

# MEETING MINUTES

## Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Central Management Area in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin July 26, 2021

A SPECIAL meeting of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Central Management Area (CMA) in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin was held on Monday, July 26, 2021. As a result of the COVID-19 emergency and Governor Newsom's Executive Orders to protect public health by limiting public gatherings, and requiring social distancing, this meeting occurred solely via teleconference as authorized by and in furtherance of Executive Order Nos. N-29-20 and N-33-20.

GSA Committee Members Present: Cynthia Allen (Acting as Alternate), Ed Andrisek, Meighan Diethofer (Acting as Alternate)

Staff Present: Bill Buelow, Rose Hess, Amber Thompson, Kevin Walsh, Matt Young

Others Present: Bryan Bondy, Doug Circle, Larry Lahr, Deby Laranjo, and Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers)

### **I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

GSA Committee Director Ed Andrisek called the meeting to order at 10:07 am. Mr. Buelow called roll. A quorum was met.

### **II. Introductions and Review of SGMA in Santa Ynez River Valley Basin**

Mr. Buelow announced names of phone and video attendees.

Mr. Buelow reviewed history of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requirements and Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) development milestones completed so far in the Santa Ynez River Basin. The CMA GSA Committee released a Draft Sustainable Management Criteria GSP section for public comment which recently ended, held one CMA CAG meeting and planned a continuation of that meeting for July 27, 2021.

He advised that all although current public comment periods are closed, previously released documents can still be located on [SantaYnezWater.org](http://SantaYnezWater.org). He reminded everyone there will be additional public comment periods for final draft GSP and the final submitted GSP.

### **III. Additions or Deletions, if any, to the Agenda**

No additions or deletions were made.

**IV. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**V. Receive update on GSP comments and correspondence received**

Mr. Buelow introduced and reviewed three public comment letters that were received in addition to many individual comments received via the online groundwater communication portal regarding draft sections of the draft GSP document. Two of the letters were written to the EMA GSA Committee but he wanted to share the information with the CMA GSA Committee as well.

A letter received from Doug Circle, on behalf of the Santa Ynez Water Group, expressed disappointment in the short amount of time recently allotted for public comment on the draft SMC section of the draft GSP. Mr. Buelow explained the public comment process in place for draft sections, assured everyone that the full draft GSP document will be available for public review and comment for six weeks before submittal of the final document to DWR followed by DWR posting the submitted final document for a 60-day comment period.

A letter to the EMA GSA was received from U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) commented on the draft SMC section of the draft GSP and is being reviewed by consultants and member agency staff.

A letter to the EMA GSA was received from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board requested coordination between the EMA GSA and the newly formed Los Olivos Community Services District (LOCSA). Mr. Buelow contacted Lisa Palmer, President of the LOCSA, and signed her up as an Interested Party to receive all future EMA notices and communications.

There was no discussion and no action taken.

**VI. Receive update from Citizen Advisory Group on Draft Water Budget**

Mr. Bill Buelow presented the CMA Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) Memorandum dated July 26, 2021, prepared by representative Len Fleckenstein, regarding CMA CAG's review and discussion of Draft Numeric Groundwater Model Technical Memorandum. CMA CAG members, Deby Laranjo and Larry Lahr, concurred with the memo was a good summary of the CAG meeting.

**VII. Receive Presentation from Stetson Team on "Sustainable Management Criteria and Projects and Management Actions for the CMA"**

Mr. Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers) gave a presentation on the projects and management actions and implementation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan in the CMA.



There was public comment, GSA Committee Member, consultant, and staff discussion during and following the presentation.

- Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer agreed that water conservation is a great idea. She informed the committee that Supervisor Joan Hartmann has expressed favor for stormwater bio-swamp projects in other meetings and she would prefer to avoid the higher cost of imported water.
- Mr. Bryan Bondy, on behalf of Santa Ynez Water Group, requested that the GSA committee consider offering a cap-and-trade approach for groundwater allocation to create a market. He suggested this type of program would be attractive to the Santa Ynez Water Group.
- Mr. Bondy expressed concern about urban water conservation projects, as it was proposed since it appeared that Ag interests would need to pay most of fees but projects proposed were for urban areas.
- Mr. Curtis Lawler pointed out a typo on slide 30. The correction is: Voluntary Fallowing could yield up to 300 AFY (not 3,000).
- Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer asked what the incentive is for Ag stakeholders is to participate in a proposed voluntary fallowing project if they are not being paid. Mr. Lawler answered as it would be a voluntary program, there would not be payment to not farm part of land but as farmers rotate crops for soil regeneration, they could include fallowing in that process. He added voluntary fallowing could possibly be mutually beneficial if included with a cap-and-trade program for stakeholders to build up a water credit to use in future.
- Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer informed the committee that rainwater harvesting has been successful for her neighbors and mosquitos have not been a problem with the use of lids. She mentioned a program by Santa Barbara Channel Keepers that gave away rain collection barrels and taught people how to use in Santa Barbara.
- Mr. Bryan Bondy said the Santa Ynez Water Group does not think voluntary fallowing program would be successful since Ag stakeholders are in business to make money unless it is combined as part of a cap-and-trade program. He emphasized that fallowing needs an economic driver to be a successful program.
- Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer asked if meter costs in a proposed required meter plan are expected to be paid for by well owners. She asked if there will be a program to help pay for meters. Mr. Lawler said the cost would be to each individual well owner. Mr. Bill Buelow added that the Santa Barbara County Water Agency is working on establishing a rebate program to help defray the cost of meters. Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer agreed that a metering program is important to implement.

- Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer asked if cap-and-trade program is included in the proposed projects and management actions. Mr. Lawler confirmed that type of program is included in Group 3 as PMA 7 “Annual Pumping Allocation Plan”. He said consultants placed that program in Group 3 instead of Group 1 because of the expected initial costs and extensive management needed.
- Mr. Matt Young, Santa Barbara County Water Agency, spoke about a proposed well metering rebate/subsidy plan in the planning stages to defray cost for private well owners. The County Water Agency is working on a plan for the entire county and expects to send something to Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors this fall.
- Acting Alternate GSA Committee Director Meighan Dietenhofer asked if PMA 10, Rainwater Harvesting project, currently placed in Group 4 could be moved Group 1 as water conservation and mentioned it is a standard practice in Israel. Mr. Lawler suggested moving planning for rainwater harvesting into Group 1 to establish barrel availability.
- GSA Committee Director Ed Andrisek asked consultants and staff to compile pros and cons of different systems for rainwater harvesting to be presented to the committee in the future.
- **The CMA GSA Committee Directors provided a consensus requesting consultants to continue with the proposed Projects and Management Actions as presented and discussed for completion of the draft GSP section.** They requested an emphasis on rainwater harvesting, metering program and a cap-and-trade program.

**VIII. Next Regular CMA GSA Meeting: Monday, August 23, 2021, 10:00 AM**

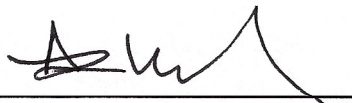
Mr. Buelow announced that the next CMA GSA Committee Regular Meeting to include conducting quarterly business will be Monday, August 23, 2021, 10:00 AM, via video/teleconference.

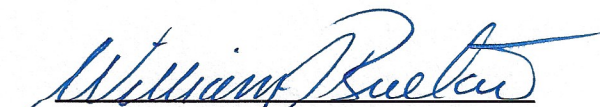
**IX. CMA GSA Committee requests and comments**

CMA GSA Committee Director Ed Andrisek requested pros and cons facts about the proposed projects and management actions be compiled and provided to the committee.

