

**Siskiyou County Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Butte Valley Advisory Committee Meeting
MEETING SUMMARY – 2/25/2021**

Meeting date/time: February 25, 2021/ 3:00 – 6:00 pm

Location: Zoom Online Platform

Key contacts:

-Matt Parker, County Natural Resources Specialist, mparker@co.siskiyou.ca.us 530.842.8019

-Katie Duncan, Stantec Consulting – Facilitator. katie.duncan@stantec.com 916-418-8245

-Laura Foglia PhD, U.C. Davis Technical Team Lead, lfoglia@ucdavis.edu 530.219.5692

MEETING RECAP

- **Approval of Past Meeting Summary.** The committee approved its January meeting summary for posting on the Siskiyou County SGMA website.
- **Public Comment:** No public comments were made during the initial public comment period.
- **District Staff and Other Announcements:** Matt Parker provided an update regarding amendment submitted to the Board concerning process to replace AC members. Matt Parker also provided an update on the Legal Counsel RFQ.
- **Review of Chapter 3 Water Quality and Subsidence Sections:** The Technical Team is in the process of incorporating Advisory Committee comments into the Chapter. The Advisory Committee provided further comments then conditionally approved the chapter sections to be posted for public review.
- **Presentation and Discussion of Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs):** Bill Rice presented proposed approach to Butte Valley GDEs. The Technical Team indicated they would like Advisory Committee input in areas of the Valley for incorporation or exclusion of certain areas in GSP GDEs.
- **Presentation and Discussion of Potential Project Management Actions in Butte Valley:** Thomas Harter presented proposed approach for PMAs. Many comments were provided for consideration. A formal write-up of the PMAs was requested of the Technical Team.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Status/Deadline</i>
Technical team to look at spring classifications and consideration in GDE monitoring.	Technical Team	Completed
Technical Team to follow-up with AC members and public members on specific GDE feedback	Technical Team	Completed
Matt Parker to coordinate with CDFW and Butte WLA to discuss GDE classification.	Matt Parker	Completed
Technical team to complete full write-up of proposed PMAs	Technical Team	Completed
Pat Vellines to follow-up with DWR on Prop 68 funding	Pat Vellines	Completed 2/26/2021
Draft Chapter 3 provided to Public for Review	Technical Team, Matt Parker, Public	Completed 3/2/2021

Next Meeting: April 29, 2021/ 3:00 – 6:00 pm. Due to current circumstances surrounding COVID -19 the meeting will again be held online with Zoom technology.

View [Siskiyou County's groundwater website](#) for posted meeting materials.

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Call to Order, Agenda Review

The Facilitator introduced herself and welcomed all to the meeting. She reviewed the virtual meeting platform procedures and called the meeting to order.

The Facilitator then reviewed the meeting agenda. No questions or comments were offered by the attendees on the agenda as proposed.

Review/Approval of Past Meeting Summary

The Facilitator reviewed the previous meeting summary and obtained approval to post the previous meeting summary to the County website.

Review Action Items

The Facilitator reviewed Action Items from the previous AC meeting and provided a status update for each.

Public Comment Period

At the outset, members of the public may comment on items not on the consent agenda. The public is asked to wait until the appropriate item to comment on issues directly related the current meeting agenda. No comments were provided.

District Staff Updates and Other Announcements

- Matt Parker provided an update on the status of the Legal Counsel RFQ and indicated there would be a recommendation for the Board, which would be disclosed following approval.
- Matt Parker also discussed that the Board would be taking action to update the Advisory Committee Charters to allow for a more efficient process to replace Advisory Committee members if necessary.

Review of Chapter 3 Water Quality and Subsidence Sections

The Facilitator indicated that many comments had been submitted by the Advisory Committee and those comments had been reviewed. There will be time for public review of draft sections after the Advisory Committee provides permission for conditional approval and draft sections are posted for public review.

Advisory Committee asked how they could view other comments submitted by other members. The Facilitator indicated that a comment response matrix is being created. The technical team will review and respond to Advisory Committee comments and provide them for viewing. The Advisory Committee expressed frustration that there was not a more formalized comment-

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response process and would like to see others' comments and how they are addressed moving forward.

The Advisory Committee provided approval for draft Chapter 3 sections to be posted to the County website for public review.

Presentation and Discussion of Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs) in Butte Valley

The technical team opened the GDE presentation by defining GDEs. Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems are areas of vegetation or other habitats dependent on groundwater. GDEs exclude drainage ditches and man-made features or areas from the definition.

There are two ways to classify GDEs, either plant communities or areas that are dependent on surface water - groundwater interaction. Butte Valley does not include areas where surface water habitats depend on groundwater. Only vegetative communities will be considered for the GDE analysis. If lowering of groundwater levels would negatively impact a specific vegetative community, then the minimum threshold (MT) for the water level SMC would be defined accordingly and appropriate projects or management actions (PMAs) may be needed.

