

Siskiyou County Sustainable Groundwater Management
Butte Valley Advisory Committee Meeting
Draft Meeting Summary

August 30, 2023, 3:00 – 6:00 P.M.
In-person only at the Dorris City Hall

Action Items:

- Randy Jertberg to provide references to the studies he referenced, regarding the efficacy of juniper removal, for Angelina Cook and others as requested.
- Any members of the Committee or public should notify Bill Rice at Larry Walker and Associates (LWA) if they are aware of an existing well in the Mt. Hebron area at around 100 feet deep.
- Randy Jertberg to follow up with Matt Parker to support efforts to connect with uplands management project proponents in the area.

Attachments/Links:

- PowerPoint Presentation Slides (attached)

Attendees: see last page

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. Call to Order, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Matt Parker, Siskiyou County Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) staff, welcomed attendees and Chair Richard Nelson conducted a roll call to establish quorum. Steve Lutz shared that Greg Herman, absent from the meeting, moved to Montana and his seat should be considered vacant. Marisa Perez-Reyes, Facilitator, reviewed the Agenda and called attention to virtual, listen-only attendees. Attendance is provided on the last page.

2. Approval of Past Meeting Summaries

Chair Nelson presented the January 25, 2023 meeting summary for the Committee's approval and noted that because quorum was not met at the April 26 meeting, no formal summary exists. Notes on the presentations and discussions that took place during the April meeting time are recorded, and Committee Members were invited to provide corrections.

3. Public Comment Period on Non-Agenda Items

Members of the public and representatives from other agencies were invited to provide comments unrelated to meeting agenda items and updates from their agencies, respectively.

Steve Burton, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), shared about CDFW's groundwater pumping rates for the wildlife area. The well in the southeast corner of the area pumps between 300-500 gallons per minute (gpm). He sent a follow-up email to clarify that three other wells on the southern boundary of the area pump about 3,500 gpm between mid-July and November/early December.

Mike Sandahl, CDFW, shared that he has filled Pat Graham's position.

4. DWR Updates

The new DWR point of contact, Alyse Briody, introduced themselves and provided the following updates:

- Work to install the monitoring well at the Butte Valley Airport is anticipated to start in September.
- Michelle Dooley is still acting Regional Coordinator until Pat Vellines' position is filled later this year.
- Draft awards for the DWR Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Implementation Round 2 grant were announced in May. Final grant awards are anticipated to be announced in September. The process of executing the contract will begin in October.
- It is estimated that a determination on the Butte Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) will be reached by October.

5. District Staff Updates

Matt Parker shared GSA updates, including:

- Contracting documents for the monitoring well paid for and installed by DWR, through an agreement with the County, will go before the Board on Tuesday, after which they are cleared to start. They were able to locate a driller based in Woodland, Eaton contractors, to do the work. Randy Jertberg commented that they're good drillers.

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- Vacancies on the Committee include the Tribal, Environmental/Conservation, Municipal (City of Dorris) seats, though the City of Dorris just hired a new staff person who will be able to join the Committee after they are settled. Matt will reach out to Greg Herman to confirm if his seat is also vacant. Matt shared that although he has reached out to Ducks Unlimited regarding the Environmental/Conservation seat, they are based in Sacramento and travel would be difficult. California Waterfowl Association is another option.
- The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has initiated a process to establish minimum instream flows for the Scott and Shasta Rivers in response to a petition issued by the Karuk Tribe, Environmental Law Foundation, and Pacific Coast Fisheries. Matt shared that this was a point of discussion at yesterday's Scott Valley meeting and is on the agenda for tomorrow's Shasta Valley Advisory Committee meeting.
 - Richard acknowledged that Butte Valley doesn't have river flow but asked for Matt to share lessons learned from this process. Matt said they've learned the value of increasing data collection and transparency in sharing that data with the public. He also highlighted the cooperation between agricultural and environmental interests.
 - The Advisory Committee held clarifying discussion on the role of the State Water Resources Control Board in regulating water and the consequences for GSPs that are determined to be inadequate by DWR.

6. Committee Discussion on Updated Draft Well Permitting Process

Rick Dean, Community Development Director at Siskiyou County Department of Environmental Health, and Matt shared an overview of the changes that are being made to Siskiyou County's draft well permitting process, including:

- Detailed description and clarification of "de minimus" domestic and/or stockwater wells,
- Updated definitions and clarification of replacement, emergency, and deepening wells,
- Evaluation matrices, including a table to evaluate impacts to "nearby" wells which correlate gallons per minute to distance from wells. Matrices also include mapping to show transmittal times for public trust, which is relevant for other parts of the County.

