

## **MEETING NOTES | June 12, 2014**

### **Santa Rosa Plain Basin Advisory Panel**

#### **MEETING IN BRIEF**

##### **Announcements**

- Consultant Tim Parker updated the Basin Advisory Panel on recent state policy and legislative activity related to groundwater. (See Appendix A.)
- Facilitator Marci DuPraw (CCP) circulated the table on which Panel members indicate who is briefing various organizations on the emerging Santa Rosa Plain (SRP) Groundwater Management Plan (GMP), inviting Panel members to provide updates. The updated version is attached as Appendix B. Marci checked with participants to see if an e-version of these updates is sufficient; however, an observer urged staff to provide a few hard copies on site for those not on the email distribution list.

##### **Meeting Overview**

- The Panel debriefed the May community forums and explored implications for remaining steps in finalizing the GMP.
- Project Manager Marcus Trotta and Technical Consultant Tim Parker oriented the Panel to revisions to the GMP, invited feedback, and asked if there were any additional changes needed. Panel members had through Wed, June 18, to suggest further changes.
- The Panel discussed the GMP approval process; the Water Agency anticipates seeking Panel approval in July and Board approval in September. The Water Agency is working with other implementing agencies to develop a Cooperative Agreement to fund implementation and a template resolution of support, which implementing agencies are encouraged to bring to their decision-makers for approval by mid-September. All Panel members are encouraged to provide updated briefings on the content and status of the final draft GMP to those whom they represent and seek letters or resolutions of support for the GMP, preferably by the end of August.

#### **The next Panel Meeting will take place June 10, 9:00-12:00, at 35 Stony Point Rd, Santa Rosa.**

Topics: At the July Panel meeting, we will seek consensus among Panel members on the GMP as a whole and approval for submitting it to the lead agency's Board for adoption.

#### **MEETING SUMMARY**

##### **Debrief of Community Forums**

With support from the Water Agency, facilitators, and other Panel members, a subcommittee of Panel members organized and conducted a series of four community forums in May for the purpose of orienting the public to the draft GMP and providing an opportunity for the public to ask questions and offer suggestions for enhancements. Forums were held in Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Rohnert Park / Cotati, and Windsor. Panel facilitator Marci DuPraw drew Panel members' attention to a summary of comments made at these forums, which was available as a handout and had been provided electronically the previous day. Marcus Trotta provided an overview of the handout and a recap of themes that were evident in the dialogue across the four forums. Marci then invited Panel members who had attended one or more forums to offer their insights about how the forums had gone and whether the comments received suggested

any changes were needed to the draft GMP; she subsequently invited other Panel members to weigh in, and then took comments from members of the public who attended this Panel meeting as observers. Comments were as follows:

- Suggestion: Many attendees were eager for more information. We gave them a lot to process. Many were just learning about groundwater for the first time at these forums. It might be good to do some follow-up outreach to forum attendees. Brainstormed ideas included: a) an email asking if they would like additional information or assistance understanding groundwater dynamics in the Santa Rosa Plain and related discussion in the draft GMP; b) sending out electronically the one-page overview flier distributed at the forums; and c) sending a notice to all well-owners with web-links to the information provided at the forums.
  - Response: The Water Agency will confer with the County and others to learn whether it would be legal and feasible to establish and use a mailing list of individual well-owners for purposes of GMP-related outreach. Staff will report back on this at the July Panel meeting. We can discuss how to proceed after we know a bit more about what is possible.
- Suggestion: The amount of groundwater used by public vs. private well-owners is an issue to community members (e.g., “Are we being asked to conserve water just to enable more development?”) Maybe we should address this issue more proactively (e.g., let the public know of appropriate forums for expressing such concerns; although the Water Agency provides monitoring data to land use planners, staff cannot lobby. The public should express their concerns and preferences to elected officials, such as City Council members).
- Concern: A Panel observer expressed the view that forum attendees didn’t have enough time to ask all the questions they might have liked to, and felt overly constrained by the facilitator.
  - Response: All did their best. Others felt the facilitator was very helpful in managing the available time well and was not manipulative.
  - Response: Non-Violent Communication training can be very helpful for managing this type of public forum constructively.
- Concern: A Panel observer expressed concern about whether this effort will result in the imposition of monitoring, controls, and enforcement efforts by the state that would interfere with residents’ lives.
  - Response: The Panel and the draft GMP reflect a non-regulatory approach. Participation in monitoring would be voluntary. It will not be necessary to monitor all wells; it will focus on areas of concern, and we will need enough participation to obtain hydrogeology data and see trends. There is a similar effort already underway in Sonoma Valley.
  - Response: There are currently voluntary monitoring programs in the Sebastopol area, in which some Panel members participate twice per year, and find it a great way to obtain monitoring information on their wells on-line for free. (Note that about half the Panel members are owner wells at their private residences.) The Sebastopol effort was initiated because well-owners observed a drop in water level in their wells and grew concerned. Participation fosters shared knowledge. The source of the data is only referred to by general location, not attributed to specific property owners.
  - Response: Others at the forums expressed the opposite concern – i.e., that the GMP has no “teeth.”

