

# REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

## Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eastern Management Area in the Santa Ynez River Groundwater Basin May 27, 2021

A Regular meeting of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Eastern Management Area (EMA) in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin was held on Thursday, May 27, 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 Officer Order.

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

Alternate GSA Committee Member Present: Cynthia Allen, Meighan Dietenhofer

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

Others Present: Steve Anderson, Jeff Barry (GSI Water Solutions), Mike Burchardi, Russell Chamberlin, Tim Gorham, Gay Infanti, Curtis Lawler (Stetson Engineers), Kevin Merrill, Tim Nicely (GSI Water Solutions), Steve Slack (CDFW), Eric Tambini, and two additional members of the public whose names were not registered.

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

GSA Committee Chair, Brett Marymee called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and asked Mr. Buelow to call roll. All GSA Committee Members were present.

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

Mr. Buelow announced names of phone and video 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. He recalled that during the last meeting, direction for Sustainable Management Criteria (SMCs) was provided by Committee Members. Thus far, the EMA GSA Committee has prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, a Data Management Plan, a Draft Hydrogeologic Conceptual Model including Groundwater Conditions, and a Draft Water Budget toward completing a Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and releasing the document for public review this summer followed with Public Hearings, then submitting a Final GSP to

the Department of Water Resources in January 2022. All documents are accessible on SantaYnezWater.org.

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

No additions or deletions were made.

**IV. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**V. Review and Consider Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the GSA Committee meetings on February 25, March 25, April 15, April 19, and May 13, 2021 were presented for GSA Committee approval. Discussion followed.

GSA Committee Member Brad Joos made a MOTION to approve the minutes of February 25, March 25, April 15, April 19 and May 13, 2021 as presented. GSA Committee Member Joan Hartmann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

**VI. Receive EMA GSA financial update and approve EMA Warrant Lists**

The GSA Committee reviewed the financial reports of FY 2020-21 Periods 1 through 9 (through March 31, 2021) and the Warrant List for January, February, and March 2021. Mr. Buelow noted that expenses were fully covered by the DWR Prop 1 Grant reimbursements received on behalf of the EMA GSA.

GSA Committee Member Brad Joos made a MOTION to approve the financial reports and the Warrant List for January, February, and March 2021 as presented (No. 1023-1028) totaling \$5,895.61. GSA Committee Member Brett Marymee seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

**VII. Receive Report from the EMA Citizens Advisory Group on the Draft Water Budget for the EMA**

Kevin Merrill reviewed the May 11, 2021 Memorandum prepared by Mary Heyden summarizing EMA Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) meeting held on May 11, 2021 regarding the Draft Water Budget for the EMA as well as the presentation by GSI dated April 29, 2021 on Draft SMCs for the EMA. The CAG Memo was included in the GSA Committee meeting packet.

Discussion followed.

**VIII. Receive Presentation from GSI on the Management Actions and Projects**

Mr. Jeff Barry and Mr. Tim Nicely (GSI Water Solutions) presented “Management Actions and Projects, Santa Ynez Basin - EMA, May 27, 2021” and reviewed the timeline of deliverables and meetings through January 2022.

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.

- Referencing slide 7, Committee Member Brett Marymee asked what would happen if a volunteer well located in a data gap area is added to the monitoring network. Mr. Barry explained that the consultants will start monitoring water levels in the volunteer well and it could be added to the monitoring well network. He also said that wells in the monitoring network will not be replaced unless a representative volunteer well drops out.
- Committee Member Mark Infanti asked if the EMA should address links to any possible CMA unfavorable conditions before setting Minimum Thresholds for the EMA? Mr. Barry explained that the groundwater flow from EMA to CMA will be addressed and that the EMA GSA has a responsibility to manage the EMA and not compromise downstream Management Areas by a significant and unreasonable reduction in groundwater flow from EMA.
- Referencing slide 10, Steve Slack (CDFW) asked if any Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs), including plants or trees in the area, have roots deeper than 30 feet. Mr. Barry explained that the consultants used data provided by DWR of potential GDE plants and trees present in this area to establish rooting depth needed and the consultants are confident that most plants and trees in area are supplied with water other than groundwater and rooting depth are less than 30 feet.
- Referencing slide 14, Committee Member Brett Marymee asked for clarification on possible Santa Barbara County grant funding for groundwater well meters to improve data of actual water use and asked if the funding would cover maintenance over time or only initial installation. Mr. Matt Young, Santa Barbara County Water Agency, explained that a grant funding program does not exist yet. It is in the planning stages and may possibly be a subsidy reimbursement program to cover initial installation costs and should be available county-wide. Establishment of this preliminary grant program will require Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors approval.
- Referencing slide 12, Committee Member Brett Marymee appreciated that the process includes quantifying benefits to the EMA versus costs, reliability, permit ability, and time to implement. He suggested considering a risk-based approach (risk versus impact), rate probability (low to high), and rate risk (low to high) to determine when to take action and what action is needed. Mr. Barry explained the difference between the approaches and will review a risk-based approach with the consultant team.