The County is proposing a robust technical approach to make the determination on whether the wells would cause effects, and that could eventually circumvent the certified hydrogeologist.

Rick and Matt clarified and shared the following:

- "Neighboring wells" are not defined by range, and are instead considered to be the closest existing wells to an area in question.
- Countywide, fewer than ten production well applications have been received since March 2022.
- Deepening or replacing a well would require a permit. Cleaning out an existing well can be considered basic maintenance and does not require a permit.
- Data collection for groundwater level monitoring will occur next week and be shared at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

The Committee discussed the evaluation matrix approach.

- Don Crawford raised concerns that the County would have a very difficult time to prove installing a new well wouldn't have a negative impact.
 - Laura Foglia, LWA, contextualized that replacing an existing well, at the same production capacity, would be one for one. Increasing irrigated acreage is really the biggest problem, and is something that they would need to evaluate carefully as a GSP.
- A Committee member asked if the new matrix will be sufficient to stand up to challenges, to which Rick replied the County would find out. They do think they can establish whether a well will increase consumptive use or not. Richard expressed strong interest in making development of the evaluation matrix a very high priority, given the timeliness of the issue.
- Rick shared that the Department of Environmental Health would likely maintain the existing well permit application fee. Matt said any additional cost depends on the availability of the evaluation matrices. He remarked that the basins under SGMA (Scott Valley, Butte Valley, Shasta Valley, and Tulelake) can be considered fortunate relative to other areas of the County because they have existing groundwater models and grant funds to maintain them, which are key to developing the evaluation matrices.
- Laura compared the up-front evaluation approach to that of other Counties where they are having applicants drill their new well, test it, and potentially abandon or destroy it.
- Craig Moyle, Stantec, asked for clarification on how the County and GSA will make sure the matrix analysis doesn't default to "first in time, first in right" determinations.

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- Conflicts with the first in time consideration are inherent in this process, and it's not clear that the hydrogeologic assessment approach will turn out to be better. No matter which method is used, there will be shortcomings.

Janae Scruggs commented that she thinks the Public Trust Doctrine will apply in the Butte Valley basin. She said that Rick and Matt should look at CDFW's comment letter from the GSP.

Angelina asked whether wells in Butte Valley could impact the Shasta Valley or Tulelake basins. Laura said the existing model domain does not track impacts at that distance.

Richard asked about wells that provide both production and drinking water. Rick said that wells that provide drinking water should be registered with DWR and should be running the associated tests.

Steve Burton later shared a document with information about a 1998 study conducted by DWR related to well interference in the area.

7. Break

The Advisory Committee took a ten-minute break and reconvened at 4:15. Committee Member Steve Burton left the meeting during this item.

8. Presentation on Basin Conditions and the DWR SGM Round 2 Grant Award

Laura shared a presentation on basin conditions, model updates, and the draft DWR SGM Round 2 grant award, and introduced a new colleague, Olin Applegate. See attached PowerPoint.

- **SGM Implementation Grant.** Butte Valley received a little over \$4 million in grant funds to spend through 2026, though this amount may be reduced in the final awards anticipated in September. Given the volume of work that needs to be accomplished, the technical team proposed convening ad hoc meetings to supplement the quarterly Advisory Committee schedule. Members of the Committee and the public were encouraged to sign up to participate in ad hoc groups, which would meet and then report out at full group meetings. See PowerPoint slides for more details. Projects include:
 - SGMA Compliance and GSP Updates. On this note, Matt offered to send DWR's comments on the Scott and Shasta Valley GSPs to give the Committee Members an idea of what they might expect to see for this basin's determination.
 - Fee study. The approach for this will be shared across the three basins. A Committee Member mentioned the possibility for water markets.
 - Well inventory. Laura noted that they would likely put out a survey and convene a working group across the three subbasins to strategize the outreach approach.
 - Monitoring. Includes voluntary flow meters and improving the existing gauge at Butte Creek.
 - Recharge. Includes western juniper removal study or pilot project to demonstrate that it works in this basin specifically. Laura clarified that upland management is provided under the recharge feasibility studies, but actual juniper removal is not.
 - Randy contended that there are already existing studies that confirm the efficacy of juniper removal. Angelina asked Randy to share those studies with her, which he volunteered to do.

Laura noted that irrigation efficiency wasn't funded in any of the three basins, and that it is difficult for DWR to justify improvements for individual property owners. Laura was recommended by others to use this money as matching funds and apply for other grants from entities like the Bureau of Reclamation to do the work. Laura shared that Giuliano from the UC Cooperative Extension left their position, and they're rehiring for it. Matt mentioned that some in Scott Valley have put together data on irrigation efficiency with the goal of using that to provide justification for grant funds.

