

MEETING MINUTES

Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eastern Management Area in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin May 13, 2021

A SPECIAL meeting of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Eastern Management Area (EMA) in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin was held on Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. As a result of the COVID-19 emergency and Governor Newsom's Executive Orders to protect public health by issuing shelter-in-home standards, limiting public gatherings, and requiring social distancing, this meeting occurred solely via video and teleconference as authorized by and in furtherance of Executive Order Nos. N-29-20 and N-33-20 and in accordance with the latest Santa Barbara County Health Office Order.

EMA GSA Committee Members Present: Joan Hartmann, Mark Infanti, Brad Joos,
Brett Marymee

EMA GSA Alternate Committee Members Present: Cynthia Allen, Meighan Diethofer

Member Agency Staff Present: Bill Buelow, Paeter Garcia, Amber Thompson,
Kevin Walsh, Matt van der Linden, Eric Tambini, Matt Young

Others Present: Steve Anderson, Jeff Barry (GSI Water Solutions), Bryan Bondy, Russell Chamberlin, Doug Circle, Elizabeth Farnum, Tim Gorham, Mary Heyden, Gay Infanti, CJ Jackson, Stewart Johnston, Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers), Kevin Merrill, Tim Nicely (GSI), Anita Regmi (DWR), Steve Slack (CDFW)

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

GSA Committee Member Marymee called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and asked Mr. Buelow to call roll. All GSA Committee Members were present. A quorum was met.

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

Mr. Buelow announced names of phone attendees and stated today's meeting is a continuation of the April 29, 2021 meeting regarding Sustainable Management Criteria.

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

No additions or deletions were made.

IV. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

V. **Continued review of revised EMA Sustainable Management Criteria for inclusion in Draft EMA Groundwater Sustainability Plan**

Mr. Jeff Barry and Mr. Tim Nicely (GSI Water Solutions) presented “Revised Sustainability Management Criteria Summary for the Santa Ynez Basin - EMA GSA dated May 13, 2021”. The presentation continued the discussion from the April 29, 2021 EMA GSA Committee meeting and included a review of revised Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) analysis approach, representativeness of wells, updated well impact analysis, considerations for setting Minimum Thresholds, relationship between Minimum Thresholds and Management Actions, adjustments/permanence of Minimum Thresholds, and potential Management Actions based on public input and feedback received based on the April 15, 2021 and April 29, 2021 EMA GSA Committee Meetings. Consultants requested that the EMA GSA Committee provide direction on SMCs to be included in draft GSP.

Public comment, GSA Committee Member discussion, and follow-up from the consultants and staff occurred during and after the presentation.

- Mr. Barry and Mr. Nicely presented information regarding SMC Analysis Approach, Representative Wells, Updated Well Impact Analysis.
- Committee Member Brett Marymee expressed concern regarding lack of well data in Los Olivos and Foxen Canyon areas of the EMA. He asked if there is enough representation to make a policy direction without more well data from those areas. Mr. Nicely stated the limitation of well data is common throughout state and DWR will be aware of that issue.
 - Mr. Young confirmed there is a lack of private well historical data in those areas but staff is actively working to find private wells to supply future data. He invited anyone with a private domestic or agriculture well in those areas to be part of the network for future monitoring.
 - Mr. Barry suggested expanding and improving the monitoring network over time to reevaluate thresholds over time.
 - Mr. van der Linden clarified that the City of Solvang has provided all municipal well data and believes data gaps are from private domestic and private agriculture wells. He could not verify if all data has been provided about ID No. 1 municipal wells.
 - Mr. C.J. Jackson asked about sensitivity of analysis if there was more well data to be provided since there is a data gap area. Mr. Barry explained that due to variability in conditions throughout the Basin, to see any potential changes, we need to add wells in the data gap area not just add more wells in general.
 - Mr. Young explained the well impact analysis on Slide 6 is based on 487 wells in the EMA GSA of which well construction is known. The 24 representative wells are only part of that 487.
 - Mr. Barry confirmed, based on all the data collected on representative wells, he is confident appropriate SMC levels can be set.