- Committee Member Brad Joos asked Mr. Young for clarification about the requirement for meters in the Cuyama Basin GSA. Mr. Young explained the processes attempted and history of certain events and clarified that the Cuyama Basin GSA ultimately voted to make meters mandatory for all groundwater users in their basin by the end of this year. Committee Member Joos suggested that mandatory meters may be the best solution for the EMA GSA as well.
- Referencing slide 7, Committee Member Joan Hartmann asked for clarification about undesirable results occurring when water levels fall below Minimum Thresholds after average and above average rainfall periods in 50% of representative wells over 2 consecutive years and what happens with a long-term drought or mega drought. Mr. Barry explained that SGMA takes drought conditions into consideration and states if the basin does not begin to recover, and groundwater levels do not return to or above minimum thresholds after rainfall resumes, then management actions may need to be implemented.
- Referencing slide 10, Committee Member Joan Hartmann asked if the undesirable result and Minimum Threshold for depletion of interconnected surface water refers to rain events. Mr. Barry clarified that undesirable results are from groundwater pumping not long-term drought.
- Referencing Potential Projects on slide 18, Committee Member Brett Marymee asked if consultants toured the Santa Ynez River Valley Basin and looked at actual flow of water? Mr. Barry explained that the Santa Ynez River mainstem is a highly regulated surface water source and that capturing water upstream in certain areas may be considered diverting surface water and could affect downstream users. So, to protect downstream water rights and beneficial uses, a potential stormwater capture and recharge project would be for off channel infiltration in the upland area far from the river alluvium and only to occur during high storm flow events.
  - Mr. Nicely added that the Draft Hydrogeologic Conceptual Model includes a map titled Potential Recharge Areas (Figure 3-17). Those mapped location should be areas of focus for stormwater capture and recharge.
- Committee Member Mark Infanti commented regarding a recycled water program project that the City of Solvang reviewed in connection with its water treatment plant and found it to be very expensive to produce recycled water; plus the City of Solvang would need infrastructure and piping to deliver recycled water to locations benefitting recharge to the City and EMA. Discussion followed.
  - He explained some alternate infrastructure ideas and asked if any financial assistance is available.
  - Committee Member Joan Hartmann advised that the State of California had plans for a water bond to aid in water efficiencies and conservation including potable reuse, but the bond was pulled back for this year. However, she expects it may be available next year. State of California budget lists \$5.1 billion for a water

infrastructure bond earmarked specifically for small or disadvantaged communities.

- Matt van der Linden, City of Solvang, commented that the City of Solvang Public Works Department is tracking grant funding and anticipates significant grant funding in the next few years for recycled water treatment and distribution.
- He added that in general stormwater capture projects tend to be less expensive than recycled water but if one looks at the benefit/cost analysis then the higher monies spent on recycled water projects produce a better benefits ratio.
- Committee Member Joan Hartmann suggested, although controversial, a potential project of exploring conservation water pricing to offer incentives through pricing so that if one has more than the “reasonable” use then tiered pricing increases. She pointed out that the Irvine Water District and others in Orange County have done this to some success. She offered to provide information to consultants.
- Mr. Young emphasized that the Potential Projects is only a potential list and Management Actions are only proposed management actions which were compiled by consultants and staff in order to gather feedback from Committee members and stakeholders on what they deem reasonable for this area.
- Committee Member Joan Hartmann commented about programs with adding compost on agricultural land may help lower carbon emissions but also holds moisture and creates drought resistant soil. There is a lot of discussion at the state level about potentially paying farmers to do this and would be beneficial for this area.
- Tim Gorham commented regarding water conservation that it is worthy to note the City of Santa Barbara was able to reduce water consumption by 30% from promoting water conservation. He pointed out that local water users may not actually be conservative with water use and that local municipal boards may not have promoted conservation efforts. His local water board is currently discussing ways to promote voluntary water conservation.
  - Committee Member Joan Hartmann agreed that water conservation should be one of our potential projects and be more aggressive with conservation.
  - Mr. Barry pointed out water conservation falls under the Potential Management Action listed as “Promote Water Efficiency Program” and could be implemented right away.
- Kevin Merrill suggested looking at successful methods used by other areas like storing water in one place and piping it when needed to another area.
- Discussion continued about potential projects and management actions.

