

Meeting Summary

Ukiah Valley Basin Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation Meeting

September 15, 2016
Ukiah Veterans Hall
293 Seminary Ave. Ukiah, CA

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy, CSU Sacramento (with the assistance of meeting notes and tape-recording by Chris Shaver, Mendocino County)

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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 (depending on priority) 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 (the County) and various stakeholders in the Ukiah Valley Basin (the 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. This is the fourth public meeting held as part of this process. After the second (July) meeting, a Working Group was formed to discuss further possible GSA structures and return with these to the larger group.

Meeting Summary

This meeting's purpose and goals were to:

- Discuss Working Group's latest recommendations re: proposed Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) structure.
- Report on feedback from participants' boards/constituencies.
- Continue thinking about GSP development and how that might inform GSA formation

discussions.

- Identify next steps re: GSA formation.

Supporting Documents (on County website)

Supporting Document A – Meeting agenda

Supporting Document B – August meeting summary

Supporting Document C – LACO Coordination Memorandum

1. Welcome, Introductions, Review of Previous Meeting Summary & Overview of Today's Meeting

Mendocino County Supervisor Carre Brown and Malka Kopell of the Center for Collaborative Policy welcomed attendees to the meeting. People introduced themselves.

The group began by reviewing the written summary of the previous (August 18) meeting. There were no corrections or amendments proposed.

Facilitator Malka Kopell reviewed the agenda (Supporting Document A). She proposed flipping the order of agenda items 2 and 3 in order to hear feedback from agency boards and other constituencies (item 3) before discussing Working Group recommendations (item 2). This change was accepted.

2. Feedback from Board/Constituency Meetings

A number of participants gave updates on communication with agency boards. These discussions were reported to be ongoing, although varying by group; some people have begun discussions with their boards even at this early stage, while others have been waiting for more detail first.

One of the questions that some boards have been asking concerns the expected costs of GSP development and implementation. There is some experience that can be used to inform current efforts – for example, Sonoma County is in the process of estimating costs for GSA operation and GSP development in the three basins in Sonoma County, and Jay Jasperse offered to share some of that information with the group. LACO Associates is also working on a cost estimate and will share results and methods soon.

A concern was raised that a GSA model involving eligible agencies plus a separate stakeholder advisory board had not been adequately considered. This was discussed in the context of the question of how best to include agricultural, tribal and environmental interests – the first two of these have been actively involved already, the third less so. Participants reiterated that environmental and other interests not represented on the GSA board would be able to be better served through direct public participation in meetings as opposed to a separate advisory board.

Regarding environmental interests in particular, the relative lack of participation thus far was raised. One participant stated that presumably there would be at least some environmental representation via the participation of Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), as well as through environmental regulatory oversight of whatever GSP is ultimately proposed. In addition, two tribal participants mentioned their commitments to environmental concerns.

A concern came up that despite the inclusivity of the group so far, many members of the public still do

not know about these meetings. Public outreach was acknowledged to be an iterative, ongoing process, including press releases by the County and participants spreading the process via word of mouth. It was suggested that it might be helpful to hold an evening meeting to accommodate interested members of the public who cannot attend during the day.

In response to a question, the role of the Working Group was clarified as providing “an extra layer” of discussion that would take place between larger group meetings, but not make any decisions on its own.

3. GSA Formation Committee Working Group Recommendations

At the August meeting, the Working Group was tasked with thinking through the appointment process for GSA members, their roles and responsibilities, and future cost sharing options. The Group proposed the following structure:

- Each member would have a two-year term.
- Each seat would have an alternate.
- The appointment process for GSA members would be decided internally by each member organization or agency. For non-agency interest seats (such as the tribal and agricultural seats), the appointment process needs further discussion.
- Paying members would vote on fiscal matters. \$5,000 was proposed as a tentative annual contribution to support GSA operations. There was also acknowledgment that there may be additional costs related to GSP development, and those costs, and how they will be borne, would need to be figured out down the road.
- Non-paying members (such as tribal and agricultural representatives) would not vote on fiscal matters.
- JPA powers will be clearly restricted to SGMA.

The Working Group also proposed more discussion about how the GSA director would be selected or appointed. Malka Kopell raised the issue of which agency would be the GSA Treasurer; no one voiced a strong opinion, and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

The group proposed January as a goal for getting a draft JPA agreement ready for public review. County support staff will work on draft language for this process. The group reached consensus on an agreement in concept for the above proposed governance structure and agreed to take this back to their boards/councils.

