

Sierra Valley Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Summary: Oct. 18, 2021

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

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

ACTION ITEMS

No Action Items from the meeting.

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Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

The thirteenth meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the Sierra Valley (SV) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was an in-person meeting, with a zoom webinar option for remote participation. The video recording is at <https://youtu.be/2ObH1xCpkgA>. The meeting agenda was reviewed, followed by introductions.

There were 16 participants: 11 TAC members and 5 project team members.

Project Updates

GSP Public Review Draft and comment process: The Public Review Draft was posted with all five chapters and some appendices. A table of contents, summary, and list of abbreviations was also included. Not all comments previously submitted are reflected in the current versions.

A public workshop on the Public Review Draft occurred last night where Laura Foglia presented information through several poster presentations. An overview handout was also provided at the workshop, which was reviewed with the TAC.

Look ahead schedule:

- Comments are due by November 15th
- The earliest that the GSP could be adopted is December 20th
- A GSP-approved GSP must be submitted to DWR by January 31, 2022
- DWR will hold another public comment period after the GSP is submitted to DWR

Discussion

Comment: It's frustrating that we seem to be running out of time to resolve and settle on final recommendations. When will the rubber hit the road?

Response: Chapter 3 describes where problems exist or may exist. Groundwater levels have declined and more information is needed on whether and how much subsidence may be occurring. A better understanding of shallow and deep groundwater components is also needed.

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Comment: Part of the problem is feeling that we are checking the GSP boxes, then realizing that it's the next five years to gain a better understanding of the system. The desire is to start making a difference now. We've covered a lot of information and it still seems that we're struggling with specifics.

Comment: There are two pieces of what we're trying to do: what SGMA requires, it feels like there hasn't been discussion about how much of a problem there is – which may define a data gap. There doesn't seem to be a common understanding of the problem, which would inform solutions and help target the locations where implementation would occur.

Response: It is a balancing act to address GSP requirements while reconciling the interests around the extent of problems and potential solutions.

Comment: At last night's public workshop, someone described it as having a hypothesis (about groundwater conditions) that needs to be tested.

Comment: It would be helpful to see what comments have been submitted.

Response: LWA is able to review the comments and responses with individual TAC members.

GSP Implementation

Betsy Elzufon, LWA Project Coordinator, recapped that Chapter 5 focuses on GSP implementation. The GSP does describe what we do and don't know, and an array of projects and management actions that can improve groundwater conditions. GSP implementation covers:

- Management and administrative tasks (many of which the GSAs already conduct) that include an Annual Report and 5-year update of the GSP. Refinements to the monitoring network, modeling, and the data management system represent routine tasks that also connect with PMAs to address data gaps.
- Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) that focus on supply (e.g. watershed management and restoration, groundwater recharge) and demand management (e.g., ag irrigation efficiency)
- Outreach and education such as: coordination with government agencies, ad hoc working sessions, and community outreach

Other aspects involve an implementation schedule/ timeline and associated costs and funding options. Implementation costs cover ongoing administration and monitoring, the annual report, modeling updates and some outreach. The expected range for annual implementation costs is between \$68,500 - \$142,000. This compares to SVGMD's average annual operating budget of \$75,575. Some funding support may be available from grants.

Discussion

Question: How will PMAs – and the monitoring of PMAs - be paid for? Why will monitoring occur in parts of the valley where there is not a problem (e.g., the western side of the valley)

Response: Monitoring will be more focused on areas where there are problems. Monitoring in other areas will not be as frequent. The monitoring network proposes to use existing wells.

Response: The plan proposes to add monitoring wells for groundwater-dependent ecosystems. However, expansion of the groundwater monitoring network would use existing wells and be tied to receiving additional grant funding.

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Comment: Other monitoring programs have triggered mandatory requirements.

Comment: It's not possible to address prior subsidence. If we are controlling subsidence by maintaining groundwater levels, we shouldn't spend much money on subsidence.

Comment: The public review draft does not include a full document.

Response: SGMA does not specify a particular period of time for the comment period. An additional 60-day comment period is triggered by DWR once the GSP is posted.

Comment: The TAC should provide initial recommendations on priorities for monitoring and PMAs that the District considers in making its decisions. The document can provide guidance without it being a requirement.

Comment: It would be helpful to see what monitoring currently exists, what additional monitoring is essential, and what additional monitoring is optional.

Comment: It might be possible to convene an ad-hoc working group, or some other process to discuss the monitoring proposal and what is needed to address data gaps.

Question: Regarding PMAs, could off-season diversions be used as a supply for recharge?

Response: That is a water rights question that needs to be posed to the Water Boards.

Question: Is surface water being pursued anywhere in the state?

Response: The best sites for dam construction have already been used. Costs for new dam construction results in water costing about \$1,500/acre-foot. The highest-value crops are willing to pay about \$500/acre-foot.

Comment: Upper watershed restoration can assist with infiltration.

Comment: The Forest Service is looking at projects such as Blatchley Canyon Project (along Nichols Mill Road), about 5000 acres to address drainage and rebuilding roads. The District can be a powerful voice in supporting those types of projects.

Modeling Update

Gus Tolley, DBS&A, explained that he is still working on sustainable yield. Similarly, climate change scenarios cannot be run until the model is fully calibrated. It may be another week or so before the sustainable yield is available.

Currently, information is being collected about potential climate change factors. Parameters for future conditions are being developed for different inputs, such as stream flow, precipitation and evapo-transpiration.

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Participants

TAC MEMBERS

X = attendance

	Organization, Name		Organization, Name
	Agricultural Commissioner, Plumas-Sierra Willo Viera		Sierra County Environmental Health Elizabeth Morgan
	City of Loyalton Jerry Gerow	X	Sierra Valley Groundwater Mgmt. District Einen Grandi
X	Feather River Land Trust Ken Roby	X	Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District Rick Roberti
	Feather River Trout Unlimited William Copren	X X	Sierraville Public Utility District Thomas Archer, Elizabeth Archer
X	Hinds Engineering Greg Hinds	X	UC Cooperative Extension Tracy Schohr
X	Integrated Environmental Restoration Svcs. Michael Hogan		Upper Feather River IRWM Uma Hinman
X	Plumas Audubon Jill Slocum		USFS – Plumas National Forest Joe Hoffman
X	Plumas County Tracey Ferguson		USFS – Tahoe National Forest Rachel Hutchinson
	Sierra Brooks Water System Tom Rowson		

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

X	CA Department of Water Resources Debbie Spangler and Pat Vellines (alt.)		CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Bridgett Gibbons
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TECHNICAL TEAM & PLANNING COMMITTEE

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|---|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| X | Laura Foglia, LWA Project Manager | X | Gus Tolley, DBS&A |
| X | Betsy Elzufon, LWA | X | Dwight Smith, McGinley & Associates |
| X | Kristi Jamason, Planning Committee | X | Judie Talbot, Outreach Facilitator |

COMMUNITY MEMBERS (none)