

MEETING MINUTES

Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eastern Management Area in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin April 29, 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, April 29, 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 Santa Barbara County Health Office Order 2021-12.2.

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, Matt Young

Others Present: Steve Anderson, Jeff Barry (GSI Water Solutions), Russell Chamberlin, Elizabeth Farnum, Mary Heyden, Gay Infanti, Stewart Johnston, Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers), Austin M., Michael McAlpin (GSI), Kevin Merrill, Tim Nicely (GSI), 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 provided a review of SGMA activities in Santa Ynez River Valley Basin.

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 summary of conversation between SYRWCD and DWR Staff members regarding Santa Ynez River and River Alluvium and SGMA GSPs and GSAs

Mr. Buelow presented Staff Memorandum dated April 19, 2021 regarding summary of telephone conversation with A. Regmi 04-15-2021. Discussion followed.

VI. Review revised EMA Sustainable Management Criteria for inclusion in Draft EMA Groundwater Sustainability Plan

Mr. Jeff Barry (GSI Water Solutions) presented “Revised Sustainability Management Criteria Summary for the Santa Ynez Basin - EMA GSA.” The presentation included a review of revised Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) including a summary of water code and SGMA regulations, well impact evaluation, adjustments made based on feedback from the April 15, 2021 EMA GSA Committee meeting, and a request for the EMA GSA to provide direction on SMCs to be included in draft GSP.

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

- Committee Member Brett Marymee asked for clarifications of line color on Slides 6 and 7. Mr. Barry explained the black line is the EMA GSA boundary, and the orange lines (Slide 6) and blue lines (Slide 7) are estimated groundwater surface elevation levels, with the lowest level at 500 feet above sea level and increased by 50-foot increments.
- Committee Member Brett Marymee, with regards to Slide 9, asked why one Municipal well is called out and why it is listed different from Agriculture or Domestic. Mr. Barry clarified that the well impact evaluation for the Paso Robles Formation shows that only one municipal well appears to be impacted if water levels fall 30-50 feet below the Spring 2018 groundwater levels. Municipal wells were separated from Agriculture and Domestic wells because Municipal wells serve a larger population. Discussion followed.
- Mr. Kevin Merrill expressed concern that the presentation preview slides were received late. He asked if there will be an opportunity to comment later. Mr. Barry assured everyone this presentation was an introduction to this topic. This analysis will be included in the Draft SMC Section to be released for public review and comment.
- Ms. Mary Heyden asked for clarification of whether there is a general groundwater level at which well screens are generally set. Mr. Barry explained that each well driller and landowner may decide individually where to set the well screen level for a particular well. Some wells are shallow because an adequate supply of water is found for what is needed and the cost is too high to drill a deeper well. Typically, domestic wells are shallow, some agriculture wells are shallow while others are deeper, and municipal wells are deep. Also, in some basins, older wells tend to be shallower while new or newly rehabbed wells tend to be drilled deeper than original well depth.

- Mr. van der Linden further described the setting of well screens in terms of a multi-layered cake, where cake is clay and frosting is water bearing layers. When a well is being drilled through the layers, well screens are generally placed in the “frosting”/water-bearing layers.
- Mr. van der Linden asked if Slides 6 and 7 measure static water level elevations since a cone of depression is created when pumping causes water level to drop even further than static level. Mr. Barry explained these slides are static water levels, so thresholds should not be set lower than where water levels could be when pumping.
- Committee Member Mark Infanti asked for clarifications about Slides 9 and 10 and what goal is being sought in these situations. Mr. Barry explained the need to establish reasonable Minimum Thresholds where static water level would be used as a benchmark for undesirable results. Minimum Thresholds can be set according to feet below the top of well screens and the max percent of wells that are impacted by different stages of lowered groundwater levels, thus the Committee needs to consider both factors.
 - Discussion followed.
 - Mr. Young added that this is the critical policy decision for the Committee to give guidance on what level the GSA is willing to let water levels drop and what is the amount of decline that could cause significant and unreasonable impacts in this Basin. The consultants need direction from Committee Members for this.
 - Committee Member Brad Joos said he will need to review data with staff before setting any levels. He considers this presentation as a preliminary informative session.
 - Committee Member Joan Hartmann asked for clarification on Slides 9 and 10, and what it means in the real world if 40% of agriculture wells are below the top of screen. Mr. Barry stated he would like to hear from agriculture users on how a 40% loss of wells would affect them. Mr. van der Linden pointed out there can be economic factors caused when water levels are too low in terms of needing to run well pumps longer hours to pump the same amount of water.
 - Discussion continued regarding Slides 9 and 10, elevation levels below top of well screens, impacts currently existing in EMA, what levels of additional impacts are tolerable before a call to action is needed, considerations about what Management Actions will happen when the Minimum Threshold is triggered, and if different types of users should have different Minimum Thresholds.
 - Mr. Barry pointed out that the Minimum Threshold is a regulatory standard that DWR is expecting to be set but the reality is the Minimum Threshold is a level providing an indication that there could be significant and unreasonable effects. If a Minimum Threshold is reached, then the GSA needs to begin implementation of a set Management Actions to bring water levels back to a sustainable condition