4. Basin Studies and GSP Development

Chris Watt of LACO Associates presented a memo (Supporting Document C) that summarizes the scope, schedules and current status of three groundwater studies, focusing on the issue of coordination. The three studies (also see June and July meeting summaries) are:

1. The Mendocino County Water Agency (MCWA) study being done by LACO Associates (Chris Watt, principal investigator);
2. The Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) study being done by the USGS (Tracy Nishikawa, principal investigator); and
3. The City of Ukiah study being done by UC Davis (Sam Sandoval Solis, principal investigator).

Watt’s presentation focused on areas for potential coordination, including public outreach, data collection, data analysis and modeling, and noted that a coordination meeting and email exchange has already begun this process. The studies were described as complimentary, working separately but

having potential, for example, to check each other's results. The studies differ in scope and focus, and it was pointed out that the knowledge they create is iterative and will help prepare a GSP by the 2022 deadline.

Much of the discussion focused on funding issues, including the question of how to fund Mendocino's contribution to the USGS study. Participants agreed to see what resources they have available that could potentially be drawn on, and will discuss this at a later meeting.

5. Funding Update

Aaron Cuthbertson of the DWR made a presentation on options for funding GSP development in the years to come.

Presentation:

- California's Sustainable Groundwater Planning Grant Program, which set aside \$100 million in 2014 under Prop 1. Of this \$100 million, \$6.7 million is currently spoken for; the next round of solicitation for GSP support will be in summer 2017. There are roughly one hundred GSAs that will be looking at tapping this funding at some point. The SGMA Planning grant program has a mailing list that Aaron encouraged people to get on.
- Aaron noted that the DWR does not have a lot of comparative information on expected costs of GSAs and GSPs. Even ballpark estimates depend heavily on local context. This means that talking to agencies in your area is, for now, the best way to anticipate costs.
- Aaron pointed out a new study from UC Berkeley on "Designing Effective Groundwater Sustainability Agencies" – this is available [online](#).

Discussion:

- LACO Associates is developing a 1-page statement that will describe what a GSP is and what it would entail for this basin. Key aspects include (1) the physical and administrative setting; (2) technical details on water flow, water budget, etc.; (3) plans for monitoring; and (4) projects and management actions to achieve sustainability as SGMA defines it. Key actions that are likely to comprise the GSP process include determining thresholds for sustainability criteria, deciding on desired measurement sensitivity, and developing best management practices (BMPs).
- A key process during these next 18 months or so will be to gather data about critical areas and to understand the data gaps that remain. One participant noted that while there are certainly many data needs, the situation should not be seen as dire – 2,500 well logs were just received from the DWR, for example, and the process is going to be a long-term one.
- One participant said that due to the costs and burden of regulation, it is essential for regulated communities to understand the benefits of the regulatory process. This will be a key issue going forward in the outreach process. It was noted that currently there is about \$15,000 in the Proposition 1 grant budget for outreach, and that there is significant outreach expertise in the group already.
- Malka stated that one thing that is clear at this point in the process, is that the GSA will need significant flexibility since there are so many unknowns.

6. Next Steps

The next meeting will take place on October 20th.

Everyone who has board meetings in the next month will go to those boards for discussion and feedback on the proposals.

In the meantime, the Working Group will discuss the appointment process for GSA members in more detail and work on filling in the language for the JPA process with the goal of having a draft by late October. The Working Group will also discuss who will be the treasurer for the GSA.

Regarding the USGS study, Jay Jasperse will send out examples of agreements with other government programs, and work on a template for cooperation.

An evening meeting was proposed to take place at some point to facilitate public participation.

Attendance

Attendees included but were not limited to the following individuals:

- Bill Koehler, Redwood Valley County Water District
- Devon Jones, MCFB
- Kevin Doble, City of Ukiah
- Chris Watt, LACO
- Glenn McGourty, UCCE
- Tyler Rodrigue, MWI
- Cory O'Donnell, SCWA
- Jay Jasperse, SCWA
- Tamara Alaniz, RRFC
- Aaron Cuthbertson, CA DWR
- Deborah Edelman, MCRCD
- Roger Kellerman, CTTB
- Douglas Crane, City of Ukiah
- Richard Campbell, Coyote Valley EPD
- Ben Henthorne III, Redwood Valley Rancheria
- Zack Sampsel, Pinoleville Pomo Nation
- David Redding, Willow CWD
- Lois Lockhart, Tribal Elder, Sherwood Valley Rancheria
- Carre Brown, MCWA
- Dan Hamburg, Mendocino County
- Jerry Cardoza, Upper Russian River Water Association
- Susan Knopf, RVCWD