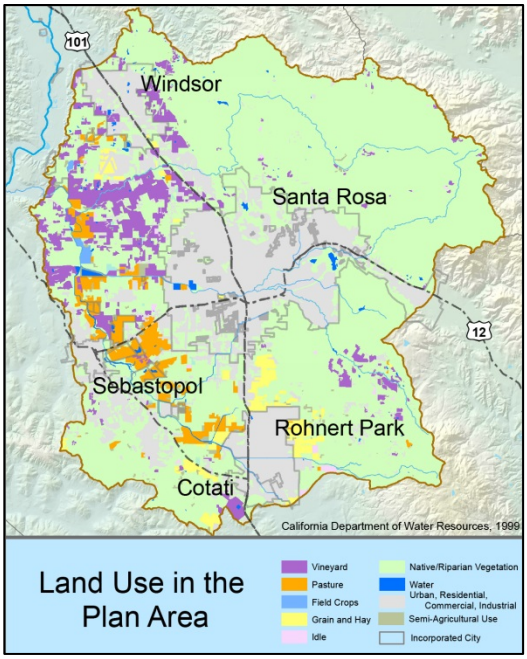
Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Management Plan Overview

Goals, Objectives and Management Components — May 2014



Recent studies and computer modeling indicate groundwater pumping in the Santa Rosa Plain watershed has caused an average annual imbalance between the total amount of water flowing into and out of the basin of approximately minus 4% (-3,300 acre feet) per year between 1976 and 2010. This imbalance can lead to declines in groundwater levels and reduce the water flowing in creeks and streams. Without management, droughts and climate change may worsen this imbalance. Careful monitoring and management of groundwater and surface water is therefore needed to ensure a sustainable, reliable supply of water in our wells, creeks and streams.

To be proactive, a balanced group of stakeholders called the Basin Advisory Panel (Panel) has been developing a Groundwater Management Plan (Plan) in accordance with state water code to locally and voluntarily manage our groundwater resources. The Panel is comprised of almost 30 technical experts, residential well users, businesses, agricultural groups, environmental organizations, governmental agencies, tribal groups, natural resource managers, and members of the general public. After nearly two years in development, the Plan is nearing completion. Four main elements guide the Plan:

1. **Water Resources** — to describe water demands and available supplies
2. **Goals & Objectives** — to manage the groundwater basin
3. **Management Components** — to realize progress on the goals and objectives
4. **Implementation** — to prioritize recommended actions and identify a schedule and funding

Goals & Objectives

The goal of the Plan is to locally manage and protect groundwater resources through non-regulatory measures to support all beneficial uses, including human, agriculture, and ecosystems in an environmentally sound, economical, and equitable manner for present and future generations.

Management Components

The Panel has developed management components to ensure implementation achieves the goal and objectives.

Component 1: Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement is the foundation of an ongoing collaborative process of decision-making and action during Plan implementation. The Plan continually cultivates and informs stakeholder through participation in meetings, briefings, relationship building, and broad educational outreach.

Component 2: Monitoring Program & Modeling

An important component of the Plan is to establish a comprehensive, long-term monitoring program. Monitoring focuses on groundwater levels. Monitoring data will be used periodically to evaluate groundwater resources, improve the monitoring program, and help make decisions on water management strategies.

Monitoring Program Elements

- Groundwater-Level Monitoring
- Groundwater Quality Monitoring
- Inelastic Land Surface Subsidence Monitoring
- Surface Water-Groundwater Interaction
- Hydro-Meteorological Monitoring
- Monitoring Protocols
- Data Management
- Prioritize Data Needs

Component 3: Groundwater Protection
Protecting groundwater resources is a key component. Groundwater protection takes many forms: acting to maintain quantity and quality, improving water well management, protecting recharge areas, and providing information on ways to improve groundwater protection.

Component 4: Increase Conservation & Efficiency
Water conservation reduces the demand for potable water resources for both surface and groundwater supplies. By fostering water supply sustainability and lessening groundwater withdrawals, water conservation approaches protect groundwater levels, water quality conditions, and ecosystems.

Component 5: Increase Groundwater Recharge
To ensure a long-term, viable, sustainable groundwater supply, the Plan seeks to increase groundwater recharge in the Plan area over the long term. Options for groundwater recharge include diverting stormwater captured into spreading basins over areas that have high permeability soils and allowing the ponded water to percolate into the subsurface. Another option is groundwater banking to recharge and store drinking water directly into groundwater through wells.

Component 6: Increase Water Reuse
Water reuse within the Plan area would include using highly treated municipal wastewater (recycled water) and untreated household gray water beneficially for a variety of non-potable (i.e. not for drinking) applications. Water reuse provides additional water supply for users.

Component 7: Integrated Groundwater Management
Integrated groundwater management includes identifying and implementing activities, developing strategies, and adopting policies that recognize the links between groundwater and the broader hydrologic system, comprising climate, rivers, wetlands, and ecosystems. In practice, this means integrating a number of processes and programs to improve linkages and connections.

Specific focused integrated management components include:

- Groundwater management and land use planning
- Urban Water Management Plans tracking and integration
- Multi-agency and organization integration
- Climate change planning
- Multi-benefit actions and activities

Next Steps
The Sonoma County Water Agency is the lead agency on the Plan. The final step in the two-year Plan development will be for the Water Agency's Board of Directors to consider adoption of the Plan at a publicized Board Hearing in Summer - Fall 2014. After adoption, the Plan will continue to be a living document that can adapt to changing conditions. The public will continue to be informed during Plan implementation.

Funding
Funding has been provided by the Sonoma County Water Agency, cities of Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Town of Windsor, California American Water, and the County of Sonoma. Moving forward, funding for implementation of the Plan would likely come from those same entities, in addition to the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, United Winegrowers, and the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria.

Learn More and Contribute
Stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of the Plan implementation. Below are a few ways to learn more.

Stay Informed - For more information visit www.sonomacountywater.org/srgroundwater

Participate in a Panel Meeting - The Panel meets the second Thursday of most months, from 9:00am – noon. Visit the website listed above for more information.

Schedule a Briefing - Panel members and staff are able to conduct briefings for interested organizations. Please contact Project Manager Marcus Trotta at (707)547-1978 or mtrotta@scwa.ca.gov for scheduling.