within the next twenty years. Also, every five years, the levels can be reset based on new data.

- Mr. Garcia commented that data presented may not indicate where wells are screened and noted that it appears that impacts to wells already exist in the EMA.
 - First key question to be answered is what additional level of impacts are tolerable before there is a call to action. The additional impacts are spread between different constituencies and users of water.
 - Second key question is what action needs to be taken when that Minimum Threshold/undesirable result is identified or is triggered. Will the action be a soft start on more data collection or is it a moratorium on new pumping or instituting cutbacks?
 - Mr. Barry added that Minimum Thresholds can be set above where we do not want water levels to go. Other Basins have set triggers above that level to initiate a call to action before reaching the Minimum Threshold.
- Ms. Gay Infanti asked if lower water levels lead to lower water quality and given water quality requirements for potable water, should municipal wells be in their own category and have their own set of levels? Mr. Barry stated that setting separate levels per well category could be done but cautioned on possible lack of adequate monitoring network and data integrity. He cautioned that lower water levels can lead to lower water quality due to pulling from deeper portions of the aquifer, can cause potential economic impacts from running wells for longer hours, and can result in the need to dig deeper wells which could also lead to poorer water quality.
- Mr. Kevin Merrill stressed that once thresholds are set, it is hard to go back to change and could have a domino effect on the economy, cities, and agriculture. He cautioned the Committee Members should not rush into deciding levels.
- Committee Member Brett Marymee asked how the land subsidence Minimum Threshold of 1 inch per year in Slide 32 was determined. Mr. Barry stated that the value is based on the differential GPS monitoring station located in Santa Ynez which has been providing data since it was installed in 2015. Discussion followed about the lack of subsidence information.
- Mr. Steve Slack asked for clarification regarding the quantity of agricultural wells in Slide 9. Mr. Barry reported the quantity is 126 not 12, the number was cutoff in conversion to PDF.
- Mr. Steve Slack asked where more information can be found about Categorized Potential GDEs referenced in Slide 27. Mr. Barry advised the Potential GDEs are being evaluated and more information will be in the Draft Sustainable Management Criteria chapter of the GSP.

VII. EMA GSA Committee requests and comments

GSA Committee Members unanimously expressed the need to meet again on Revised Draft Sustainable Management Criteria before decisions are made. Discussion followed.

A majority of Committee Members requested another Special Meeting be scheduled for May 13, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. to revisit tonight's presentation and information. This will allow two weeks for each Committee Member to meet with agency staff, review information and return with questions or comments to set Minimum Threshold levels.

Committee Member Brad Joos requested specifics on what Committee Members need to provide to the consultants to move forward and set parameters properly.

Mr. Barry offered to provide hydrographs with Minimum Thresholds marked for specific representative wells of different users for the next meeting.


Committee Member Joan Hartmann asked if different formations could have different thresholds; whether different users could have different thresholds within the same formation; and whether water quality requirements for municipal wells is higher than for other users.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, GSA Committee Member Brett Marymee adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm.



Brett Marymee, Chairman



William J. Buelow, Secretary

STAFF MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 19, 2021
TO: File
FROM: B. Buelow
SUBJECT: Summary of Telephone Conversation with A. Regmi 04-15-2021

As a follow up to several emails (attached) from Anita Regmi at DWR, a call was scheduled between Bill Buelow of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District (SYRWCD) and Anita Regmi of the southern regional office of the State of California, Department of Water Resources (DWR) to discuss the issue of the Santa Ynez River Alluvium (River Alluvium) in the three Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) currently being prepared for the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin).

