

Meeting Summary

Ukiah Valley Basin Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation Public Workshop

June 14, 2016 | Ukiah, CA

County Administration Center – Conference Room C

501 Low Gap Road

Ukiah, CA

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy, CSU Sacramento (based on meeting notes taken by Sarah Dukett)

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Background

California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) provides a statewide framework for sustainable groundwater management. SGMA is intended to support local groundwater management through the oversight of local agencies, which are required to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) by June 30, 2017. GSAs must develop groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) by 2020 or 2022 to achieve sustainability within twenty years of the GSP’s adoption.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is providing GSA development support to the County of Mendocino (hereafter County) and various stakeholders in the Ukiah Valley Basin (hereafter Basin). Following a series of public workshops held by the County in 2015, the DWR tasked the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) at California State University, Sacramento to support GSA formation efforts, including assessing the perspectives of a diverse set of stakeholders, facilitating stakeholder discussions, and helping finalize the governance process(es) for one or more GSAs. CCP practitioners began an interview-based stakeholder assessment in April 2016. This meeting provided an opportunity to present the initial results of this assessment to members of the public, as well as provide additional background on SGMA, present updates on two ongoing groundwater studies (details below), and begin discussions related to GSA formation.

Meeting Summary

The meeting's purpose and goals were to:

1. Provide an up-to-date overview on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.
2. Present the results of the Initial Stakeholder Assessment by the CCP.
3. Provide information to the public on current and upcoming groundwater studies.
4. Begin public discussion on the formation of one or more Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs).

Supporting Documents (on County website)

Supporting Document A – Meeting agenda

Supporting Document B – Presentation slides, Malka Kopell, Facilitator, CCP

Supporting Document C – Presentation slides, Chris Watt, LACO Associates, Consultant to Mendocino County

Supporting Document D – Presentation slides, Samuel Sandoval Solis, UC Davis, collaborators with the City of Ukiah

Welcome and Introductions

Sarah Dukett of the Mendocino County Executive Office welcomed attendees and reviewed the purpose and goals for the meeting. Malka Kopell of the CCP then reviewed the agenda (Supporting Document A).

SGMA and the Ukiah Valley – Where are We Now?

Malka Kopell continued with a two-part presentation. The first provided a general overview of SGMA, while the second presented the results of the CCP's Initial Stakeholder Assessment in the Basin. *Slides from this presentation are provided in Supporting Document B.* Each part of the presentation was followed by a short discussion, including Q&A.

SGMA Background Presentation

Summary

SGMA aims to bring groundwater use under sustainable management through the fundamental principle of local control. The process begins with the formation of one or more regulatory authorities (GSAs), and continues with the development of management plans (GSPs); both of these require consultation with local stakeholders, including various users of ground- and surface water. SGMA mandates the formation of GSAs by 2017, the completion of GSPs by 2020 or 2022 (depending on criticality status), and the sustainable management of groundwater within 20 years of GSP finalization. (For presentation slides, see Supporting Document B, slides 1-19.)

Discussion

- *Is it possible for stakeholders to submit an alternative plan and form an additional GSA?*
Yes
- *When will the next [Bulletin 118](#) update be released?*
DWR is currently reviewing basin modifications conducted so far. When finished, DWR will release the next Bulletin 118 update, most likely in late 2016 or early 2017. (The Department is required to release an interim update by 2017 and a comprehensive update by 2020.)
- *Can a city assume jurisdiction for a "white area"?*
No, only the county and the state can, as per SB 13.

Initial Assessment Results

Summary

Stakeholders reported an interest in working together in a simple, facilitated process that would include and protect the interests of all without creating a complex regulatory process; those consulted were familiar with SGMA, and felt that basin has plenty of water. Concerns reported included the quickly approaching deadline, the potential burden of additional regulation, the influence of downstream interests in Sonoma County, and the lack of data on (especially) surface-groundwater interactions. Stakeholders supported the County taking a lead role in the SGMA process, and requested that agricultural interests be included in future discussions. (See Supporting Document B, slides 20-25.)

