

**CENTRAL MANAGMENT AREA
CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: October 8, 2021

TO: CMA GSA Committee

FROM: CMA Citizen Advisory Group
(representative Sharyne Merritt)

SUBJECT: Workshop on Public Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and Future Governance

Attendees

CMA CAG Members in attendance: Sharyne Merritt, Cindy Douglas, Len Fleckenstein; Sean Diggins, and Larry Lahr

Staff in attendance: Bill Buelow and Kevin Walsh (SYRWCD), Matt Young (County Water Agency)

Consultants in attendance: 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. The meeting was held on October 8, 2021. The purpose of the meetings was for the CMA CAG (CAG) to review the Public Draft of the GSP and future governance options. The GSP 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.

CAG Comments o

Each member of the CAG was given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments on the Public Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin. 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.

Data gaps

- CAG members noted concern about monitoring the *Buellton Aquifer*. There are a number of places in the document where argument could be made that current monitoring is not adequate, but the document says it is adequate. Most of the acreage within the CMA is

unmonitored. The argument is stronger for getting more monitoring wells if the document says monitoring is currently inadequate.

- Consultant/Staff noted more monitoring wells are needed just to be on par with other areas. They acknowledge this is a data gap and it is desirable to add more monitoring wells
 - Consultant/Staff noted there are 4 wells in the *Buellton Aquifer*: two on the east are drilled through the in Santa Ynez River Alluvium into the *Buellton Aquifer* below. They are 500 feet below the surface; two additional wells are completed on the west and are in the highlands.
- CAG members suggested a need for a stream gauge within the CMA boundaries – there is one upstream of the CMA and one downstream of the CMA, but none within the CMA boundaries.
 - Consultant/staff noted the gauge at the eastern end is close to the boundary, so it supplies a good estimate of flow in that area. The next gauge is at Lompoc. The groundwater contribution to surface water is minimal. Surface water is affected by releases from Lake Cachuma, flows from tributaries, and pumping by diverters. The surface water is least impacted by groundwater, so it was decided to not put one at the western edge of the CMA.

Surface water (River and River Alluvium) - Ground water interconnectivity, and GDE's

- CAG members asked if SGMA has an obligation to keep surface water contribution at current level
 - Consultant/staff responded that 15-feet below the surface of the river in the alluvium is the root level for riparian trees. Consultant stated that these were groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDE) though this was questioned by the CAG – see below.
- CAG members asked if there is interconnectivity between ground water and the River Alluvium. Pointing to Table 2b.6-2, which shows 11-acres of potential GDE Associated within a Principal Aquifer [*Buellton Aquifer*], 1,223-acres of potential riparian areas not subject to SGMA, 501-acres not likely to be affected by groundwater management, and 807-acres of riparian vegetation that according to the text “may have some influence from the *Buellton Aquifer* water levels”
 - Consultant/staff responded that interconnectivity between ground water and Alluvium was unknown currently
- CAG members asked how the 15-feet below the surface water threshold was derived.
 - Consultant/staff responded that they wanted to monitor undesirable results related to flux.
 - Consultants further explained: The surface water of the Santa Ynez River flows on top of the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium* and within the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium*. Water flowing beneath the surface of the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium* is also referred to as the “underflow” and “subflow”. Below the *Santa Ynez River*

Alluvium is the *Buellton Aquifer*. Riparian vegetation has its roots in the first 15-feet of the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium*. *Santa Ynez River Alluvium* is between 0 to 150-feet deep.

- CAG members observed that there were likely few if any acres of the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium* that were less than 15-feet deep allowing the *Buellton Aquifer* to be within 15 feet of the surface. It would therefore be unlikely for the Santa Ynez River riparian ecosystem to be groundwater dependent.
- CAG members noted that it is not likely observed water level decreases in the *Buellton Aquifer* will affect the surface water or habitat for riparian vegetation. The CAG noted that in the CMA, riparian vegetation is better classified as Surface water Dependent Ecosystems (SDE) rather than Groundwater Depend Ecosystems (GDE).
- A member of the public commented that there should be explicit and strong caveats explaining that riparian vegetation primarily relies on the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium*. There is virtually no way the *Buellton Aquifer* would be a materially contributing cause to riparian vegetation; SGMA was not intended to manage surface water

Management

- CAG members asked about the trigger of two consecutive non-drought years for Minimum Thresholds, noting there may not be two consecutive non-drought years in the future.
 - Consultant/Staff said this was the best route to go at this time however these thresholds could change, if needed. Further, sustainable yield will be updated during revisions to the GSP.
 - Sustainable yield refers to the difference between inflow and outflow. There is uncertainty in the water budget due to some estimated parameters. Consultants will corroborate the model with groundwater levels to refine the budget in the future.
- CAG members asked when Group 1 Management Actions will begin; who determines timing of metering and amounts of fees; who pays for the meters; given delays experienced by well companies, how long will this take?
 - Consultant/Staff offered that Group 1 Management Actions will begin immediately. Timing of metering and amounts of fees will be determined by GSA. It will take a lot of time to initiate all of these actions.
 - Other basins have left paying for meters up to the owner; Santa Barbara County supervisors are looking at some sort of defrayment of cost; up to \$500 or \$600 per well; The GSA will have to come up for standards for calibration; must be installed by certified person. CAG members suggested that the GSA look at SB88 for lessons learned.
- CAG members suggested that since Surface Water users have to report use to the State using State approved techniques, CMA should allow use of any techniques approved by the State.

- Consultants/Staff reviewed the GSP timeline: the GSP gets adopted and uploaded in December 2021 and January 2022; then DWR has 2 years to approve it; GSA will continue to meet quarterly with annual reporting; The GSAs need to figure how we are going to fund implementation.
- The CAG discussed how will the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District will relate to GSA.
 - Consultant/Staff if GSA's want the District to continue supporting SGMA, it will.
 - Consultant/Staff said it is possible the GSA will monitor wells in the *Santa Ynez River Alluvium*.
- A member of public noted that on other GSA boards there are stakeholder directors, for example, an environmental director and an agriculture director.

There was no further discussion, and the meeting was adjourned.