- **Monitoring.** Laura shared that an updated water budget will be presented at the October meeting. Bill Rice is looking for an existing well in the Mt. Hebron area, around 100 feet deep, and anyone should contact him if they know of one. Laura provided an update on the well survey results. Twenty total responses have been received and five site visits have been completed for wells that need rehabilitation or replacement. LWA has identified a driller to complete the work. She reported that understanding where dry wells are appearing has been very helpful for verifying the model and to see that people in the area are responsive and interested in engaging.
- **Butte Model Update.** LWA are developing a new approach to estimate agricultural water use in Scott Valley that will make it easier to update on a more monthly basis. They also incorporated all of the airborne electromagnetic (AEM) survey data to update the geological model. There were several differences in the location of bedrock.
 - Richard asked whether the model ever shown the basin's water budget. Laura replied that in updating the larger watershed model, they hope to get to the bottom of some of these questions. For example, the contribution from Mount Shasta. Geochemistry will help trace that as well.

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- Richrd suggested that Mt Shasta’s historic snowpack levels may correlate to groundwater in Butte Valley. Laura agreed it’s a good question to explore. Richard referenced the cloud seeding idea he shared at an earlier Advisory Committee meeting.

9. Updates on Groundwater Related Projects

a. Dry Well Surveys – Laura Foglia

Laura shared about the dry well surveys, see Presentation slide.

b. Harland Project – USFS

At an earlier Advisory Committee meeting, it had been suggested that the Committee coordinate with the U.S. Forest Service regarding the Harland Project, which Randy indicated he could support. In the interim time, Matt has reached out to contacts at the USFS, with no response. Randy also shared that he has not had recent contact with the people associated with that project. Matt recommended a Committee Member be designated to help coordinate with projects across the County related to uplands management. Randy affirmed he could fill that role.

Steve Lutz mentioned a portable cogeneration project in the area. He wasn’t certain of whether it would go forward or who the project sponsor is.

10. Open Committee Member Discussion

Chair Nelson facilitated discussion among the Committee Members to reflect on the day’s discussions and presentations.

Richard asked about whether studies have been undergone to quantify the impact of winter 2022-2023 precipitation and the reformation of Tulare Lake on recharging over-drafted groundwater basins in the Central Valley. He posited that documentation of groundwater recharge there might lend support for using earthen dams in this Valley to recharge groundwater. Laura explained that diversion of surface water within the valley isn’t an option, so you would be having to look outside the valley, store it, and send it through later in the year, but that kind of work could be considered.

Richard asked whether it would be possible to receive financial updates from the GSA. Matt replied that DWR’s reimbursement timeline would make timely updates difficult to track, but offered to share quarterly progress reports.

Angelina asked whether, by the end of the grant, they will achieve the benefits they identified in the GSP. Laura indicated that the GSP update will provide that evaluation.

11. Closing, Action Items, and Future Agenda Items

At the time of this meeting, the date for the next Butte Valley Advisory Committee meeting was scheduled for October 25. It was later updated to October 24. Items for the Agenda are anticipated to include:

- Update on Strategy Document and new facilitation support activities,
- Fee study,
- Updates on geology, and
- Updated information on water use for 2023.

12. Adjourn, Schedule Ad Hoc Groups

The meeting adjourned by 6:00 P.M. and Committee Members signed up to participate in ad hoc meetings on certain grant component-related topics. The following members volunteered for groups as follows:

- Monitoring network expansion (data gaps)
 - Richard Nelson
 - Don Crawford
- Groundwater recharge opportunities
 - Randy Jertberg
 - Steve Lutz
 - Don Crawford
 - Mike Sandahl, CDFW

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MEETING PARTICIPANTS:

* online, listen-only participants

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Don Crawford
Randy Jertberg
Richard Nelson (Chair)
Steve Burton – left early, during Agenda Item 7
Steve Lutz

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Don Bowen (Vice-Chair)
Greg Herman

Agency Staff and Members of the Public:

Alyse Briody, California Department of Water Resources, Northern Region Office
Angelina Cook, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
Hailey Lang, Department of Environmental Health, County of Siskiyou
Janae Scruggs, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Linda Söller, UC Davis
Mike Sandahl, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Rick Dean, Community Development, Department of Environmental Health, County of Siskiyou
*Philip Cramer, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Project Team:

Matt Parker, GSA staff
Marisa Perez-Reyes, Stantec
Craig Moyle, Stantec
Laura Foglia, Larry Walker and Associates
Olin Applegate, Larry Walker and Associates