Concern: A Panel observer expressed concern about the possible influence of Bechtel, Rand, and other large corporations on this effort and, relatedly, whether there is a desire to privatize a public resource.

- Response: Neither Bechtel nor Rand are involved in the Panel nor development of the draft GMP, nor is there any recommendation in the GMP about privatizing groundwater.<sup>1</sup> The Panel roster is attached. (The facilitator checked with the Panel for its accuracy, received two edits, and received confirmation by consensus that it is now accurate. Please see Appendix D for the current Panel roster.)
- Comment: Someone at one of the forums asked a question about whether the casino is contributing to the overdraft. Our response focused on the importance of living within our means, but we missed an opportunity to explain the concept of “overdraft.”
  - Response: We never said the Basin is in “overdraft.” That term has legal connotations tied to specific conditions (e.g., long-term steep declines in groundwater levels and net imbalance) that the USGS did not observe, so the term does not apply. The model suggests that there is a “bit of minus balance.” This is something that warrants our attention to ensure that groundwater levels are in balance into the future.
- Comment: Maybe there is something we can learn from the Las Posas Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project in Southern California; they thought they had banked groundwater, but ended up losing it. It underscores how experimental ASR is.
  - Response: Actually, the Las Posas project started about 20 years ago, and a lot has been learned since then. ASR is actually no longer considered experimental.
- Comment: One Panel member who attended the forums mentioned that he had a list of comments that had been made by people visiting the information tables that had been set up around the room that he’d like included in the record. (Since the forum summary is of comments made in the full group dialogue and the comments provided by the Panel member were reportedly made in informal conversations at the information tables, the list is attached to this document as Appendix E.)
- Other Observations:
  - The forums were well-attended.
  - Attendees’ questions seemed sincere.
  - Those speaking for the Panel worked together very well as a team.
  - At the Rohnert Park / Cotati forum, most attendees lived outside the city. Attendees seemed surprised to learn that most groundwater use is non-municipal. (Municipal use represents less than 20% of the total.) Attendees also expressed concern about the impact of dairy farming on groundwater quality.
  - Judging from the Santa Rosa forum, all our outreach efforts – social media, announcements at two council meetings, and community access TV -- worked!
  - It is always challenging to reach the public, and that is the reason we did so much -- forums, many sponsors, briefings, media, ads, fliers, newsletter blurbs, Panel member outreach. One can always do more, but folks have competing priorities. Most of us are doing this as volunteers, and have competing priorities. Lots of us are well-owners ourselves. We did a great good job!
  - There was some confusion among members of the public regarding the difference between these community forums on the draft GMP and a series of drought workshops taking place around the same time. In some communities,

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that there is no recommendation in the GMP about privatizing groundwater

lots of folks came to the GMP forums, and few to the drought workshops; in other cases, we had the opposite dynamic.

- A Panel observer expressed concerns that those attending the forums seemed generally to be affiliated with groundwater-related organizations.
- The presentation by Marcus and Tim was excellent, and reflected all the thoughtful preparation.
- The fact that there is no hard data on rural domestic wells introduces uncertainty into the model, although it is a good, robust scientific model.
- Attendees at the forums wanted to know, if we shift away from groundwater use, what is the implication for surface water?
- How you define “zero” (i.e., the baseline) is key; that is a challenge with groundwater. It’s probably been dropping since people have been living in the Santa Rosa Plain.
- A Panel observer brought to the Panel’s attention the Sonoma County Climate Action Plan, indicating that it involves changes to the County’s General Plan and raises a concern about impacts on development patterns.

### **Revised Draft GMP as a Whole**

Project Manager Marcus Trotta and Technical Consultant Tim Parker oriented the Panel to the most recent revisions to the GMP (see Appendix C). A revised figure from the draft GMP (Figure 2-16) was also handed out and described. The revised figure presents the final estimates of groundwater demands from the Plan Area based on the USGS fully coupled model which are lower (for agricultural groundwater demands) than the initial estimates shown on the original version of the figure. They asked for feedback, which is summarized below. In addition, they indicated that Panel members had until close of business Wednesday June 18, 2014, to provide any additional feedback on these materials to Marcus and Tim; at the suggestion of a Panel member, Facilitator Marci DuPraw agreed to send out an email to all Panel members to this effect later today. Marci underscored the importance of Panel members taking advantage of this key window of opportunity for final comments on the draft GMP, as we approach closure.

