

**SIERRA VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
SIERRA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
81059 HIGHWAY 70 BECKWOURTH, CA 96129
Monday, July 15, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

This meeting will also be available via Zoom Teleconferencing:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87847235864?pwd=YWFYaTErR1BUTjA3cHFiOHUvRTcydz09>

Meeting ID:
878 4723 5864
Passcode:
647657
By Phone:
+1 (669) 900-9128

Board of Directors
Einen Grandi, Chairman
Jim Roberti, Vice-Chairman
Dwight Ceresola, Director
Dave Goicoechea, Director
Matt Kilmurray, Director
Greg Ramelli, Director
Paul Roen, Director

MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL OF DIRECTORS

Chairman Grandi called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM
Directors present: Grandi, Ceresola, Goicoechea, Roberti, Kilmurray
Directors absent: Roen, Ramelli
Also present: Ben Volk, Judie Talbot, Betsy Elzufon
Via Zoom: Jay Huebert, Laura Foglia, Tracey Ferguson, Steve Reich, Gus Tolley, Jim Thomas, Debbie Spangler

2) PUBLIC HEARING

Adoption of an Ordinance Enacting a Management Charge for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

The Board of Directors will hear comments from the public regarding SVGMD's proposed ordinance to fix the management charge for the fiscal year 2024-2025 on all land within the District at \$.15 per acre, per year, with a total minimum charge of \$6.00 per year for all parcels or lots forty (40) acres or less, for the purposes of paying the costs of initiating, carrying on, and completing any of the powers, projects, and purposes for which the District is organized.

Chairman Grandi opened the public hearing at 6:03 p.m.

There was no public comment.

Chairman Grandi closed the public hearing at 6:04 p.m.

3) PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY – limited to 5 minutes per speaker

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item not appearing on the agenda. Under state law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District Board of Directors at this time.

There was no public comment.

4) REPORTS

A. Meter Technician Report – Jay Huebert

Huebert took readings on July 5th. He commented that the water table is dropping a bit, but that's to be expected for this time of year. He said there are ~10 large-capacity wells within a mile radius of the Tom Dotta well, so levels go down when several are pumping. However, when those wells are shut off for cutting hay, that well comes back up five to six feet in just a few days. The well at D&S by the train tracks is slower to recover.

Grandi commented that the numbers in Huebert's reports correlate to when pumps are turned on and off. He believes the large volume of water that came from Frenchman Lake last year and this year has made a lot of difference in the north side of the valley. Director Roberti agreed, saying it makes a big difference when D&S and Roberti Ranch can

use surface water for irrigation instead of groundwater. He reported there has been a significant increase in surface water ever since there was a fire near Frenchman Lake. Director Goicoechea commented that the opposite is true at Smithneck Creek, where the water flow is significantly decreased due to tree overgrowth.

Huebert reported that the total for year-to-date pumping is 3,377.14 acre/feet, which is about on track for years like this. Two meters with water damage have been sent back to TechnoFlo to determine why they stopped working. Replacement meters were installed at Roberti's a few weeks ago.

B. DWR Update – Debbie Spangler

Spangler shared that environmental compliance is complete for the continuous subsidence monitoring site off of Highway 70 and the final agreement has been sent to the landowner for signature. Grandi has talked to the landowner and shared his concern that he will be granting access to his property for 20 years without any compensation and he doesn't even pump groundwater. The landowner did not tell Grandi an amount he would like to receive. Spangler doesn't think compensation can come from the grant; it would either come from DWR or District funds.

Director Roberti asked about the possibility of using the turnout on Highway 70 where they had discussed putting a monitoring well, but Spangler said this subsidence monitoring station requires quite a bit of equipment and doesn't think that would be a good location for this. The key for this type of station is that it needs to be located in a focal point of subsidence. Grandi asked how subsidence levels were determined. Gus Tolley said the site was selected based on InSAR (Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar) subsidence data, which started in 2015. June 2015 is the baseline for InSAR subsidence monitoring. It isn't required to be in the annual report, but is optional to include.

Spangler also shared that environmental compliance is complete for the monitoring well site at Smithneck Creek and the agreement is ready to be sent to Sierra County for signature. The Board directed Spangler to proceed with sending the agreement to Sierra County.

C. LWA Team Project Update – Laura Foglia

Laura Foglia, LWA GSP Project Manager, shared that the LWA team is going through the models for GSP updates and reviewing data for the well inventory. The Smithneck recharge update is going to be discussed later in the meeting (item 5B).

