

**EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA  
CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP  
MEMORANDUM**

---

DATE: May 11, 2021

TO: EMA GSA Committee

FROM: EMA Citizen Advisory Group  
Prepared by Mary Heyden

SUBJECT: Draft Water Budget for the EMA and April 29, 2021 Presentation on Draft SMCs

---

**Eastern Management Area (EMA) Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Members**

Gay Infanti, Sam Cohen, Mary Heyden, Elizabeth Farnum, Tim Gorham, Kevin Merrill

**Introduction**

The EMA GSA Committee requested staff for the GSA agencies to coordinate meetings of the EMA CAG. Through a coordinated effort, the CAG held a meeting on May 11, 2021 via teleconference due to COVID-19 restrictions. The EMA CAG reviewed the Draft Water Budget for the EMA prepared by the consultant GSI and the presentation by GSI dated April 29, 2021 on Draft SMCs for the EMA.

Below is a summary of the CAG's comments.

**CAG Comments on the Draft Water Budget for the EMA:**

- Members of the CAG ask about the current total groundwater storage in the Basin. A bigger picture of the total storage capacity could be used to assess if the EMA is currently at critical groundwater levels.
- Members of the CAG opined that the future forecast of the EMA water budget is too optimistic, and the historical levels are no longer relevant due to climate change and drought issues effecting the amount of water coming into the Basin. Some members would like to develop water reserves in the Basin to carry through in times of drought.
- The CAG asked about the margin of error that can be expected in the current water budget calculations. Quantitatively, what is the confidence in the data? Is there a possibility that the historical 1800 AFY deficit may be overestimated? Some members of CAG estimate

that the Basin has been relatively sustainable for many years, with cycles of rain, normal and dry years. The Basin is robust and rebounds quickly. The future water budget already includes climate change data.

- All members of CAG agreed that one group of groundwater pumpers should not negatively impact the other “groups”, especially domestic pumpers.
- Members of the CAG discussed the possibilities of future recycled water with both the Solvang WWTP and proposed Los Olivos WWTP. A robust conversation ensued.
- Some CAG members discussed current “data gaps” and whether Minimum Thresholds should be less restrictive and more flexible.
- The CAG discussed how to move forward if some members do not feel comfortable with the draft water budget?
- It was also mentioned that the colors in Figure 3.48 (for example) were difficult to differentiate from each other. Would it be possible to incorporate percentage numbers to the list next to the graph?

Various additional comments were provided from members of the public that were in attendance, including a consultant representing the Santa Ynez Water Group. Below are several examples of the comments provided.

- Bryan Bondy, a hydrologist hired by the Santa Ynez Water Group had technical comments on the Water Budget.
  - Error or uncertainty is reasonably expected. SGMA requires to minimize uncertainty where possible.
  - The graphs of the groundwater storage and the groundwater levels in the 1980’s appear to be inconsistent. This could throw off the estimated historical deficit of the Basin’s inflows and outflows. The areas of uncertainty need to be clearly explained to the decision makers, as important decisions will be made on these numbers.
  - Will the NOAA letter to the EMA GSA be published on the Santa Ynez Water website? The last comments posted are from 2019.
- Steve Slack, from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, is concerned the GDE’s will not be addressed, as subterranean streams are not regulated by SGMA.

### **CAG Comments on the April 29, 2021 Presentation on Draft SMCs**

- The CAG discussed if there are any differences between the original and the revised documents.

- A CAG member asked if their comments regarding the different criteria needed for the two aquifers, the Careaga Sand and the Paso Robles formation, had been addressed? Solvang wells are already at the suggested Minimum Thresholds.
- Some CAG members discussed the need to have data supporting proposed Minimum Thresholds. The CAG suggested creating a chart of the representative wells and the depth of their top of screens. Especially if this is the criterion upon which the GSA will base the groundwater level MT.
- Bryan Bondy made a request to GSI to create a graph in cross-section view plotting the top and bottom of EMA well-screens with the historical low groundwater level. Mr. Bondy then asked, what the lowest water-level is before there are significant and undesirable results. Lows will happen episodically in drought conditions, and then there will be a rebound of groundwater levels in normal and wet times.
- The EMA Staff, Bill Buelow, Matt Young, Paeter Garcia and Matt van der Linden had no further comments.