- Suggestion: It might be very helpful to conduct periodic outreach specifically to rural residents, since from the annualized data in the draft GMP, it appears that they are a key population of groundwater users and therefore, need to be in the loop about GMP-related activities. They need user-friendly advice about how to weather seasonal changes in groundwater availability (e.g., occasional postcard; seasonal newsletter with features like, “What to do in the fall”).
  - Response: As noted above, the Water Agency will research the legality and feasibility of establishing and using a mailing list of individual well-owners for purposes of GMP-related outreach. Staff will report back on this at the July Panel meeting. We may want to focus on particular subsets of rural residents.
  - Response: Please keep such communications broad and inclusive.
- Question: Does the GMP’s data on the amount of water used by the agricultural sector include surface water?
  - Response: Recycled water was removed from the data; other types of surface water were not removed. However, due to the source of the data, it is reasonable to assume that it does not include surface water.
- Question: Does the USGS estimate on the amount of water used by the agricultural sector include frost protection?
  - Response: Yes.

- **Question:** What is the reason for the apparently dramatic fluctuation in the level of groundwater pumped by agriculture?
  - **Response:** That is due to year-to-year climate fluctuations.
- **Question:** We understand that rural domestic use of groundwater is not monitored, and so it was estimated by the USGS. What was the basis of that estimate?
  - **Response:** It was estimated based on census data and assuming a per capita water demand of 0.19 acre-feet per year.
- **Comment:** The update to Figure 2-16 is helpful.
- **Suggestion:** Look for a way to convey that re-use is not appropriate in all situations (e.g., put “appropriate” before “re-use” wherever the latter appears).
  - **Response:** Others on Panel were fine with the need to convey the underlying point, but uncomfortable with the proposed way of doing so because the word “appropriate” is so open to interpretation. Therefore, Tim will look for other ways to address the underlying concern in the next revision.
- **Suggestion:** Make explicit that the draft GMP recommends increased area for recharge.
  - **Response:** It already does say that, but Tim will see if there is a way to make it more clear through formatting.

### **Mapping Final Steps to GMP Approval**

Facilitator Marci DuPraw distributed the list of steps remaining to get closure on the GMP, which had been distributed in January. She pointed out how few remain, and asked Marcus to describe the sequence of steps involved in the GMP approval process.

Marcus indicated that:

- Panel comments on the revised draft GMP that are received by close of business June 18<sup>th</sup> will be compiled for review at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting that will occur on June 25.
- The TAC will provide suggestions to Tim and Marcus on final revisions to the draft GMP that they deem appropriate in response to those written comments, today’s input from the Panel, comments made at the May community forums, and their own knowledge and expertise.
- Tim and Marcus will revise the draft GMP accordingly and bring the final draft GMP to the July Panel meeting for Panel approval.
- Water Agency staff will then submit it to the Agency’s Board for adoption (most likely in late September).
- Meanwhile:
  - Water Agency staff in consultation with other implementing agencies will draft the Cooperative Agreement to document financial contributions for GMP implementation and a template resolution of support for use by other implementing agencies.
  - Other implementing entities will:
    - Obtain legal review as needed, and submit the previously-discussed proposed Cooperative Agreement and a template resolution, to their decision-makers;
    - Get the final draft GMP on their respective decision-makers’ (e.g., City Council) agendas for any time between July 10 (the Panel meeting where we will seek consensus on the GMP) and mid-September pending readiness of the Cooperative Agreement; and
    - Provide letters or resolutions of support for the GMP (preferably by the end of August).

- All Panel members are encouraged to provide an updated briefing on the content and status of the final draft GMP for those whom they represent.

### **Action Items**

- Panel members will submit any additional comments or suggested revisions of the draft GMP to Marcus and Tim by close of business Wed., June 18, 2014.
- Water Agency staff will research feasibility of establishing a mailing list of individual well-owners for use in conducting GMP-related outreach, and report on this at the July Panel meeting.

### **Participants**

#### **Panel Members**

- Garrett Broughton, Town of Windsor
- Sue Kelly, City of Sebastopol
- Tito Sasaki, Sonoma County Farm Bureau
- Elizabeth Cargay, Well Owner & Foothills of Windsor Homeowners Association
- Jennifer Burke, City of Santa Rosa
- Rue Furch, Sebastopol Water Information Group (SWIG) and Sierra Club
- Jane Nielson, Sonoma County Water Coalition and O.W.L. Foundation
- Pete Parkinson (retired), County of Sonoma
- Maureen Geary, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
- Keith Abeles, Community Alliance of Family Farmers
- Dawna Gallagher, Well Owner
- Lloyd Iversen, Local Well Owner
- Daniel Sanchez, North Bay Association of Realtors
- Jay Jasperse, Sonoma County Water Agency
- Margaret DiGenova, Cal American Water Company
- Joe Gaffney, Sonoma County Alliance
- Bill Keene, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District
- Damien O'Bid, City of Cotati

#### **Observers**

- Debra Tavaris, self
- Lou Tavaris, self
- Bob Anderson, United Winegrowers
- Karl Adelman, citizen
- Rick Rogers, National Marine Fisheries Service

#### **Staff**

- Marcus Trotta, Water Agency (Project Manager)
- Tim Parker, Parker Groundwater (Technical Consultant)
- Marci DuPraw, Center for Collaborative Policy (Facilitator of Panel & Funding Subcommittee)
- Jennifer Larocque, Water Agency