

# MEETING MINUTES

## **Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Western Management Area in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin April 14, 2021**

A SPECIAL meeting of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Western Management Area (WMA) in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin was held on Wednesday, 14 April 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 Directors Present: Director Chris Brooks, Ms. Meighan Diethofer (Acting as Alternate), Director Steve Jordan, Ms. Kristin Worthley (Acting as Alternate)

GSA Committee Directors Absent: Director and Alternate representing Mission Hills CSD

Alternate GSA Committee Director Present: Director Katherine Stewart

Staff Present: Mr. Joe Barget, Mr. Bill Buelow, Ms. Amber Thompson

Others Present: Mr. Bryan Bondy, Mr. Doug Circle, Mr. John Fio (EKI), Mr. Jerry Gruber, Ms. Karen Kistler, Mr. Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers), Ms. Anita Regmi (DWR), plus 1 other member of the public whose name was not registered.

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

GSA Committee Director Brooks called the meeting to order at 10:10 am and asked Mr. Buelow to call roll. Two Committee Directors and two Acting Alternate Directors were present providing a quorum.

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

Mr. Buelow announced names of phone attendees.

Mr. Buelow reviewed history of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requirements and what has been completed so far in the Santa Ynez River Basin including: the creation of the three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the Basin (EMA, CMA, WMA), coordinating efforts between the eight agencies participating in the three GSAs, establishing a Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) in each of the Management Areas of the Basin and Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) development milestones. The GSPs are due in January 2022. The WMA GSA Committee has so far prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, a Data Management Plan, a Draft Hydrogeologic

Conceptual Model, and a Draft Groundwater Conditions Technical Memorandum which just ended the first round of public review and comment.

**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 Staff Memorandum regarding letter from Santa Ynez Water Group**

Bill Buelow presented Staff Memorandum dated April 12, 2021 regarding Santa Ynez Water Group letter of March 22, 2021. Staff recommendations were to maintain current structure under the MOAs to submit three GSAs and prior to submittal of the GSPs, staff from each of the eight agencies in the Basin will discuss various governance options and present the topic to each of the GSA Committees. Discussion followed. WMA GSA Committee by unanimous consensus agreed to support staff recommendations as presented in the Staff Memorandum.

**VI. Receive Comments from WMA Citizens Advisory Committee on Draft Groundwater Conditions Technical Memorandum**

Bill Buelow reviewed the WMA Citizens Advisory Committee Memorandum dated March 16, 2021 regarding review and discussion of Draft Groundwater Conditions Technical Memorandum. Ms. Karen Kistler added that the detailed review provided at the WMA CAG meeting was very helpful. There was no public comment.

**VII. Receive Presentation from Stetson Team on “Draft Water Budget” and “Sustainable Yield Preliminary Discussion”**

Mr. Curtis Lawler, (Stetson Engineers) presented the April 14, 2021 Stakeholder Workshop. He discussed the Draft Water Budget Tech Memo and Sustainable Yield. He requested detailed comments and questions be made via the portal at [SantaYnezWater.org](http://SantaYnezWater.org).

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

**Mr. Lawler Reviewed Time Periods and Data Sources**

- GSA Committee Director Chris Brooks asked if staff considered, in respect to return flows, Mission Hills CSD (MHCS D) 2015 hydrogeology plan found blue clay layer at percolation ponds of wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and states the recharge goes to Lompoc Plain instead of the Lompoc Uplands. Mr. Lawler stated that currently MHCS D recharge from WWTP is being credited to Lompoc Upland so consultants will review the referenced report and make adjustments if needed.

