

SVGSP Ad Hoc Meeting Summary: April 18, 2022

Project Website: www.sierravalleygmd.org/sierra-valley-groundwater-sustainability-plan

Data Portal: <https://sierra-valley.gladata.com>

Action Items

- Reach out to local CalTrans contact to determine policy about maintaining vertical markers
- Well permits are needed for replacements – and for deepening a well – agencies could perhaps track that and report to the state agency; perhaps add an item about a well going dry
- Set up an ad hoc session for GDE monitoring

Project Updates

Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)

Public Comment Period

The formal California Department of Water Resources (DWR) public comment period for the Sierra Valley GSP closes on April 23, 2022. Although comments can be submitted after that date, they may not be considered within DWR's review of the GSP.

- The SV GSP is online at <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/preview/125>
- Comments can be submitted at <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/comments/125>

Annual Report and Posting

As required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the Annual Report for the Sierra Valley subbasin was submitted to DWR by April 1st. The document provides an overview of subbasin groundwater conditions and planning efforts. It is available online at:

<https://www.sierravalleygmd.org/files/f538cd202/Submitted+Annual+Report+4-1-22.pdf>.

Grant Opportunities

The technical team is always looking to identify possible grant opportunities. Applications for Round 2 SGMA Grants can be submitted in September of 2022

Governor's Executive Order N-7-22

This Executive Order addresses the drought and contains several sections. Item 9 requires that well permitting entities submit any well applications to the appropriate GSAs, and consult with the GSAs, to ensure that new wells will not adversely compromise overall groundwater sustainability. This process is already in place in the Sierra Valley subbasin. Review of well permit applications also need to consider whether a new well would interfere with nearby existing wells.

Exemptions to the Executive Order include:

- Domestic wells producing less than 2-acre feet per year
- Small community water systems
- Public supply wells

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Subsidence Monitoring

Background

Dwight Smith, McGinley and Associates, reviewed a map of a subsidence analysis based on satellite imagery of the land surface. The areas of subsidence correlate with the areas of greatest pumping. Several areas that were considered for possible locations of new monuments are shown as lettered blocks on the map.

As outlined in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), four new geodectic survey markers (monuments) will be installed to conduct vertical surveys to record elevation of the land surface. Relatedly, DWR uses existing monuments along route 70 as an elevation control for DWR surveying. It is proposed that surveys to record elevations of the new monuments also survey a few of the existing monuments. This would create a subsidence monitoring network of new and existing monuments.

Criteria for siting new monuments include:

- accessible
- away from areas of high travel or agricultural operations
- proximity to active monitoring of water levels for additional analysis

Proposal

Dwight noted, that when thinking about subsidence and impacts on infrastructure, “differential” settling is likely to produce the most impacts. For example, if subsidence occurred at the same rate over a broad area – few impacts would be seen. However, when more subsidence is seen in one area (with less subsidence in a nearby area), then cracks can occur in roads and canals - because of the difference between the two ground elevation levels. The possibility for differential settling occurs along route 70, between the monuments labeled “Buttes” and “E143” (KS0061).

For geographic coverage of the new monuments, area “F” is a priority since it is close to the new DWR monitoring well #7. Locations for the three additional new monuments would be distributed towards the fringes (areas C, D, E, G). Surveying costs would be about \$2,500.

Discussion

- It will be good to clarify that four new monuments will be installed
- Clarify which new and existing monuments will be surveyed and when
- Identify the incremental costs for surveying additional existing monuments (which requires about 2 hours of time for each monument)
- Minimally, subsidence surveys will occur once every five years for the update
- The subsidence monitoring network should specify which existing monuments should be surveyed along with the new monuments

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Recommendation

- Locate new subsidence monuments at points A, F, D, E
- Concurrently survey the new monuments with existing monuments (DWR labels: Buttes, E143, D143, C143)

