

MEETING NOTES | October 11, 2012

Santa Rosa Plain Basin Advisory Panel

Meeting in Brief

Governance Proposal Approved

The Basin Advisory Panel finalized its governance proposal that the Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors will review as part of the resolution and formal public hearing on groundwater planning scheduled for Oct. 23, 2012.

Public Hearing October 23 at 10:00

The Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors will consider a resolution of intention to prepare a Groundwater Management Plan. A public hearing is scheduled for Oct. 23 at 10:00 at the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Chambers.

<http://www.scwa.gov/srgroundwater/>

Action Items

Timeframe	Name	Action Item
October	Panel Members	Continue conducting constituent briefings

Summary

Governance Proposal Finalized

Version 9/26/2012 Discussed

A small subcommittee met in September with County Counsel to review the governance proposal to resolve some lingering questions. Mark Calhoon, Jay Jasperse, Rue Furch, and Dawna Gallagher served on the subcommittee. The Basin Advisory Panel reviewed the latest version, which had minor refinements to reflect the intent of the Panel and be consistent with the Water Code. The second change related to advance posting agendas was to allow for flexibility to make timely decisions during implementation since the Panel will not likely meet as often. The Panel approved the changes, which included the following:

Add text under Lead Agency Role: Amend the Groundwater Management Plan with the concurrence and recommendation of the Basin Advisory Panel.

Change text under Basin Advisory Panel Role:

Original text: The Panel's proposed action would be identified prior to a meeting in an agenda and actions recorded in the meeting summary, including Panel member attendance.

Revised text: The Panel's agenda will be posted prior to a meeting and actions in the meeting summary, including Panel member attendance.

Agreed: Change all "would's" to "could's."

Briefings Conducted

City of Santa Rosa City Council and Board of Public Utilities

Jennifer Burke provided a briefing Sept. 25. There were no comments on the goals and objectives as currently written. Approximately 30 people attended.

Sierra Club

Len Holt briefed the Sierra Club's executive group. One small change was proposed, which Len will discuss when the group revisits the goals and objectives.

Monitoring Question Answered

Gary Michelson followed up on the question raised at the last meeting about monitoring. He learned that anyone can monitor wells as long as protocols are in place to avoid contamination, and the well owner signs an access agreement. This will support volunteer monitoring programs.

Management Components

This was the first of several meetings to begin considering management components for the groundwater management plan. The Panel heard a presentation on statewide groundwater management planning and then learned about water resources management strategies for the county.

Statewide Groundwater Management—Mark Nordberg, Department of Water Resources

Mark Nordberg provided an overview of statewide groundwater management activities, highlighting the role of Bulletin 118 on Groundwater and the California Water Plan. The Water Plan has an expansive collaborative process with technical and regional subcommittees. There are 515 groundwater basins and sub-basins in California. In California, groundwater provides about 30% of water supply in normal years and 40%, in dry years. Through the California Water Plan, a groundwater group has been evaluating the content of groundwater plans to determine consistency with water code requirements. The objective is to enhance the groundwater content in the Water Plan by expanding information about statewide water conditions through compiling and summarizing data. A host of activities are underway to achieve this objective. The State is actively compiling groundwater information through existing plans, the CASGEM program, Integrated Regional Management Plans, Urban Water Management Plans, and others. The second task is to summarize available information and identify data gaps. The Water Plan will also look at the change in storage and identify conjunctive management opportunities. The Water Plan is also examining the relationship between groundwater banking and flood management as well as sustainability measures.

As of August 2012, 118 groundwater plans exist in California, representing about 20% of California's total land coverage and 42% of groundwater basin coverage area. There are 23 adjudicated basins statewide, covering about 4% of California with most in Southern California. Mark discussed the requirements of groundwater management plans: objectives, agency cooperation, map, recharge areas, and monitoring. He also reviewed a range of voluntary and suggested components for plans. Through this work, they have analyzed the 118 plans to determine how many of them comply. Many do and others do not. The Sonoma Valley Plan is in full compliance.

In response to a survey on limitations to implementation, organizations implementing groundwater management plans identify funding as a major limitation, followed by physical limitations, public involvement, groundwater policy, and limited data and analysis.