- Bryan Bondy asked for clarification about clay layers at the MHCSO WWTP. Mr. Lawler explained further MHCSO WWTP using location and map and expressed concern of potential Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs) mapped but actually use WWTP discharge instead of groundwater and should possibly be screened out. Mr. Lawler will evaluate.
- GSA Committee Director Steve Jordan advised that certain creeks flowing into the Santa Ynez River are channelized. He asked if this channelization of these creeks with established debris basins as well as the two retention ponds to reduce potential flooding to City of Lompoc been taken into consideration in the Draft Water Budget. Mr. Lawler thanked him for those details and said he will review infiltration along those tributaries with the groundwater modelers.
- GSA Committee Alternate Ms. Meighan Diethofer asked if large scale phreatophytes data provided by DWR was refined. Mr. Lawler confirmed consultants did QC and expanded DWR data with USGS existing data. Discussion continued.
  - GSA Committee Director Steve Jordan added that phreatophytes vary by year and is not a constant number. Curtis confirmed that numbers presented were for today.
  - Mr. Lawler explained quantities of phreatophytes will vary because of two reasons: water availability in groundwater table and flood events may wipe out vegetation.
  - Mr. Joe Barget added the definition of phreatophytes as a plant that draws water from near a water table. He asked if that means there are none in Lompoc Plain due to deep groundwater levels. Mr. Lawler explained phreatophytes exist mainly near riverbed or shallow water table depth (less than 30 feet typically).
- GSA Committee Alternate Director Katherine Stewart asked if SWRCB water rights releases from Cachuma Reservoir are reflected in the Draft Water Budget. Mr. Lawler confirmed releases are important to water supply. He reviewed the reservoir accounts (ANA, BNA) and confirmed data is included in the water supply.

### **Mr. Lawler Reviewed Water Budget Analysis Results**

- Mr. Joe Barget asked for clarification on Slide 26, specifically which subareas do the two golf courses pump from and are they counted as agriculture or municipal water users. Mr. Lawler confirmed golf course water pumping is included in the numbers for agriculture outflow. Mr. Buelow confirmed La Purisima Golf Course and Mission Club Golf Course are both located in the Lompoc Upland.
- GSA Committee Director Steve Jordan asked if numbers presented are consistent with historical groundwater storage data. Mr. Lawler confirmed that the change in Groundwater Storage graph were compared to SYRWCD annual reports and follow same pattern.

- GSA Committee Director Steve Jordan asked if there is a lag between big rainfall event and increases showing in groundwater storage. Mr. Lawler explained there is a delay as well as some immediate response.
- Mr. Jerry Gruber pointed out that the amount of water run off from mountains seems low (Slide 27). He asked for explanation and expressed concern of possible underestimating groundwater recharge because mountain front recharge. Mr. Lawler explained most components are estimated and have a great amount of uncertainty so consultants double check against with other data. With respect to mountain front recharge, because of topography, most of rain comes down slope as stream flow and enters in fast as surface water so it shows up as stream percolation. Mountain front also provides water seeping through cracks into groundwater as it flows down streams. Mr. Buelow added that typically only happens with lots of water in rain events so mountain flow only happens occasionally and only in wet years not every year. The average shown is a 30-year average and is not representative of rain events every year.
- Ms. Anita Regmi (DWR) asked about the change in storage on Slide 31 specifically about change in storage from 2010-now. Mr. Lawler explained Slide 32 indicates that during 2011-2018 groundwater in storage decreases to a -5700 average flow per year. Mr. Buelow added there has been some recovery to Lompoc Plain since 2018 due to rainfall events and water rights releases management that are not reflected in that slide.
- GSA Committee Alternate Ms. Meighan Diethofer asked if normal storage of -1,000 af/year is easy to recover from. Mr. Lawler stated the question to answer is at what overdraft level would cause undesirable results.
- GSA Committee Director Steve Jordan advised that agriculture pumping have two invisible trends:
  - In wet years, Ag users pump less but in dry years, pump more.
  - Ag users are increasing long-term attempts to conserve water.