D. Stetson & DRI Team Project Update – Steve Reich/Jim Thomas

Steve Reich, Principal of Stetson Engineers, reported that he received the results from the May 20th irrigator's workshop questionnaire. There were nine respondents and all responded positively to the workshop and said it was useful. Last month the Stetson team started farm assessments at Roberti's, Grandi's, and Goodwin's. Other ranches have been contacted and so far everyone seems interested, except for one ranch that has declined to participate. Reich is coordinating with Tracy Schohr (UCCE livestock and natural resources adviser) for outreach.

Jim Thomas, Project Manager for DRI, shared that four soil moisture meters were installed on Roberti's pivots 10 and 13 on July 2nd. They are currently calibrating data and expect to publish online data in August. They were also able to collect samples of sediments for testing and found sandy loam conditions. Upcoming irrigation efficiency installations include soil moisture meters at David Goodwin's pivot 1 and 2. They believe Pivot 1 is an excellent candidate for a LEPA system and are planning to install around the first of August.

5) DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS

A. Plumas/Sierra County Well Permit Application Review (if any)

There were no new well applications.

B. Smithneck Recharge Project

Betsy Elzufon, LWA Associate, gave a presentation on recharge project opportunities:

- Smithneck Creek (Potter property) status: streamlined diversion permit approved. 2nd year of implementation.
- Staverville Creek (Easley property) status: in discussions with landowner, streamlined permit under development
- Little Last Chance Creek (Williams/Dotta Ranch) status: in discussions with landowner. Streamlined permit under development
- Smithneck Creek (Griffin property) status: Potential for recharge from nearby ephemeral stream. Needs further evaluation.

Director Goicoechea stated the intent of the Board is to protect people's water rights. Since this permit only operates off of excess in surplus years, he recommends not upsizing the project and to stop plans for putting in a bigger pipe than was used last year.

Elzufon said the State Water Board has already approved the permit between December 1 and March 14.

Roberti replied that the project already has a flaw because the ground is almost always frozen between November and January. Water won't be able to move in the pipes and it won't percolate; it will really depend on the winter. There could be three feet of snow and the creek is frozen and there will be no water during the date ranges of the permit.

Foglia said there might be problems, but this is a pilot study to see if it works.

Elzufon shared they are structuring the project to follow the rules and only do recharge during the winter months. Everything is rented and would all be removed before the irrigation season.

- Smithneck Creek – Potter Property
 - Saves a lot of effort to use a place already with a diversion point
 - Proof of concept completed in 2024 with delivery of 20 acre-feet
 - Streamlined diversion permit approved by State Board, waiting for posting and open comment period
 - Watermaster stated no objections with diversion from December 1 – March 14
 - Diversion based on flow thresholds
 - Plan to measure impact to groundwater levels

Grandi asked what is the end goal of this project? How can this provide permanent recharge? There is no way to pump water out of that creek in a sustainable way. If it has to be pumped, who is going to pay for the pump? Will some sort of structure need to be built in the creek?

Ben Volk said no permanent structure would be needed because pumping would only be allowed when flow rates are very high.

Foglia said options need to be explored in the next couple of years. The grant provides opportunities to try different things to convince the State and DWR that an effort is being made.

Director Ceresola responded that extravagant money is being spent on projects that don't pencil out. Everybody here has tight budgets, so spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to pump 20 acre-feet doesn't make sense to the Board. Neither does putting in a new pipe and pumping for a week before it freezes. This Board wasn't raised to just chase grants and maybes.

Volk said he has seen where similar projects have worked, but it has been on the west side of the State with temperate conditions.

Roberti said that's what they're trying to explain. The probability of this project working is probably five percent because of the permit restrictions and freezing conditions. Since one of the diversion permit conditions is that Oroville needs to be spilling/released during those winter months, he cannot see investing money into this particular project. He asked if the team has researched historic flows between December and March? Because some years are exceptional, but typically it's very late February or into March.

The Board directed LWA to set the Smithneck/Potter project aside. It does not have Board approval.

Elzufon moved on to the Staverville Creek recharge opportunity:

- Easley Property
 - Existing diversion with year-round water rights
 - Existing diversion ditch, diversion structure needs repair
 - Low cost for pilot project effort in 24/25 winter season

The big expense would be putting in the stream gauges, but otherwise it would be simple and wouldn't require a pump. The team would set up the diversion as it's designed, get the State permit, and monitor the water levels to see if it would have an impact. The easy way would be to use Easley's existing water right.