**X. Adjournment**

GSA Committee Director Ed Andrisek adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

  
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 Art Hibbits, Vice-Chairman

  
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 William J. Buelow, Secretary



CENTRAL MANAGMENT AREA  
CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP  
MEMORANDUM

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DATE: July 26, 2021

TO: CMA GSA Committee

FROM: CMA Citizen Advisory Group  
(representative Len Fleckenstein)

SUBJECT: Review and Discussion Draft Numeric Groundwater Model Technical Memorandum

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**Attendees**

CMA CAG Members in attendance: Deby Laranjo, Sharyne Merritt, Larry Lahr, Len Fleckenstein, and Jeff Newton

Staff in attendance: Bill Buelow (SYRWCD)

Consultants in attendance: Jean Moran and Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers)

**Purpose**

The CMA GSA Committee requested staff for the GSA agencies to coordinate meetings of the CMA CAG. Through a coordinated effort, the CAG held a meeting via teleconference due to the COVID-19 restrictions. The meeting was held on June 17, 2021. The purpose of the meeting was for the CMA CAG (CAG) to review the Draft Numeric Groundwater Model Technical Memorandum. The Memorandum was prepared by the Stetson Engineer's team. A copy of the document was made available to the CAG prior to the meeting at [www.SantaYnezWater.org](http://www.SantaYnezWater.org).

**CAG Comments on the Draft Water Budget Technical Memorandum:**

Each member of the CAG was given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments on the Draft Technical Memo. Discussion occurred with each question and comment by various members of the CAG, Staff and Consultants. Below is a summary of the comments and questions by topic:

**Timeliness of Water Data**

- CAG members noted that the most recent data shown in the Technical Memorandum is for 2018 which wouldn't account for recent increase in agriculture between Buellton and Lompoc. Can more recent data be included?
  - Consultant answered that new data would have to be incorporated after a plan is prepared, i.e., as part of plan updates post-2022.

- Also, many of the new crops may be drawing on river water from alluvium, so they wouldn't impact uplands groundwater.
- Consultant displayed a graph showing water levels are higher now compared to 2018. Graph is US Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) data of total dewatered storage between Bradbury Dam and SY River narrows near Lompoc. Wells are monitored monthly by USBR.

#### River Alluvium vs. Groundwater

- CAG members expressed some confusion or uncertainty about relationship between the Santa Ynez River Alluvium and the groundwater basin. There was a lengthy discussion of the relationship between the Santa Ynez River Alluvium, and uplands groundwater basins. All agreed on the need to explain the relationship in technical memos and the final GSP.
  - Consultant noted that explaining the relationship is complex, because the State Water Quality Control Board manages water rights and usage from the river alluvium, whereas CA Dept of Water Resources oversees SGMA implementation for development of GSPs.
  - In the CMA, there are areas where the Santa Ynez River Alluvium is underlain by bedrock/Monterey shale, and some areas where it is underlain by the uplands groundwater basin.
  - Staff reminded attendees that the river alluvium gets replenished by rainfall and releases from Cachuma Reservoir, including fish-flow releases. SYRWCD is the entity which requests Water-Rights Releases to the USBR.
- Consultant noted that the GSA agreed to set conservative minimum thresholds for groundwater levels at 15 feet below recent historically low levels. SGMA is intended to manage groundwater, not surface water. However, the SGMA states that implementation of the GSP should not cause significant and unreasonable depletions of inter-connected surface water.
- CAG members expressed a desire to see the GSP clarify the legal and technical distinctions between wells set in the river alluvium and groundwater wells set in the basin. CAG members further recommended that the GSP include definitions of surface wells and groundwater wells, along with a map showing alluvial and uplands groundwater wells, so the public can understand the distinction.
  - Consultant expects the final plan could include a requirement for some type of well registration to clearly indicate whether a well is drawing from the alluvium (and therefore subject to SWQCB permits) or from the groundwater (and therefore subject to any requirements of the GSP).
  - Staff noted that some wells located in the SYRWCD's Zone A (within the Santa Ynez River bed) do not draw from the river alluvium but are actually deep wells drawing from the groundwater basin below the alluvium. For wells in the Santa Ynez River Alluvium, staff indicated well depths will be reviewed and reports of diversion to the SWRCB will be verified, as requested by DWR.
  - Staff indicated that the Hydrogeological Conceptual Model (HCM) will be edited to be clearer on these distinctions.