#### **Mr. Lawler Reviewed Climate Change and effects to SYRVGB**

- Mr. Bryan Bondy pointed out that it appears water budget terms on historical budget do not match with other CMA terms. Mr. Lawler will review and follow up.
- Ms. Karen Kistler asked regarding future GW use if considerations been made for recent land use changes causing subsequent water use changes due to an increase of Ag use on what was historically ranch land including increase of hoop crops along Highway 246 and conversion of dry farming to row crops which may use more water. Mr. Buelow stated DWR provides updates land use surveys every couple of years with latest one being 2018 survey. However much of land use changes seen now have happened post-2018 so may be included in a future update from DWR.

**VIII. Receive Draft Water Budget Technical Memorandum and consider public comment period and assignment to CAG**

Mr. Buelow announced that the Draft Water Budget Technical Memorandum will be released for public review and comment in the next few days. Staff recommended setting a three-week public review and comment period for this document. By unanimous consensus, Committee Members agreed with receiving and releasing the document for public review and comments, setting a three-week public comment period and requested the WMA CAG meet to review and discuss the Tech Memo near the end of the established comment period.

**IX. Next Special WMA GSA Meeting: Wednesday, April 28, 2021, 10:00 AM**

Mr. Buelow announced that the next WMA GSA Committee Meeting will be a “Special” meeting on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, 10:00 AM, via video/teleconference.

**X. Next Regular WMA GSA Meeting: Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 10:00 AM**

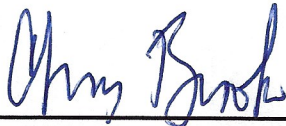
Mr. Buelow announced that the next WMA GSA Committee Regular Meeting to include conducting quarterly business will be Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 10:00 AM, via video/teleconference.

**XI. WMA GSA Committee requests and comments**

Mr. Buelow announced SGMA Newsletter Issue No. 3 has been released. Member agencies of all three GSAs are distributing in utility bills, groundwater production mailing and online.

**XII. Adjournment**

GSA Committee Director Brooks adjourned the meeting at 12:17pm.



Chris Brooks, Chairman



William J. Buelow, Secretary

## STAFF MEMORANDUM

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DATE: April 12, 2021  
TO: WMA, CMA and EMA GSA Committees  
FROM: GSA Member Agency Staff  
SUBJECT: Santa Ynez Water Group Letter of March 22, 2021

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Please see the attached March 22, 2021 letter from Mr. Doug Circle, representing the Santa Ynez Water Group (Water Group).

In the letter, Mr. Circle explains the Water Group's requests to "minimize GSP implementation costs to the maximum extent possible". To date, many of the Water Group's comments have focused on the reduction or elimination of data gaps and additional data acquisition that are not required to implement SGMA or manage groundwater in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin).

The Water Group further requested that the three GSAs combine to submit one Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) instead of the planned three GSPs, indicating that a single GSP approach would save costs. However, staff advises that submitting one GSP instead of three is not feasible at this time, as it would require changing the three Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) that established the three GSAs. There is not enough time in the schedule to modify the MOAs with concurrence of the eight agencies and approval by their Boards and Councils, much less revise the current versions of the GSPs into one in the remaining time. It also must be noted that the three GSAs would need to renegotiate the various consulting agreements currently in place for preparing the three GSPs.

The three GSP documents are scheduled to be ready for review this summer. Changing the format of the documents and coordinating with the three GSAs and two consultant teams would put the submission of the GSPs by the SGMA deadline of January 31, 2022 in jeopardy.

- **Staff recommendation:** Maintain current structure under the MOAs to submit three GSPs.

Additionally, the Water Group asked that the three GSAs consider consolidating into a single GSA to further reduce costs for meetings and other administrative requirements. The GSAs will consider potential options for future governance of SGMA in the Basin once the GSPs are submitted.

- **Staff recommendation:** Prior to submittal of the GSPs, Staff from each of the eight agencies in the Basin will discuss various governance options and present the topic to each of the GSA Committees.