- Mr. Nicely stated the well density data collected and provided for the EMA GSA is sufficient per DWR guidelines.
- Ms. Gay Infanti asked if Sedgwick Preserve, located in the data gap area of the EMA GSA, has been included as part of the well monitoring network. Mr. Nicely confirmed that one of the representative wells is located on Sedgwick Preserve.
- Ms. Gay Infanti expressed concerned about setting different thresholds for different water users. She pointed out that since domestic wells are typically shallow, many domestic wells may begin going dry before an impact is reached for deeper agriculture or municipal wells. She requested the Minimum Thresholds be set closer to the Spring 2018 groundwater elevation levels than levels marked on Slides 21 and 37. Mr. Barry explained the suggested levels attempt for a balance and reduction of possible impacts to all beneficial users, domestic, municipal and agriculture.
- Mr. Kevin Merrill asked if there is any evidence of domestic or municipal wells going dry if water levels go down to 50 feet below Spring 2018 groundwater elevation. He expressed concern that setting a Minimum Threshold too close to Spring 2018 groundwater elevation levels may be setting the GSA up to fail as soon as the GSP is submitted. Mr. Barry pointed out that at 50 feet below Spring 2018 groundwater elevation levels, the graph indicates depletion of supply may be occur since almost 50% of domestic and 50% of agriculture wells will be affected. Discussion followed.
- Mr. Young explained the process of determining Sustainable Management Criteria.
 - Currently consultants and staff are asking for public input and committee guidance on levels to create the Draft SMC chapter.
 - Draft SMC chapter will be released to the public and EMA CAG for full thorough review and comments.
 - Those comments will be addressed and incorporated into “Draft Final” SMC chapter of the Draft GSP.
 - Draft GSP with all “Draft Final” chapters included will be released to the public and EMA CAG for full thorough review and comments.
 - Those comments will be addressed and incorporated into the Final GSP before the plan is submitted to DWR by January 2022.
- Mr. van der Linden suggested a conservative approach to setting limits by setting the level at smaller thresholds below Spring 2018 groundwater elevation now then reevaluate over the years and extend levels, if appropriate.
- Mr. Doug Circle offered the Santa Ynez Water Group to attain access to agriculture well data in data gap areas for the EMA GSA as they did for the CMA GSA.
- Mr. Doug Circle expressed concern that seems to be a lack of representation of agriculture interests by the Committee Members and feels the comments made by the agriculture community are not being heard even though the Santa Ynez Water Group has been attending all the EMA GSA and CAG meetings.

- Committee Member Brad Joos stated that ID No. 1, a municipal water provider, has a diversity of users including domestic, commercial and agriculture with 50% of ID No. 1 produced water going toward Agriculture use. Thus, he believes ID No. 1 has a good knowledge of agriculture water needs and that ID No. 1's presence on the EMA GSA Committee represents all beneficial users.
- Mr. Bryan Bondy, speaking on behalf of the Santa Ynez Water Group landowners, offered alternative thoughts on bridging the gap between approaches discussed so far. The presentation suggested water levels below top of screen have significant and unreasonable effects. However, agriculture landowners believe water levels dropping below top of screen does not reflect a depletion of groundwater supply even though it could create problem with maintenance of said well. He suggested a focus on being able to produce the supply needed for beneficial use and determine location of wells that are truly at risk of having a supply issue. Then decide what, if any, solutions can be made to solve that problem in that area without restricting water use for other users in other areas. Discussion followed.
 - Mr. Barry responded the Committee needs to decide what is considered an undesirable result and develop the thresholds. He pointed out that different users have different definitions of undesirable. Even though SGMA identifies depletion of supply as a key undesirable effect, it is not the only undesirable effect, and the EMA GSA Committee needs to decide what is undesirable.
 - He added that undesirable is currently described in the Draft document as affecting 50% of wells for two consecutive years.
 - He clarified that DWR gives flexibility regarding water levels that drop below Minimum Thresholds during extended drought and SGMA states that Projects and Management Actions need to be initiated if groundwater levels do not recover after normal or above-normal rainfall returns.
 - Mr. Barry explained why groundwater levels dropping below top of screen, even for only a short time, would cause production issues and undesirable effects.
- Committee Member Brad Joos commented that hitting a Minimum Threshold does not mean a stop to all pumping, it just triggers a response. He provided the example of wildfire trigger points used by fire responders. They do not wait until homes are burning before moving in to fight a wildfire. Mr. Barry confirmed hitting a Minimum Threshold signifies a possible undesirable result and alerts that it may be time to consider alternatives.
- Committee Member Brad Joos stated that ID No. 1 has a long history with a balanced portfolio of using diverse water supplies including surface water, groundwater, and imported state water to meet needs while protecting all water sources.
- Committee Member Brad Joos stated that the single largest investment owned by most citizens in the area is their home and property. If property values drop

dramatically due to loss of water supply, then the livelihood of each landowner in valley will be impacted not only livelihood of agriculture landowners.