Evaluating Outreach for GSP Development

Feedback on Outreach for GSP Development

What worked

- Presentations were very good, especially considering the amount of information that needed to be covered in a short amount of time
- Terrific job in TAC members attending and participating
- Good job trying to get people to participate
- Having participation from Plumas County
- Having a matrix of public comments and how they were responded to
- Having a charter of roles and responsibilities

What didn't

- It didn't seem that the TAC served as a Technical Advisory Committee to the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), did more to inform the work of the technical consultants
- Never discussed, reached consensus or made recommendations to the Board
- Needed representation from both GSAs to know what the TAC was discussing – TAC recommendations did not seem to be conveyed to the GSAs
- Water quality needs to be considered in making informed decisions. Issues about water quality and quantity were discounted. Some management actions, such as ponding of creeks could be detrimental to water quality and the fishery.
- The domestic well issues were not addressed – requiring a number of wells to go dry is a dangerous proposition. Domestic well users were not represented.
- Would have been good see the Planning Department from Sierra County – the Supervisors need to rate this as a priority for staff
- Needed to revisit charter of roles and responsibilities
- The timing of this limited the amount of interaction with the public and what the TAC could do

Workshops

- It is difficult to absorb the ideas
- It was an invitation to participate
- The format of the workshops was more informational and in a group setting, which was a good process. Handouts and surveys supported an information-heavy workshop and provided options for continuous public involvement. In providing information, the workshops were helpful.

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- It would be hard to interpret the plan to terms of understanding the impacts to domestic users and environmental interests. How the plan addressed, or didn't, potential impacts to their interests.

Outreach for GSP Implementation

Going forward

- We need marching orders from the GSAs about what they need, with clear roles and responsibilities. It felt like the GSAs didn't want us to exist.
- Domestic well users need to be represented. This is a challenge since no organization represents domestic well users – and it is often difficult for individuals to commit to longer-term processes such as this. People need to know how to report wells going dry. It would be good to have a workshop on the “care and feeding of your domestic well” (e.g., how often should you get water quality tested, what issues should you be looking for, what to do if wells go dry).
- Well permits are needed for replacements – and for deepening a well – agencies could perhaps track that and report to the state agency; perhaps add an item about a well going dry. Inform people about reporting dry wells at <https://mydrywell.water.ca.gov/report/>
- More time is needed to dig in and have debates and discussion. It was hard to provide meaningful input on such a constrained timeline, with so much to learn.
- The plan doesn't seem to commit to much of anything.
- Change the structure of the Board to include representatives from domestic well users and an environmental organization – they would provide different perspectives on over-drafting and subsidence
- If the structure of the Board doesn't change, how can domestic well users and environmental interests more aware of the issues and need to be involved at the Board meetings? (newspaper articles, direct outreach, leverage the connection of environmental organizations)
- Hold a public meeting around the Annual report. You don't need to report against Sustainable Management Criteria. Would be tough to decipher the Annual Report results against the GSP. Would need to be included in any annual presentation.
- It would be useful to have discussion on how to make the Annual Report meaningful for those in Sierra Valley. There should be a discussion about the SMC and how conditions compare against the SMC. That's what we would want to share with the public each year. Explain what is being done to try and fix things.
- There is flexibility in the design of the Annual Report – and could be adapted to make it more meaningful
- The data and models will continue to be refined
- A thank-you acknowledgement to the TAC

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Participants

Attendees

Bill Copren, Feather River Trout Unlimited
Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County
Elizabeth Morgan, Sierra County Environmental Health
Ken Robey, Feather River Land Trust
Willo Vieira, Agricultural Commissioner, Plumas County

Planning Committee

X Laura Foglia, LWA Project Lead	X Dwight Smith, McGinley & AssociatesX
X Betsy Elzufon, LWA Project Manager	X Debbie Spangler, DWR
X Jenny Gant, SVGMD	X Judie Talbot, Outreach Facilitator
X Kristi Jamason, Planning Committee	