Santa Ynez Water Group  
c/o Doug Circle  
Rancho Cañada de Los Pinos LLC  
[doug@circlevision.com](mailto:doug@circlevision.com)

March 22, 2021

Board of Directors, Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Eastern Management Area GSA  
Chair: Brett Marymee, SYRWCD (Cindy Allan, Alternate)  
Brad Joos, SYRWCD Improvement District #1 (Paeter Garcia, Alternate)  
Mark Infanti, City of Solvang (Ryan Toussaint, Alternate)  
Joan Hartman, County of Santa Barbara (Meighan Dietenhofer Alternate)  
Citizens Advisory Group, Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Eastern Management Area

Board of Directors, Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Central Management Area GSA  
Chair: Ed Andrisek, City of Buellton (John Sanchez, Alternate)  
Art Hibbits, SYRWCD (Cindy Allan, Alternate)  
Joan Hartman, County of Santa Barbara (Meighan Dietenhofer Alternate) (*non-voting member*)  
Citizens Advisory Group, Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Central Management Area

Board of Directors, Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Western Management Area GSA  
Chair: Chris Brooks, Vandenberg Village CSD (Katherine Stewart, Alternate)  
Jim Mosby, City of Lompoc (Kristin Worthley, Alternate)  
Bruce Nix, Mission Hills CSD (Myron Heavin, Alternate)  
Steve Jordan, SYRWCD (Art Hibbits, Alternate)  
Joan Hartman, County of Santa Barbara (Meighan Dietenhofer Alternate) (*non-voting member*)  
Citizens Advisory Group, Santa Ynez River Valley Basin Western Management Area

c/o William (Bill) Buelow  
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District  
3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101  
Santa Ynez, CA 93460

*Transmitted via email attachment to [bbuelow@syrwcd.com](mailto:bbuelow@syrwcd.com)*

Re: Request to Consolidate GSPs and GSAs to Mitigate SGMA Implementation Costs

Dear Directors and Staff:

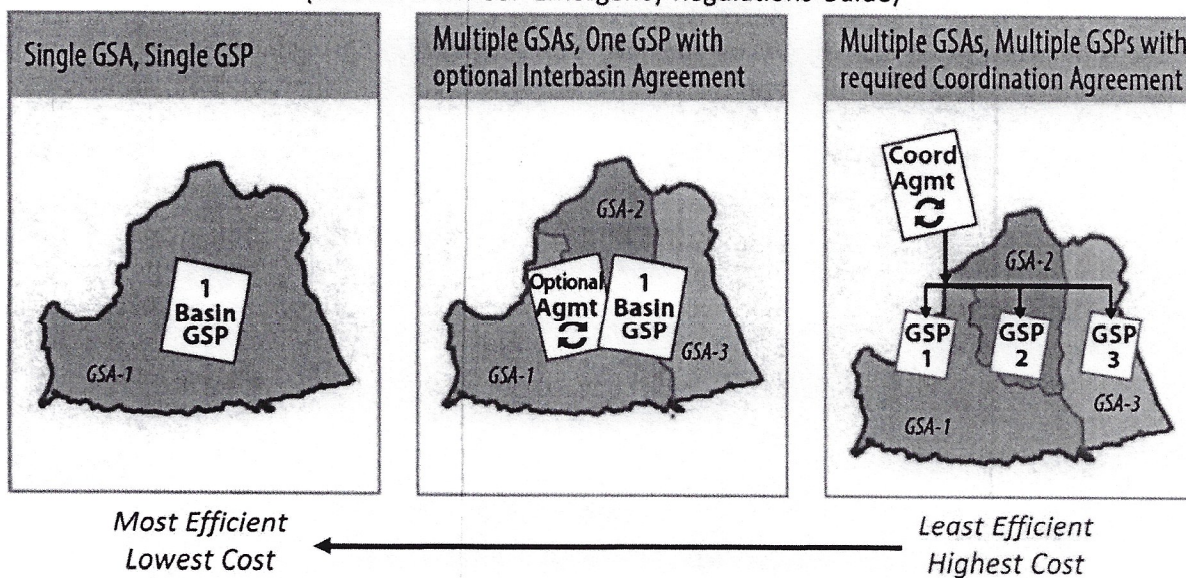
As you know the Santa Ynez Water Group (SYWG) was recently formed to engage on behalf of landowners with the three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) concerning development of the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). SYWG includes, vineyards, vegetables, and other interests and currently represents 54 landowners and 7,853 acres in the Santa Ynez River Valley Basin. SYWG desires to work cooperatively and collaboratively with the GSAs on planning issues that will impact sustainable management of the groundwater basin and our business.