The California Water Plan 2009 recommended a statewide inventory of groundwater plans. There is no comprehensive data-monitoring network for conjunctive use or groundwater recharge programs. The Plan recommends collecting information to enable informed decision making for legislators and policy makers; identifying areas where local agencies may need technical or financial assistance; and improving better coordination among existing and future planning activities to avoid potential conflict.

For the 2013 Update, the survey will inventory existing conjunctive use, recharge and groundwater banking projects and determine future conjunctive management potential. The Department of Water Resources has worked with the Association of California Water Agencies to conduct surveys on activities and identified 89 conjunctive management programs in the state with most being in the Tulare Lake (37) and South Cost Region (32). According to about half those projects, most of the water used for conjunctive use comes from the State Water Project or local surface water. The most common form of recharge is direct percolation or in-lieu pumping.

One member asked if the Sonoma Valley plan had any weaknesses that the Santa Rosa Plain effort should seek to strengthen. Mark responded that the Sonoma Valley plan meets all qualifications and is considered a great example in the state. Members asked a variety of questions and then moved on to concentrate on water management in Santa Rosa.

Sonoma County Water Resources Management Strategies—Jay Jasperse, Sonoma County Water Agency

The Water Agency manages water, flood, sanitation, and energy, making it unique in California. The Water Agency's water supply mostly comes from the Russian River with a small percentage coming from groundwater. The Water Agency attempts to optimize various strategies, including: water conservation, recycled water, groundwater / local supplies, and Russian River water.

Groundwater pumping in the areas leveled off in the late 1980s and 1990s and decreased by integrating these water strategies, including increasing imports from Russian River and water conservation. Since then, groundwater levels have rebounded and stabilized. Another example is supplying recycled water in the Sonoma Valley for agricultural operations in lieu of groundwater. This has also led to increased groundwater levels and reduced pressure on groundwater supplies.

The Water Agency is also exploring conjunctive management. In cooperation with other partners, conjunctive management can be realized by capturing stormwater, enhancing recharge and providing flood management. These types of integrative projects are the way that the Water Agency is seeking to maximize benefits.

The Water Agency has had a strategic partnership with USGS to study the four most heavily populated basins in the region: Alexander Valley, Sonoma Valley, Santa Rosa Plain, and Petaluma Valley. USGS has completed studies in the first two and is finishing the study for the Santa Rosa Plain this year.

The Water Agency is also doing a groundwater banking feasibility study with multiple partners in two basins. The idea is to “bank” winter Russian River water in groundwater basins during winter months and then draw it during the summer months when the Water Agency needs to reduce water flow in Dry Creek to enhance salmon populations per the National Marine Fisheries Biological Opinion.

Santa Rosa Plain Management Options

The group spent time talking about options that might merit consideration in the Groundwater Management Plan. After some discussion, the Panel suggested that staff move forward and begin writing management component sections that have widespread support. For other topics, the Panel will discuss them more in depth.

Develop Plan Sections for Panel Review

- Conservation: urban, rural and agriculture
- Incentivize abandoned well destruction / sealing

Needs More In-Depth Discussion or Discussion Underway

- Monitoring groundwater levels and quality
- Aquifer storage recover and stormwater recharge
- Interface between land use planning and groundwater planning
- Identifying recharge area (will be part of the USGS study)
- In lieu groundwater pumping
- Water quality data gaps
- Changing conditions (climate)
- Funding
- Reliability of future surface water (e.g., Eel River)

The group discussed that injecting recycled water may be a hot-button issue. The group should discuss it more.

Panel members like programs that involve homeowners and the public, such as the *Slow it, Spread it, Sink it*, and would like to encourage those activities in the Santa Rosa Plain. The Management Plan will include **monitoring activities, action items, and outreach activities** as part of its implementation plan.

Participants

Panel Members

Jennifer Burke
Michael Burns
Mark Calhoon
Elizabeth Cargay
Ezrah Chaaban
Rue Furch
Joe Gaffney
Dawna Gallagher
Kara Heckert

Len Holt
Lloyd Iverson
Jay Jasperse
Sue Kelly
Gary Mickelson
Jane Nielson
Damien O’Bid
Pete Parkinson
Rocky Vogler

Other Participants

Karl Adelman
Bob Anderson
Mark Nordberg
Rick Rojers

Staff

Tim Parker, Technical
Marcus Trotta, Project Manager
Gina Bartlett, Facilitator