- Consultant displayed figure from HCM showing wells in alluvium; these well owners will have to register their wells as either alluvial wells or groundwater wells.
- CAG member recommended the text should not say “groundwater pumped as surface water”; instead the text should either say it’s groundwater or it’s alluvial/surface water being pumped.
  - Consultant agreed to do global search for use of term “pumped as surface water”.

#### Data on Existing Wells

- A CAG member asked if we have an accurate count of the number of wells in the CMA.
  - Staff believes SYRWCD’s data set is good; however, the data lacks a lot of detailed information that would be needed for future water management. The GSP could require updated information.
  - Groundwater pumping data is currently self-reported by well owners to SYRWCD. Surface water diverters are also required to report production to the State Water Resources Control Board.
  - City of Buellton already has meters on its wells.
  - The GSP could potentially require metering for groundwater wells.

#### Well Production & Pumping Data

- CAG noted a need for consistent order of CMA and WMA data in Table 7 (Production Well Summary) and Table 8 (Pumping Summary).
- CAG asked whether it’s confusing to show a graph with combined CMA and WMA data because recharge rate in CMA differs from recharge in WMA.
  - Staff explained the combining of data was needed for the numeric groundwater model, and that the model originated in work done for the WMA. Consultant noted this combined data allowed them to see how water flows from CMA into WMA, especially along the river.
  - Groundwater levels in the Santa Rita area are lower than in Buellton Uplands, suggesting a hydrogeological barrier separating the groundwater basins of CMA and WMA.

#### Cannabis Water Usage

- Discussion focused on data available to determine water usage by cannabis growers.
- Staff noted SYRWCD has no official irrigation factors for cannabis. Usage varies depending on inside vs. outside plantings, among other factors. Assumed to be similar to corn, which is one of the higher crop irrigation factors.
  - District needs to develop water factor(s) for cannabis, depending on how its grown.
- CAG noted that the State restricts cannabis growers from using surface/alluvial water between April and November. Thus, it is important to know whether a grower’s well is drawing from alluvium or from groundwater.
  - Staff will verify that cannabis growers (in order to get a County permit) are required to meter their water usage. Unsure when/how usage would be reported.
  - County land use planners should inform SYRWCD about permit applications so staff can better know if cannabis grower’s water source is surface or groundwater.

Staff would be able to review and comment on pending projects if Board of Supervisors directed County planners to share information with SYRWCD.

#### Evapotranspiration (ET):

- CAG noted evapotranspiration estimate is high: about half as much as agricultural usage. What is the impact on groundwater rather than on surface water? Is the ET being subtracted from estimate of groundwater volume?
  - Consultant indicated that ET is estimated based on acreage of species and water usage factors. Data from the Nature Conservancy (from 1985-2015) shows riparian flora is doing well in the CMA.
  - The ET estimate would be subtracted from the alluvial water supply estimate. Map figure 14 shows ET is taking place in the riparian zones.
  - Consultant also noted that from a legal perspective the flora influences the surface water above the Lompoc Narrows, but the flora influences the groundwater below the narrows.
  - Consultant agrees to add info to the ET table to show distinction between ET influencing surface water versus groundwater. Consultant will add columns to Table 9 to show ET relation to CMA vs. WMA; data is from the model using 4-acre cells.
  - Staff noted that this riparian ET information needs to be included because it's all part of the CMA's water budget which must account for both surface water and groundwater.

#### Groundwater Modeling

- CAG asked about the calibration of the model.
- Consultant indicated that the model calibrates well with measured groundwater levels.
- The model's uncertainty is in knowing exactly how much water is being pumped at each well; therefore, consultants had to make estimates for the model inputs. The model will need to be refined in future years.
- CAG member questioned whether Table 11 (Parameter Adjustment/Sensitivity Analysis) has errors regarding impact of recharge. Table seems to show an increase in recharge having a large negative impact on groundwater.
  - Consultant will review and check the table.