Roberti thought this project would be worth the gamble and is what the Board envisioned coming off of the other one. This would be an inexpensive way of doing it without a massive investment to keep it going.

Elzufon discussed the Little Last Chance Creek recharge opportunity:

- Williams Property
 - Existing diversion currently used for irrigation
 - Large potential recharge area
 - Irrigation areas with pivots to coordinate with irrigation efficiency project
 - Recharge in winter only
 - Potential increase in storage during winter, reduced water use in summer (irrigation efficiency)

This project would require piping and pumping and would need a temporary diversion permit.

Foglia shared that it took five years to get the permit they wanted in Scotts Valley. That permit has fewer restrictions, but first you need to show things are getting done before those permits will be granted. This project will probably benefit the subsidence area as well.

- Potential impacts of winter recharge projects:
 - Landowner costs
 - SVGMD use of land
 - Pump and fuel costs only paid for during the winter recharge period
 - Water right fee for the diversion location
 - Benefit to landowner
 - Infrastructure improvements (as needed)
 - Groundwater levels increase over winter time (this is a benefit for the entire basin)
 - Other irrigators' concerns
 - Impact to downstream water users
 - Less water available or available for a shorter period
 - Benefit to irrigators
 - Effective recharge could ultimately increase availability
 - Groundwater level increase over winter season
 - Water stays in Sierra Valley instead of going to Oroville
- Another possible resource:
 - Water transfer – Lake Davis to Frenchman Lake
 - Plumas County currently pays DWR for 2,700 acre feet of water in Lake Davis, but only utilizes 500 acre feet
 - Plumas County is interested in selling this water – could be a source of additional irrigation or recharge water
 - Cost \$100/af

Roberti asked the team to look into injection wells since he believes it would work in Sierra Valley. He would like a cost analysis for using an abandoned well, because those are all over the valley. What would it cost to maintain?

The Board gave direction to stop the Potter/Smithneck project, to look for other Smithneck/Badenaugh options, and to continue moving forward with the Staverville Creek and Little Last Chance Creek recharge projects.

C. Drought Resiliency Plans for Plumas and Sierra Counties

The Board clerk shared an email from Rob Thorman, Plumas County Assistant Director of Public Works, sent on June 24, 2024:

"I wanted to reach out and let you know that Plumas County is working with DWR to draft a Plumas County Drought Resiliency Plan as required by SB 552. We have 4 public meeting planned with the first in Quincy at the end of July. This plan covers State Smalls and domestic wells. We were thinking that one of the four meeting should be in the east end of the County. I wanted to see if there would be any interest in arranging some kind of joint meeting with Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District or at least getting input from SVGWMD on the meeting date and location. Let me know what you think. We are tentatively planning meeting in September, November and February 2025."

The Board clerk also spoke to LeTina Vanetti with Sierra County's Drought Taskforce about the possibility of having a joint meeting with the SVGMD and the Drought Taskforce groups of Plumas and Sierra Counties.

The Board directed the clerk to contact both Counties about having a joint meeting on Monday, September 16th in Beckwourth.

D. SVGMD Funds in the Plumas County Treasury

Director Ceresola reported that the treasurer did not get this item on the Board of Supervisor's agenda for approval. The Directors discussed having District Counsel send a letter to the Plumas County treasurer and the Board of Supervisors as the next step to obtaining SVGMD funds.

Director Goicochea made a motion to have District Counsel send a letter to the Plumas County treasurer and Board of Supervisors, Director Kilmurray 2nd, motion passed, roll call vote: Directors Roen, Grandi, Goicochea, Roberti, and Kilmurray all in favor. Director Ceresola abstained.

E. Resolution 24-04 – Setting a Date for a Public Hearing to Consider the Imposition of a Large Capacity Well Management Charge for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Director Goicochea made a motion to approve Resolution 24-04 for a public hearing on August 19, 2024, Director Ceresola 2nd, motion passed, all in favor.

6) CONSENT CALENDAR

All items on the Consent Calendar shall be considered routine and will be enacted by one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Board member requests that specific items be removed from the Consent Calendar for separate action. Any item removed from the consent calendar will be considered after the regular business items.

A. Approval of The Minutes as Read/Distributed for 6/17/24

B. Approve payment of bills and finance reports

Director Goicochea made a motion to approve the consent calendar, Director Ceresola 2nd, motion passed, all in favor.

7) ADJOURNMENT

Director Grandi adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM

Jenny Gant, Board Clerk