Ms. Regmi said that DWR needs to know more about this subject as it has come up during several recent GSA meetings and there have been specific questions that have been asked by various agencies such as NOAA.

Ms. Regmi reiterated that DWR had received some information from SYRWCD in response to earlier requests, but that she still did not understand the source of the boundary of the Santa Ynez River Alluvium. Mr. Buelow reiterated the previous request of January 25, 2021 by Ms. Regmi was about data collected by riparian pumpers and where it was sent and stored. Mr. Buelow sent Ms. Regmi a link to the eWRIMS system, where riparian pumpers upload pumping records to maintain compliance with the State Board.

Mr. Buelow then clarified that the extent of the River Alluvium extends upstream from the Lompoc Narrows to Bradbury dam and corresponds to the District's Zone A plus some additional areas of River Alluvium between the two non-contiguous sections of the District. The management of the River Alluvium as surface water or surface water underflow accords with the State Water Resource Control Board's (State Board) assertion of jurisdiction over River surface and subsurface water as underflow. This is documented in various State Board Orders, including D886, 73-37, 89-18, and most recently, 2019-0148, and has been accepted for a long time.

Mr. Buelow further explained that SGMA's definition of groundwater specifically excludes subsurface "water flowing through a known and defined channel," which is essentially how the State Board has defined subsurface water in the River Alluvium. Mr. Buelow pointed out this was done intentionally by the two agencies so there would be no jurisdictional overlap. Ms. Regmi she appreciated and understood the clarification.

Ms. Regmi stressed that all three GSPs need to more clearly document the status of wells screened in the River Alluvium. She added that there needs to be a better explanation of the process of evaluating each well and the GSAs will need to provide DWR with documentation of sources and citations. She further explained that as currently drafted, the reviewers of the GSPs will not understand the assertion of the exemption of wells in the River Alluvium. Mr. Buelow thanked Ms. Regmi for the feedback and said he would pass along the information to the GSAs.

Ms. Regmi indicated that the declaration of the exemption to SGMA "is a big deal" and further explained that DWR's request for more information is a "heads-up" to the GSAs. Mr. Buelow explained that the GSAs will provide additional details about the status of wells in the River Alluvium and explained that the GSAs are currently contemplating how this will be done (either in the body of the GSPs and/or adding an appendix with technical information to each GSP). Ms. Regmi appreciated the information and indicated that DWR will require the GSAs to verify that every well that classified as "exempt from SGMA" is reporting its pumping to the State Board. In addition, DWR will need to know how each exempt well was surveyed or screened to determine its status as a riparian well and exempt from SGMA.

Mr. Buelow offered to send Ms. Regmi a link to the current State Board order 2019-0148. Ms. Regmi said she would appreciate the information.

Mr. Buelow asked Ms. Regmi about other basin's that consolidate or separate post GSP submittal and asked if there was a specific process that GSAs must follow. Ms. Regmi said that she thought it was straight forward so long as there are no material changes. If there are material changes, then a public hearing process would need to be followed. Ms. Regmi said that she would ask her manager for more information on the process and pass it along.

From: [Regmi, Anita@DWR](mailto:Regmi_Anita@DWR)
To: Bill Buelow
Cc: "[Lawler, Curtis \(curtis@stetsonengineers.com\)](mailto:Lawler, Curtis (curtis@stetsonengineers.com))"
Subject: RE: Status of wells in River Alluvium
Date: Thursday, April 01, 2021 7:50:37 AM

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Good morning Bill,

I would like to follow up on the topic discussed in the email below. We have been receiving inquiries related to the GSA's process of SGMA implementation and specifically regarding the subarea identified as River Alluvium. Therefore, it is even more important for us to understand the source of the River Alluvium boundary so that we can provide guidance to all interested parties. I am interested in knowing the data source of this boundary and who determined this boundary. I will appreciate a response.

Thank you.