Discussion

- *Who will decide what agencies will be let in [to the GSA]?*
SGMA is clear about which agencies are GSA-eligible. Other stakeholders can participate if they are invited by GSAs.
- *Do agencies have to meet all three requirements to be eligible, or just one?*
Just one.
- *Is the Sonoma County Water Agency GSA-eligible?*
This depends on whether their special district overlaps with the Basin; if so, then yes.
- *Can private water companies have a role in the (or a) GSA?*
Yes, but only if they are invited by a GSA.

Current and Upcoming Groundwater Studies

Three studies are being conducted in order to generate better data on groundwater stocks and flows in the Basin. Chris Watt of LACO Associates and Samuel Sandoval Solis of UC Davis presented overviews of two of these studies, commissioned by the City of Ukiah and the County of Mendocino, respectively.

Presentation 1: Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant (Prop 1) Study (Chris Watt, LACO Associates)

Summary

Chris Watt of LACO Associates presented an overview of an 18-month study that will be conducted by Mendocino County between July 2016 and December 2017, funded by California's Proposition 1. The study covers a range of activities, including data compilation, creation of a water budget model, dialog with stakeholders, and an initial draft of components for a GSP. Watt's presentation focused on the water budget, the development of measurable criteria for sustainable management, and the interaction between surface- and groundwater. (For presentation slides, see Supporting Document C.)

Discussion

- *Is there any new information on criteria for measuring surface water-groundwater interaction?*
No. The County is working proactively with the DWR, but there are no answers yet. Hong Lin from DWR clarified that DWR is working on this at a state level, and this will appear in the upcoming Bulletin 118 update referenced above.
- *Is it possible that the prioritization level of a basin would be lowered by the Bulletin 118 update?*
Not really; it is very unlikely that a basin previously classified as "medium" priority would be reclassified as "low."
- *Is the County working with the Russian River Watershed (USGS modeling) Study?*

The County wants to work with the USGS and will start coordinating with them soon. (There was discussion about having USGS present at the next meeting; Malka will follow up on this.)

- *What are the inputs for the water budget?*
Climate and gauging data.

Presentation 2: Groundwater Characterization Study (Samuel Sandoval Solis, UC Davis)

Summary

Dr. Samuel Sandoval Solis and Maritza Flores Marquez, both of the University of California, Davis, presented an overview of the City of Ukiah-funded study currently being carried out by UC Davis. The study uses time-series data from 45 wells in the Basin to analyze how groundwater behavior changes with water supply and demand. This water budget model forms the basis of the study's ability to evaluate various alternative water management strategies that will be discussed as part of the GSP development process. The presentation also included details about the study methodology, including surface water-groundwater interaction, aquifer mass balance, precipitation, and data sources. (For presentation slides, see Supporting Document D.)

Discussion

- *What is the timeline of the study?*
One year. The first presentation will be in September 2016.
- *Coordination with all parties will help in the GSP efforts*
Dr. Sandoval clarified that this is just a first-level study – a “bank account” view from outside – and that the USGS study will examine the internal physical details.
- *The USGS flow model needs more details. There was a request that this be presented at the next meeting.*
Yes, this will be presented at the next meeting.
- *How is frost protection looked at?*
Both past and current water use practices are used to understand a frost event's impact on the water budget.
- *Does the study look at the effect of population growth on water use?*
Yes, we have gathered data on the population effect from previous studies.
- *Is this a geological analysis?*
No, not heavy on geological analysis.
- *How does the study distinguish underflow from groundwater?*
Doing a time study analysis to look at the overall balance of the basin.