- Mr. Barry and Mr. Nicely presented information regarding Potential Management Actions and Projects.
- Mr. Young emphasized that the presented list of potential Management Actions and Projects is only a potential list based on consultants' experiences and what has been seen in other basins around the state. It is not a direct proposal. It is just teeing up the discussion to be addressed over the next few meetings.
- Committee Member Joan Hartmann further emphasized the process and reminded everyone that information is being provided to create a Draft SMC chapter to be released for public review and comment.
 - Committee Member Hartman requested footnotes be added to the Draft SMC noting the differing opinions to show people the logic and reasoning behind the levels that were chosen. Mr. Nicely agreed footnotes could be added to the document for that purpose.
 - Committee Member Hartman asked if responses are made to comments received on the Draft documents. Mr. Nicely confirmed consultants directly address each individual comment with written responses. In addition, noting comments received that resulted in changes to the Draft document and registering comments with the responses in the communications portal log ultimately to be included in the GSP and will be public information.
- Mr. van der Linden explained high costs of well maintenance or repair for City of Solvang and increased concerns of potential capacity problems if groundwater levels drop below top of screen. He added that since 1998, the City of Solvang has paid over \$65 million for imports of State Water to provided needed water supply and reduce impact to groundwater basin in Santa Ynez Valley.
- Mr. Garcia explained when one of the available water supplies is under stress, the rate payers will pay the price and approaching a Minimum Threshold is not equivalent to a failure in this basin.
- Committee Member Brett Marymee asked for verification on basin coordination. Mr. Curtis Lawler stated Stetson who is working in the CMA and WMA is coordinating with the EMA so all three plans are coordinated. Mr. Nicely confirmed GSI and Stetson have been working closely with each other for coordination to benefit the entire Basin.
- Committee Member Brett Marymee asked for more information about cloud seeding program. Mr. Young explained Santa Barbara County Water Agency has a cloud seeding program done in partnership with other agencies but has not been able to

perform cloud seeding over the last few years due declining interest by some of the partner agencies plus rules that are in place after wildfires occurred in the area.

- Committee Member Mark Infanti stated the City of Solvang's wastewater treatment plant recharges Santa Ynez River underflow and appears to currently benefit recharge to the CMA not EMA. Upgrades to the treatment plant are being planned, at a great cost, to add water treatment capability so treated water could be used at least for agricultural purposes. He asked about recharge possibilities for EMA aquifer. Discussion followed.
- Mr. Lawler stated he would like to see a Minimum Threshold set near the historic low since recharge has historically occurred using nature as a guide and to err on the side of caution.

EMA GSA Committee Members provided guidance and direction regarding setting Minimum Threshold levels.

Committee Member Supervisor Joan Hartman, representing County of Santa Barbara, provided concepts to provide guidance in reaching a number.

- The process is adaptive so adjustments can be made over time.
- We can learn from other basins that are worse off than our area.
- We can have different Minimum Thresholds for different formations but should have a same level set for all user types.
- Minimum Threshold should be set to be protective of the most sensitive or most vulnerable users such as those with small domestic wells and small agriculture wells.
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. She would rather relax in the future as we learn more rather than be very lenient now and needing to be more stringent in the future in order to avoid going beyond recoverable levels.

Committee Member Councilman Mark Infanti, representing City of Solvang, commented.

- Add emphasis in the GSP document specifically the justification for setting the thresholds.
- Agreed on setting different Minimum Thresholds for the different formations.
- He recommended Careaga Sand formation Minimum Threshold be set at 12 ft below 2018 Spring groundwater elevation levels.
- He deferred recommendation for Paso Robles formation to ID No. 1 since that is where most of ID No. 1 wells are located.

Committee Member Trustee Brad Joos, representing Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1 (ID No. 1), commented.

- Agreed with Committee Member Hartmann about an ounce of prevention and we should take one step at a time.
- Public health and safety are number one priority. So, municipal wells cannot run out of water since ID No. 1 provides water for homes, families, businesses, farms, ranches, churches, restaurants, schools and businesses in Santa Ynez, Ballard, Los

- Olivos, Chumash Reservation, and helps the City of Solvang. Personal impacts to many users happen if ID No. 1 is not able to supply water with their wells.
- He recommended Paso Robles formation Minimum Threshold be set at 15 ft below 2018 Spring groundwater elevation levels.
 - DWR is watching. If decisions made start impacting the small producers, then the State may step in and take over.

Committee Member Director Brett Marymee representing Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, commented.

- He recapped recommendations expressed by both Municipal water purveyors represented on the EMA GSA Committee.
- Qualitative construct expressed by Committee Member Hartmann was good.
- Reminded all that the GSP is adaptable.

Committee Member Mark Infanti made a MOTION requesting staff to add a Minimum Threshold for the Careaga Sand formation at 12 feet below Spring 2018 groundwater water elevation levels and add a Minimum Threshold for the Paso Robles formation at 15 foot below Spring 2018 groundwater water elevation levels to the Draft Sustainable Management Criteria section of the EMA Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Motion was seconded by Committee Member Brad Joos and unanimously passed by Roll Call vote.

VI. EMA GSA Committee requests and comments

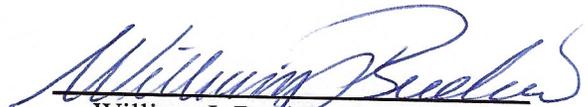
Committee Member Director Brett Marymee stated the next EMA GSA Committee Meeting will in two weeks. A Regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via video/teleconference.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business, GSA Committee Member Marymee adjourned the meeting at 8:48 p.m.



Brett Marymee, Chairman



William J. Buelow, Secretary