The following methodology was applied for GDE analysis:

1. Mapping of Potential GDEs – the technical team started with The Nature Conservancy's dataset indicating potential GDEs, added local data sets indicated groundwater levels, and compared both data sets. This process formalizes the GDE list.
2. Analysis of Vegetation Rooting Zone Depths – The technical team assessed feasibility of root zone requirements of the potential GDEs in Butte Valley.
3. Depth to Groundwater – The technical team implemented grid and point-based analysis. Based on seasonal water levels, the technical team assessed plant communities' proximity to well zones. The technical team then used a time-series analysis (showing a range of data including wet and dry years, which corresponds with Butte Valley data) to analyze depth to groundwater.
4. Evaluate Relationship Between Rooting Zone and Groundwater Depth
5. Potential GDE Consideration – The technical team reviewed basin maps and potential GDE locations and asked for Advisory Committee input.
6. Defining GDEs for inclusion in GSP

The group discussed the classification of Butte Valley Wildlife Area (Butte WLA). The technical team has not considered Butte WLA a GDE because it is a man-made wetland that depends on groundwater pumping. The group discussed that this classification should be discussed offline. Matt Parker will coordinate with CDFW and Patrick Graham to discuss this issue further.

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The group discussed why springs were included in the water level definition. The technical team indicated that springs were used as an additional data point to indicate water levels just outside the Basin margins. These were used together with water level data within the Basin to develop a depth to water table map and interpolate water levels within Butte Valley, not to define GDEs. Not all springs utilized were in the Basin. The group expressed uncertainty on this applied methodology and provided some anecdotal information. The technical team is following-up on these concerns.

The group provided feedback and local knowledge regarding GDEs in the basin. The group decided it would be most beneficial for the technical team to follow-up with individual participants in order to define GDEs in Butte Valley.

Presentation and Discussion of Potential Project Management Actions in Butte Valley

The technical team presented potential Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) that could be implemented to achieve sustainability in the basin. PMAs need to be clearly articulated within the GSP so agencies can take action. PMAs can be categorized as existing, proposed, or to be evaluated in the future.

The technical team review proposed PMAs including a cap on consumptive water use, potential recharge projects, increased irrigation efficiency, changes in irrigation practices, and upland management.

Implementing these PMAs would help the basin meet sustainable management criteria (SMC) thresholds and would serve as a guide for the GSA to implement voluntary measures prior to groundwater levels falling below the MT. If the basin is in a position where the minimum threshold is being exceeded consistently, these measures would become mandatory. Given the data, the technical team does not anticipate there to be a situation in the foreseeable future where the MT would be exceeded. There is time, given this rate of decline, to implement corrective measures.

The group discussed the PMA – No expansion of basin-wide net groundwater pumping. This PMA is proposed to stabilize current pumping levels. It does not limit expansion of activities but looks at net changes in groundwater usage.

The group discussed the proposed “soft landing” approach to achieving sustainable groundwater levels in the basin. The technical team discussed how this approach may affect domestic wells. Avoidance of undesirable results would require water levels to stabilize at current levels, levels cannot fall more than about 10’ from current levels.

The group discussed the feasibility of a payment program for well outages. The technical team indicated that a funding mechanism had not yet been identified and asked Pat Vellines of DWR to see if Prop 68 funding could be applied for this time of management.

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The group discussed how activities and pumping outside of the basin boundaries affect and impact management within the basin. The technical team indicated that a PMA related to the connectivity of the basin to its surrounding watershed and land use zoning could be considered by the GSA.

The group discussed the use of multi-year averages when setting thresholds and defining actions.

The group expressed concern regarding mandatory actions and “water policing”. The facilitator emphasized that neither PMAs nor SMCs are intended to be alarmist. Matt Parker added that the GSA has no intention of being “water police” and emphasized that this is meant to be a collaborative effort that empowers local action and control. The plan will define triggers that will indicate when voluntary measures and incentives should be implemented to ensure sustainability. Flexibility has been built into the working procedure.

The group discussed the potential need to idle land in the basin as an action to meet net groundwater usage goals. The group discussed how the model accounts for different land use types (active fields vs. cover crop vs. idle) and discussed how land use changes should be taken into account to appropriately quantify basin wide ET.

The Advisory Committee requested that the technical team write-up the PMAs in more detail and provide them time to consider and review the proposed actions. The Advisory Committee and public participants expressed frustration in not having enough information and requested additional materials to be provided ahead of the meetings.

Matt Parker reminded the group that the goal is for the GSP to be written in an adaptive manner and language can be included in the GSP to express flexibility and local control. The technical team echoed Matt’s message and reminded the group that 5-year updates provide opportunity to consider additional data and refine thresholds and goals. The Facilitator emphasized that DWR wants the GSA to have local control and for decisions to be made at the local level.

Meeting Adjourns

The Facilitator thanked all for participating and adjourned the meeting.

MEETING ATTENDEES

Advisory Committee Members

Richard Nelson, Private Pumper
Don Bowen, Residential
Carol Mckay, City of Dorris
Don Crawford, Private Pumper
Patrick Graham, CDFW Butte Valley Wildlife Refuge
Steve Albaugh, Private Pumper
Jeff Volberg, Environmental/Conservation

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Absent Committee Members

Howard Wynant, Tribal Representative
Greg Herman, Private Pumper
Steve Lutz, Butte Valley Irrigation District

District Staff

Matt Parker, County of Siskiyou Natural Resources Specialist

Technical Team

Dr. Laura Foglia, UC Davis/Larry Walker Associates
Dr. Thomas Harter, UC Davis
Bill Rice, UC Davis
Ethan Brown, Shasta Resource Conservation District

Agency Staff

Janae Scruggs, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Pat Vellines, Department of Water Resources
Drew, Stroberg, US Forest Service

Facilitator

Katie Duncan, Stantec
Elizabeth Simon, Stantec

Members of the public

Eric Levesque
John Bennett
TBD