GSA Formation: Beginning a Discussion

Facilitator Malka Kopell gave a brief presentation to help frame and focus the conversation about GSA formation. Her remarks covered possible GSA models (single versus multiple agencies in a GSA, single vs. multiple GSAs), the timeline for developing consensus, and expectations and legal requirements for defining governance models for various GSA models. The timeline focused on five key steps: (1) developing rules of engagement for the Governance Group that oversee GSA formation; (2) creating a workplan for this group; (3) creating GSA proposals; (4) solidifying these proposals, and (5) finalizing the GSA proposal. (For presentation slides, see Supporting Document B, slides 26-36.)

The discussion that followed covered the following topics:

- *SGMA's 20-year timeline: is the goal really to achieve sustainability?*

Yes, and the timeline is a long one so that stakeholders have time to plan and adjust their practices in order to implement needed changes.

- *How much of a role does climate play in the GSP process?*
Climate data will need to be used for both historical analysis and future projections. NOAA and USGS have data from Sonoma County which is available for use in this process as well.
- *[The GSP process should be considered when discussing the GSA structure. For example,] a negative impact may be identified in the GSP process, and if there is a need, things have to be addressed right away. Given that potential, the GSA needs to have an enforcement mechanism and the ability to carry it out; this needs to be part of the GSA formation process. Or the GSA could include a geographically-based “management area” structure, where local plan implementation is up to the local agency in that sub-region.*
- *Is there experience that we can draw on from other stakeholder groups who have gone back to their respective decision-making boards?*
Yes: it is important to identify specific decisions in advance in order to plan accordingly for allowing proposals to be brought before various stakeholders’ respective decision-making boards. This conversation about timing needs to happen as a group.
- There was a suggestion that the group meet sooner rather than later due to complicated meeting schedules among various stakeholders. Speeding up the process would allow action items to be brought back to various stakeholders’ decision-making boards in a timely manner.

Next Steps

In planning next steps, facilitator Malka Kopell reminded the group of the 5-step process that needs to be completed by April 2017 (see Supporting Document B, slides 37-39); she characterized this process as “neither a sprint nor a marathon,” but rather somewhere in between. In planning the next meeting – focused on assembling the Governance Group mentioned above – the following issues were discussed:

- The next meeting will focus on the membership, governance process, and meeting schedule of the Governance Group.
- Mendocino County staff will create a Doodle poll for scheduling the next meeting.
- Discussion with Hong and Malka about various types of GSA models in response from members of the public.

Malka Kopell said she would try to come back to group members before the next meeting with items to review, and will continue the assessment process. The next meeting will be held in mid-July, dates TBD.

Hong Lin of DWR reminded participants of various SGMA-related resources on the DWR website.

Then the meeting adjourned.

Attendance

Attendees included but were not limited to the following individuals:

- Beverly & Marvin Rubin, Philo _____
- Hong Lin, California DWR
- Lee Marder, Round Valley Water District
- Bill Koehler, Redwood/Millview CWD
- Frost Pauli, MC Farm Bureau

- Ann DuBay, Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA)
- Cory O'Donnell, SCWA
- Jay Jasperse, SCWA
- Robert Rogina, Rogina Water Co.
- Daniel Rogina, Rogina Water Co.
- Patty Madigan, Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD)
- Douglas Crane, City of Ukiah
- Janet Pauli, IWPC
- Carre Brown, MCWA
- Pamela Britten, Round Valley Indian Tribes
- Paul Zellman
- Chris Watt, LACO Associates
- Maritza Flores Marquez, UC Davis
- Laura Garza, UC Davis
- Pablo Ortiz, UC Davis
- Mike Webster, MCRCD
- Susan Knopf
- Jeremiah Puget, North Coast Water Board
- Devon Jones, Mendocino County Farm Bureau
- Jeff Kubran, D____
- Tamara Alaniz, Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District (RRFC)
- Grenville Pool, RVCWD
- David Jensen, Mendocino County Division of Environmental Health
- Al White, RRFC
- Estelle Clifton, North Coast Resource Management