**IX. Next “Special” EMA GSA Meeting: Thursday, June 24, 2021, 6:30 PM**

Committee members unanimously agreed to availability for this special meeting.

**X. Next “Regular” EMA GSA Meeting: Thursday, August 26, 2021, 6:30 PM**

Committee members unanimously agreed to availability for this special meeting.

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

Mr. Buelow thanked Kevin Merrill for writing an article for the Santa Ynez Valley News’ May 18, 2021 edition regarding the SGMA efforts.

Committee Member Mark Infanti thanked consultants for the Next Steps calendar slide in the presentation.

Committee Member Joan Hartmann thanked everyone, especially consultants and staff, for how well they have worked together through difficult and sometimes contentious issues and discussions.

Committee Member Brett Marymee suggested that the next SGMA Newsletter include promoting the EMA GSA’s need for well information in the areas determined to have a data gap and promote the benefits of being part of the monitoring network. Mr. Buelow replied that can be added to a newsletter. Mr. Tim Nicely advised he can provide a map showing where monitoring wells are needed in the EMA and will work with Mr. Buelow on that.

Committee Member Brett Marymee also asked for clarification on “mega drought” and if the Santa Ynez Basin could be headed toward one. He referenced the unusual heatwave of June 17, 1859. Discussion followed.

Committee Member Brad Joos commented he is pleased with today’s discussion and feels the Committee has done a good job being responsible with setting minimum thresholds. He likes the initial proposed management actions discussed and in order to manage fairly, he suggests there is a need to register and meter every well in the basin.

Alternate Committee Member Dietenhofer announced that she attended the Central Management Area (CMA) and the Western Management Area (WMA) meetings when the GSA Committees discussed and provided guidance on Minimum Threshold levels. She said both CMA and WMA GSA Committees set conservative levels for Minimum Thresholds as did the EMA GSA.

**XII. Adjournment**

There being no further business, GSA Committee Member Marymee adjourned the meeting at 8:20 PM.

  
Brett Marymee, Chairman

  
William J. Buelow, Secretary

**GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY FOR THE EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA (EMA)  
IN THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN**

**JANUARY 2021 WARRANT LIST FOR COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PAYEE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
1023	01/13/21	Bartlett, Pringle & Wolf	Consulting - Grant Financial	\$ 187.50
1024	01/13/21	Stetson Engineers	November 2020 Engineering Service (Basin Coordination)	\$ 1,202.61
1025	01/13/21	Valley Bookkeeping	2020 4th Quarter Bookkeeping (Oct., Nov., Dec. 2020)	\$ 150.00
<b>MONTH TOTAL</b>				<b>\$ 1,540.11</b>

**FEBRUARY 2021 WARRANT LIST FOR COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PAYEE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
1026	02/16/21	Stetson Engineers	December 2020 Engineering Service (Basin Coordination)	\$ 810.75
<b>MONTH TOTAL</b>				<b>\$ 810.75</b>

**MARCH 2021 WARRANT LIST FOR COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PAYEE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
1027	03/31/21	Stetson Engineers	January 2021 Engineering Service (Basin Coordination)	\$ 3,394.75
1028	03/31/21	Valley Bookkeeping	2021 1st Quarter Bookkeeping (January, February, March 2021)	\$ 150.00
<b>MONTH TOTAL</b>				<b>\$ 3,544.75</b>

**TOTAL THIS QUARTER: \$ 5,895.61**

**EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA  
CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP  
MEMORANDUM**

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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

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**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.