeting packet.

Director Sangiacomo – I would like to reiterate what others have already said. This is a tremendous amount of work. Thank you again to the staff.

Director Gorin – I read that the Farm Bureau is going to give Bob Anderson the opportunity to speak to the ag community about the sustainability plans moving forward for all three basins.

Director Ding – I thank staff for all their work. I suggest we preserve the old public comments on the web. Every five years, we have the chance to update it. Keep ideas open.

Director Mulas – I reiterate what everyone said about staff. Lots of work has gone into this.

Director Mulas – Have we been able to see the impact of opening the Baylands water off Hwy 37, is there any way of knowing if it has had an impact of adding to the saltwater intrusion?

Trotta – We don’t have any monitoring data to indicate whether it has impacted the movement of brackish water into the basin. We have had discussions with Sonoma Land Trust and the Partnerships that is advancing those projects. It is something to keep an eye on. Seawater is an area of large data gaps in our GSP.

Director Mulas – I was on Hwy 37 this weekend and couldn't help but notice the large amount of brackish water. I think we need some really good information on it.

Director Gorin – It might be good to include the presentation The Sonoma Land Trust presented to the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. Creating wetlands is a great mitigation strategy. DuBay (chat) – [https://www.sfbayrestore.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/SCBS%20presentation%20to%20SFBR SLT 10-15-21 0.pdf](https://www.sfbayrestore.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/SCBS%20presentation%20to%20SFBR%20SLT%2010-15-21%200.pdf).

Director Mulas – I would like to know what you consider to be low impact developments.

Trotta – Low impact development would be any new developments, for example, stormwater management that a new development would propose additional impervious surfaces.

Lots of examples have been implemented in all three basins.

Director Mulas – I didn't keep up with all the developments across from Train Town.

Director Gorin – Any projects above a certain size must include low impact development in the design of their drainage system.

DuBay (chat) – <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Eng-and-Constr/Grading-and-Storm-Water/Prioritizing-Low-Impact-Development/>

Director Gorin – Are you going to have an Advisory Committee meeting between now and December 6?

DuBay – The Advisory committee meets on November 9.

Director Gorin – I think Fred Allebach voices concern we heard at the public meeting. The reliance on projects like aquifer storage and recovery. How do we move forward in evaluating demand management and some of the engineering projects?

Trotta – The way we made that out in the GSP is to assess the demand management measures starting with voluntary incentives that we are proposing to roll out right away.

Director Gorin – I think it is the future role of the Advisory Committee and Board to evaluate the projects and ask hard questions. Can we achieve water savings that we need with less expensive mechanisms?

Director Gorin – We all need to 'get cracking' on the 500 pages of the Plan to digest it by the December 6 meeting. How will the Public Hearing work? Will there be policy options for us to consider?

DuBay – The comment period closes on October 31. Staff will take the comments, address them, and make changes to the GSP if needed. If there are any substantive changes, those would be discussed with the Board on Dec. 6, along with a staff recommendation. At that point, we are getting close to the GSP deadline. At the December meeting, we may give a very brief overview of the GSP and focus on comments received. If the Board wants to move forward, we will have a resolution.

Director Gorin – Do you anticipate a long meeting? Should we consider starting the meeting earlier?

DuBay – Maybe we can let you know next week depending on the questions received.

Director Rogers – I share Fred's concern about saving water. I haven't seen any cost benefit analysis of projects; most projects seem almost free with grant funding. Even with ASR, we aren't talking about what the water will cost that we put into the aquifer. What can we do on a voluntary basis?

What are best practices in the ag community? How are you enforcing those and how are you getting those out into the public sphere? The project doesn't talk about that and, and so the question becomes 'is the project supposed to talk about that or is that something that the GSA now does in its next iteration'?

Director Gorin – I agree, it would be great to have a cost analysis with the projects.

Public Comment

Fred Allebach (chat) – It takes some years for Bay wetlands to have plants grow that will serve as the mitigation, the Hwy 37 area is not there yet.

Fred Allebach – My concern is about supply and demand. My worry is that people won't personally save if there is going to be a project. I would like to see more conservation. Marcus Trotta mentioned 900 acre-feet declining but 300 in storage, and without projects if 290 acre-feet were saved, then that would zero out, it seems. I don't always see how the numbers add up.

Trotta (chat) – The 900 acre-feet per year decline in storage was for both the shallow and deep aquifer system, not just the deep during the current water budget period of 2012-2018 (this period included the previous drought of 2013-2018 which had 10% lower precipitation and more pumping in comparison with the longer historical period of 1971-2018 where a 300 acre-feet per year decline in storage was simulated). The 50-year future water budget projects a continuation of the approximately 300 acre-feet per year decline in groundwater storage for both the shallow and deep aquifer systems.

8. Legal Counsel, Plan Manager and Administrator Report

Ann DuBay mentioned that in addition to the Plan/Administrator Report in the packet, the airborne electromagnetic survey project that the Department of Water Resources is doing is scheduled to start around November 6. Andrea Rodriguez is involved with outreach on that project and someone from technical will be involved with DWR. We also talked to them about reaching out to the Farm Bureau to let people know about the concern that **Director Mulas** raised about herd animals.

Jay Jasperse mentioned that DWR has draft guidelines out for SGMA implementation's next phase, towards the end of November. They will have between \$200 and \$500 million in funding available for medium and high-priority basins like ours in late 2022 or 2023.

We had a CAT 5 (highest rating) atmospheric river over the weekend. There have been 10 in 40 years, but this is only the second one in the month of October. Based on the storm, we worked hard with the State Water Board; they lifted our curtailment from the Russian River of the 20% reductions. All the water contractors are still obligated to meet the governor's 15% drought reductions so we're working with the contractors to remind people that the drought is not over.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Rabbitt – Hats off to Sonoma Water for filing that temporary urgency change order request prior to this atmospheric river hitting us, to allow us the opportunity to take the excess water that filled up in the Russian river so quickly, to those areas where it's needed.

9. Adjournment

Director Gorin – I agree, we are indebted to all our water agencies who were out during the storm, ensuring that equipment was functioning, and storm water drains were being cleared. She thanked the Board members for attending and adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m. The next Board meeting/Public hearing is December 6, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.