SYWG is sending this letter to express its concerns about future costs for GSP implementation and to recommend steps that can be taken to reduce those costs. We are very concerned about implementation costs because we assume that those costs will be borne by the groundwater users in the basin through one of the fee mechanisms allowed under SGMA. Given the relatively small amount of pumping in the basin, those costs will result in significant per acre-foot pump fees that will impact our businesses and the local economy. For example, all the SGMA implementation costs for the CMA will be spread across only ~2,500 acre-feet of pumping. Assuming average annual GSP implementation costs of \$200,000, the outlook is a \$80 per acre-foot pump fee, which is very significant.

SYWG desires to minimize GSP implementation costs to the maximum extent reasonably possible. To date, our comments on draft GSP materials have focused on eliminating data collection recommendations that are not necessary for sustainable management of the Basin. We encourage the GSAs to carefully consider data needs and only commit to data collection efforts that will truly be necessary to sustainably manage the Basin. Looking ahead, we are also very concerned about the significant costs for implementing SGMA in a triplicate fashion with three GSAs and three GSPs.

GSP implementation costs will be significant. At a minimum, each GSA must develop and submit annual reports each year and update the GSP at least once every five years. The costs alone will be significant. Given the current management structure (three GSAs and three GSPs), a significant amount of effort will be triplicated. Clearly, preparing three annual reports and updating three GSPs will be significantly more expensive than preparing one annual report each year and updating one GSP. As shown in the DWR graphic below (Figure 1), it is perfectly acceptable for the three GSAs to adopt a single GSP for the Basin, which would eliminate the triplicated efforts going forward. In fact, DWR prefers this approach in basins that have multiple GSAs.

Figure 1  
GSA and GSP Options for SGMA Implementation  
(Source: DWR GSP Emergency Regulations Guide)





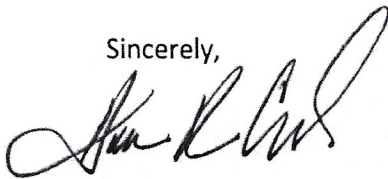
SYWG strongly recommends that the GSAs change their approach to a single GSP. The single GSP would incorporate differential management in WMA, CMA, and EMA by establishing three management areas<sup>1</sup> and specific objectives each, as is provided for in SGMA. A single GSP would reduce annual reporting and GSP update costs going forward because only one annual report and one GSP updated would be needed, instead of three. Additionally, we recommend exploring whether the three GSAs could eventually be consolidated into a single GSA to further reduce costs for meetings and other administrative activities.

It is not too late to decide to adopt a single GSP for the Basin. It is important that a decision to prepare and adopt a single GSP for the Basin be made now, as there is still time to implement this change before GSP adoption deadline in January 2022. If a single GSP is not adopted, it may be difficult or impossible to consolidate the GSPs later.

We respectfully request that the GSAs place an agenda item on the next Board meeting agendas to discuss this and that the three GSA Boards come together in a joint meeting as soon as possible to discuss switching to a single GSP.

Please let us know if there is anything SYWG can do to further the recommendations communicated in this letter.

Sincerely,



Doug Circle

cc: SYWG Members  
Bryan Bondy, Bondy Groundwater Consulting, Inc.

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<sup>1</sup> GSP Emergency Regulations § 354.20(a): Each Agency may define one or more management areas within a basin if the Agency has determined that creation of management areas will facilitate implementation of the Plan. Management areas may define different minimum thresholds and be operated to different measurable objectives than the basin at large, provided that undesirable results are defined consistently throughout the basin.