Anita

Anita Regmi
DWR-Southern Region Office
Cell Phone: (818) 429-2414

From: Regmi, Anita@DWR
Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 10:27 AM
To: Bill Buelow <bbuelow@syrwcd.com>
Cc: 'Lawler, Curtis (curtis@stetsonengineers.com)' <curtis@stetsonengineers.com>
Subject: RE: Status of wells in River Alluvium

Good morning Bill,

I have a follow up request for information regarding the subareas where the wells are identified as River wells in the Santa Ynez River Valley groundwater basin. I reviewed the information available under the State Board on its Electronic Water Rights Information Management System which provides information about surface water diversions and wells with existing water rights. I have also reviewed the information pertaining to the River Alluvium Subarea from the draft HCM. I am trying to understand how the boundary of the subarea "River Alluvium" was drawn. Your email below says "It is well documented that wells in the River and River alluvium are under the jurisdiction of the State Water Resources Control Board". My recollection from one of the GSA meetings is that the River Alluvium boundary was drawn by the State Board. I will appreciate it if you could direct me to the document which discusses how the boundary is drawn. BTW, I also checked the reference made in HCM about the boundary in question, the referenced document does not discuss anything about the scientific or the legal basis of the boundary and about who created this boundary.

Thank you.

Anita

Anita Regmi
DWR-Southern Region Office
Cell Phone: (818) 429-2414

From: Regmi, Anita@DWR
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 9:54 AM
To: Bill Buelow <bbuelow@syrwcd.com>
Cc: 'Lawler, Curtis (curtisl@stetsonengineers.com)' <curtisl@stetsonengineers.com>
Subject: RE: Status of wells in River Alluvium

Good morning Bill,
Thank you for your email. The link you have provided below is helpful. The database and documents available through the link below shows that many of the water users in the Santa Ynez Valley Groundwater Basin have various types of water rights. The State Water Board and the state courts have authority to administer the water rights and they enforce water right laws. I will look into details to understand how the existing water rights address the groundwater in the Basin. SGMA does not change any of the existing water rights, therefore, I will dig further to understand if the area with existing water rights are exempt from management under SGMA. I will get back to you on this topic in near future.

Thank you.
Anita

Anita Regmi
DWR-Southern Region Office
Cell Phone: (818) 429-2414

From: Bill Buelow <bbuelow@syrwcd.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 5:32 PM
To: Regmi, Anita@DWR <Anita.Regmi@water.ca.gov>; 'Lawler, Curtis (curtisl@stetsonengineers.com)' <curtisl@stetsonengineers.com>
Subject: RE: Status of wells in River Alluvium

Hi Anita,

Thanks again for touching base with us on this matter. My apology for the delayed response, it has been a busy time for the three GSAs and the District.

The purpose of my email is to address your question during the last CMA meeting and follow-up email below relating to current data, data reporting, and well construction information for wells in the Santa Ynez River and Santa Ynez River alluvium (River). It is well documented that wells in the River and River alluvium are under the jurisdiction of the State Water Resources Control Board. As such, all applicable reporting data for the River, such as diversions, well locations, well construction data, maps, etc. are filed with the State Board (not the Regional Water Quality Control Board). The data is made publicly available by the State Board on its Electronic Water Rights Information Management System (referred to as "eWRIMs"). The eWRIMs system is very comprehensive and can be found at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/ewrims/.

As you know, under SGMA surface water is analyzed and handled differently than groundwater. The three GSAs are in the process of addressing both the River and Basin groundwater resources in accordance with the SGMA statute and implementing the SGMA regulations with the preparation of three GSPs.

We sincerely appreciate your follow-up and look forward to our ongoing work together.

Regards,
Bill

Bill Buelow, PG

BOARD TREASURER

GROUNDWATER PROGRAM MANAGER

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BBuelow@SYRWCD.com

From: Regmi, Anita@DWR <Anita.Regmi@water.ca.gov>

Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 11:05 AM

To: Bill Buelow <bbuelow@syrwcd.com>; 'Lawler, Curtis (curtisl@stetsonengineers.com)' <curtisl@stetsonengineers.com>

Subject: RE: Status of wells in River Alluvium

Hi Bill and Curtis,

Thank you for reaching out. As I mentioned in the meeting today, I would like to see the current data, how and where these data are being reported. If these data are being reported as surface water data to the regional water quality control board, please provide some information on the

program, water quality management plan (if any), and the well constructions (screen-interval) for the wells in question if possible.

Thank you.

Anita

Anita Regmi, P.G.
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From: Bill Buelow <bbuelow@syrwcd.com>
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:53 AM
To: Regmi, Anita@DWR <Anita.Regmi@water.ca.gov>
Cc: 'Lawler, Curtis (curtisl@stetsonengineers.com)' <curtisl@stetsonengineers.com>
Subject: Status of wells in River Alluvium

Anita,

Thanks for your comment during today's CMA meeting.

We would like to follow up with you regarding this topic at your earliest convenience.

Thanks,

Bill Buelow, PG

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