WESTERN MANAGEMENT AREA  
CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP  
MEMORANDUM

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DATE: March 16, 2021  
TO: WMA GSA Committee  
FROM: WMA Citizen Advisory Group  
SUBJECT: Review and Discussion Draft Groundwater Conditions Technical Memorandum

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**Western Management Area (WMA) Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Members:**

CAG Members in attendance: Karen Kistler, Charles Witt, Kari Campbell-Bohard, Jose Baer, Derek McLeish and Scott Williams.

Staff and Consultants in attendance: Bill Buelow (SYRWCD), Miles McCammon and Curtis Lawlor (Stetson), Kristin Worthley (City of Lompoc).

**Purpose**

The WMA GSA Committee requested staff for the GSA agencies to coordinate meetings of the WMA CAG. Through a coordinated effort, the CAG held a meeting via teleconference due to the COVID-19 restrictions. The meeting was held on March 16, 2021. The purpose of the meetings was for the WMA CAG (CAG) to review the Draft Groundwater Conditions Technical Memorandum. The Memorandum was prepared by the Stetson Engineer's team. A copy of the documents was made available to the CAG prior to the meeting at [www.SantaYnezWater.org](http://www.SantaYnezWater.org).

**CAG Comments on Draft Groundwater Conditions Technical Memorandum**

- The CAG asked how the groundwater contours were done.
  - Consultant response: assigned wells in each aquifer were selected for contours.
- A CAG member asked the meaning of groundwater usage shown on Figures 2-1 and 2-4 change in storage and usage over time.
- Members of the CAG agreed that they would like to see as many "data gaps" closed as possible (pg 38) and referenced Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs).
  - Consultant indicated that GDEs will be screened using the numeric groundwater model based on simulated groundwater elevations.
- The CAG was interested in how the Aerial Electromagnetic Survey (AEM) would be incorporated into the Groundwater Conditions TM.

- Staff and Consultants indicated that as soon as the AEM data has been processed and interpreted, it will be integrated into the various models. This may be done during the next iteration of the GSP due to the timing.
- The CAG and consultants discussed how the amount of groundwater in storage is being presented as a relative number and not an actual number. There was further discussion about groundwater storage and its relationship to seawater intrusion, which does not occur in the WMA due to geology.
- CAG discussed section 4.1.2 and the physical separation of the Lompoc Terrance due to the syncline which separates the lower aquifer from seawater intrusion. The CAG further discussed minimum flows in the Santa Ynez River estuary and the role of Water Rights Releases from Lake Cachuma.
- The CAG discussed well hydrographs in Appendix A. They requested to add blanket statements when there are lapses in data to indicate the well was either decommissioned or there is no current data available.
- There was a discussion about the effect of the wastewater treatment plants on the upper aquifer.
- The CAG discussed page 12, second paragraph section 1.3.5 and the inclusion of water level data on a regional map given that it is suspected to be perched aquifer.
  - The Consultants are continuing to work on that issue and may remove the upper aquifer as a principal aquifer due to the perched conditions.

**Comments by the Public in Attendance:**

- Mr. Bryan Bondy of the Santa Ynez Water Group recommended adding some context to Figure 2-1 regarding the cumulative storage numbers and average changes in storage. Mr. Bondy further recommends a comparison figure with groundwater pumping and changes in storage.
- Mr. Bryan Bondy recommended screening GDEs now, and do not wait for model completion, using contours, aerial photographs or other sources. Mr. Bondy has a similar comment regarding screening springs and recommended a day in the field to evaluate the presence/absence of springs.
- Mr. Bondy discussed the proposed surveys for land subsidence and suggested it was unnecessary given the regional geology and suggests other less expensive alternatives.
- Mr. Steve Slack from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife remarked that the comments for the CMA were on the WMA page on the website and asked if there was a Groundwater Conditions TM for the EMA.
  - Staff will check on the website issue and clarified that the groundwater conditions were discussed in the Hydrogeologic conceptual model for the EMA.
- Mr. Slack asked about safety nets for Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems.