

Siskiyou County Sustainable Groundwater Management  
**Scott Valley Advisory Committee Meeting**  
Draft Meeting Summary

August 29, 2023, 3:00 – 6:00 P.M.  
In-person only at the Fort Jones Community Hall

**Action Items:**

- Larry Walker and Associates (LWA) to hold a refresher workshop or webinar on the Scott Valley groundwater model. Following the refresher, members of the Advisory Committee (at a regular meeting or in an ad hoc group) are to discuss and develop a statement of locally supported agreements to submit to the State Water Board regarding the proposed instream flow process.
- Laura Foglia, LWA, to provide follow up details on the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) SGM Round 2 grant application to Charnna and others as requested.
- LWA to provide three-dimensional/visual representation model of the basin to Michael Stapleton and others as requested.

**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 Tom Menne conducted a roll call to establish quorum. 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 Menne presented the January 24, 2023 meeting summary for the Committee's approval and noted that because quorum was not met at the April 25 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. No corrections were made and the January summary was approved.

**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. There were no public comments.

**4. DWR Updates**

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

- The Regional Coordinator position previously held by Pat Vellines has not been filled yet. Alyse is taking on Point of Contact duties.
- Draft awards for the DWR 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.

**5. District Staff Updates**

Matt Parker shared that there are no GSA updates beyond the items that will be covered in this Agenda.

**6. Committee Discussion on the State Water Board's Process for Establishing Minimum Instream Flows for the Scott and Shasta Rivers**

Matt provided information on the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) meeting on August 15 regarding the establishment of minimum instream flows for the Scott and Shasta Rivers and invited members of the Committee to advise the GSA Board on their role in that process.

Tom Menne said the GSA should be closely involved in the process, particularly in Scott Valley. He and Brandon Fawaz expressed frustration that the petition for minimum instream flows seems to contradict with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act's (SGMA) 20-year timeline.

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Members of the Committee suggested the Water Board members should be better educated on the GSP and that the GSA should have more representation on the flow calls. Members on the Committee shared examples of how they feel that members and staff of the State Water Board could be better informed, including topics like Scott Valley's decree, groundwater modeling, and local monitoring. Tom and Theo Johnson called attention to remarks from several members of the State Water Board that seemed to indicate they were misunderstanding about the local cooperative solutions. Committee Members suggested the GSA Board educate the State Water Board about what is in the Scott Valley GSP, what the GSA is doing, and what work has taken place in the past 5-8 years (including irrigation efficiencies that have been achieved).

In response to a question from Charnna Gilmore about whether the GSP's flow targets exceed the baseline flow in the emergency regulations, Matt replied that the GSP does not include a flow target, but does include a streamflow reduction reversal goal. Charnna asked whether there is a scientific basis for why the State Water Board would find the GSA's efforts to improve streamflow conditions to be lacking at this stage of GSP implementation.

Theo asked if the GSA could coordinate with the State Water Board on a government-to-government level. Matt shared that they have weekly coordination meetings (but not policy discussions) on regulations. In response to whether the GSA could work directly with the Water Board's five board members in addition to its staff, Matt replied that they could, and shared hope that they could streamline some of the various efforts happening in different places.

The group expressed consensus that the Scott Valley groundwater model is representative of the best available science. Members urged the State to work within the locally established framework. Brandon stated that no matter how much the basin pumped or didn't pump last year, the Scott River was never going to maintain the State Water Board's desired flow.

Members of the Committee observed that the State Water Board is using instream flow as their target, but what they really want is fish. They suggested a role for the County in supplementing with other metrics that can help achieve the desired results, besides streamflow.

- Sarah Schaefer, Quartz Valley Indian Reservation, noted that although flows don't guarantee fish, they do seem to be the limiting factor. Every single year, the Tribe deals with dead Coho, yet the ditches are flowing. She also brought up contamination issues related to the presence of E. coli in the Tribe's water source that appears when agricultural ditches are running. She suggested engaging local fisheries and geomorphology experts in the instream flows conversation.

The Committee discussed approaches for engaging State Water Board staff when they visit Siskiyou County. Some members of the Committee were able to participate in a tour that State Water Board staff participated in, but others were not invited. There was a suggestion that the Advisory Committee could host State Water Board staff together as a group, so that no beneficial user group is unrepresented in such tours. The Committee discussed whether the GSA should facilitate a multi-representative group to meet with the State Water Board when they are in town or whether the Advisory Committee itself should host them. Laura called attention to a challenge, which is that different people from the Water Board visit each time, and they need to really make sure the right people are in the room. Such an event would either need to be a special Advisory Committee meeting (due to quorum), or there would need to be a subcommittee of four or fewer that handles communications with the State Water Board and its staff.

Sari Sommarstrom noted that UC Davis is studying the effectiveness of local cooperative solutions from last year, and that may be a good topic for future Advisory Committee meetings or flow discussions. She highlighted another study by Eli Asarian on the same topic, using a different methodology.

Angelina Cook, member of the public, highlighted that the petition pertains to dewatering rivers, and it's clear that more needs to be done. Sarah built on Angelina's point, adding that sharing data, not just putting together models, would show good intention. She raised the topics of meters, which appear to be coming. Michael Stapleton, Tom, and Brandon offered thoughts on why meters could be challenging to install and maintain. Beyond the cost of installation, Brandon said maintaining the meter and reporting the data would take up to one third of his time. The problem wouldn't be the meter's read-outs, but the bureaucratic reporting mechanisms. Michael acknowledged why the 20-year SGMA timeframe is problematic for guaranteeing the fish population, which is stressed in the present. Tom said he thinks the problem has less to do with increasing ag pumping and more to do with drier winters over time. Tom said the agricultural footprint in Scott Valley is smaller than it used to be in prior decades, and that they have probably reduced their pumping due to the use of the pivots. He thinks the correlation between river flow and farming isn't as strong as people are saying.

In regards to the role of the County, Brandon suggested a serious discussion needs to be had on uplands management, given the relative scale of the Valley floor to the sides of the "bathtub." Matt acknowledged future work needs to be done with the U.S. Forest Service, and that is something the County Board of Supervisors plans to discuss.

Charnna said it's more likely that climate change will put ranchers out of business before regulations do. She encouraged the Committee to contend with whether the basin is changing to the degree that is needed, particularly for achieving

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equity among communities, Tribes, and fish. Charnna urged the Committee to consider the value of regulation playing a role in Scott Valley, because it is very difficult for self-regulation to work and be sustainable.

Tom pointed to Dr. Harter's groundwater model which says that in an extreme drought, there's nothing that can be done to meet the State Water Board's minimum instream flow targets. Laura confirmed that even if no farming or groundwater pumping were to take place for 20 years, the model predicts that flows in the river still wouldn't meet the proposed target in the current climate. Agricultural products would be replaced with native vegetation that still contribute to evapotranspiration.

- Charnna requested a refresher presentation on the model, because this point doesn't match what she remembers of the Committee's previous discussions. Laura and Matt agreed that the Advisory Committee should have a refresher on the model at or before the next meeting that breaks down what is empirical and what is assumed. Laura reminded the group that the extreme scenarios are bookends, and it's not the GSP's goal to manage to those extremes.

Theo recommended a smaller subcommittee develop a statement of locally supported agreements to bring to the larger committee with the goal of submitting to the State Water Board. Jim Morris said the GSA should propose alternate or additional criteria related to achieving fish population targets, aside from instream flows. The Committee concurred with next steps as follows: webinar or in-person presentation by LWA to review the groundwater model, to inform the development of statements by a subcommittee for the full Committee to consider and transmit to the State Water Board.

### **7. Committee Discussion on Updated Draft Well Permitting Process**

Matt Parker provided 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.

He noted that new wells in the Scott Valley adjudicated zone are not subject to GSA review, the Board is still working on what to do about indemnifications, and there are discussions on a potential streamlined programmatic approach for the future. Dan Wessel, Siskiyou County Environmental Health, added a few notes. See PowerPoint slides for full details. Matt invited members of the Committee to provide feedback to the GSA Board.

Dan shared that countywide, ten agricultural well applications have been held up. One replacement well permit has been issued in Scott Valley after a consultant found its impact to be favorable.

Theo clarified that the County's streamlined programmatic approach wouldn't be in place before the well guidelines are enacted.

Charnna asked about the possibility of establishing a secondary water source for the City of Etna. Would the Committee see that as an issue? Members of the Advisory Committee shared that drilling a backup well wouldn't likely pose an issue because the City is not likely to increase its groundwater pumping. Jim likened the case to replacing agricultural wells where the amount of pumping is expected to remain the same.

Members of the Committee expressed concern that adjourning the topic would indicate they approve of the updated document, which they have not yet seen. They would want to see the draft before the Board adopts it.

### **8. Break**

The Advisory Committee took break and reconvened after about ten minutes. Committee Member Brandon Fawaz left the meeting during this item.

### **9. Presentation on Basin Conditions and the DWR SGM Round 2 Grant Award**

Laura Foglia shared a presentation reviewing comments received on the basin's GSP determination, basin conditions, model updates, and the draft DWR SGM Round 2 grant award. See attached PowerPoint. She introduced a new colleague, Olin Applegate, who was previously a masters student working under Thomas Harter.

- **The GSP has been approved.** The comments on the plan need to be addressed by 2027 in the next update. Laura noted that DWR's letter of approval is on their website. The main areas for improvement include:
  - Provide current water budget – this has actually already been done, with the model
  - Fill data gaps to better understand water quality and interconnected surface water (ISW)
  - Need to revisit sustainable management criteria (SMC) definitions on water quality and ISW - stream depletion reversal. Laura said the model should help with this and she mentioned DWR is working on

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best management practices for establishing ISW SMCs, for the types of data or tools the GSA may want to use.

- Coordinate and collaborate with other agencies to understand beneficial users – the GSA is really trying and more communication is happening the basin already.
- **SGM Implementation Grant.** Scott Valley received somewhere between \$5-6 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
  - Fee study and economic analysis
  - Well inventory
  - SVID recharge project
  - Ditch infiltration study
  - Upland management

Charnna requested information on how these grant components line up to the tiered PMAs documented in the GSP, which Laura agreed to follow up with her on.

Tom asked about the fee study and economic analysis and Matt shared that some members of the GSA Board have said fees should be countywide, but nothing has been decided yet.

LWA emphasized that stakeholder involvement will be at the forefront of the well inventory effort. At the Advisory Committee's request, they clarified that they have already pulled DWR's existing well inventory logs which will serve as a starting point, but those logs are missing a lot of information. The level of detail for the well inventory effort is something they want to get direct input on from stakeholders.

- **Monitoring updates.** Laura provided an overview of the current groundwater level monitoring points. Rainwater gauge data was shared but still needs to be analyzed.
- **Model updates.** Much progress on the model has been made since the GSP was approved, including incorporation of the uplands, local cooperative solutions (LCS) reflective of those submitted to the State Water Board, and precipitation data. The model is current through June 2023. Laura recognized Charnna and Betsy Stapleton's contributions. On the topic of accuracy, the model is over-estimating high flow events, which could be the result of flow gauge margin of error. Data from tributaries could help improve model calibration. Laura confirmed that this model can run different scenarios more readily than the previous model which had used statistical regression. They are coordinating the model with the U.S. Geological Survey, Quartz Valley Indian Reservation, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Klamath Restoration work.
  - Michael asked if Laura could provide a three-dimensional/visual representation of model of the basin, which she confirmed she could do.
  - Bonnie asked for details on how the model can be accurate without data on groundwater extraction rates. Laura shared how they develop estimates using available information on land use and irrigation type, and evapotranspiration and soil characteristics to develop a solid idea of how much groundwater is used. Laura said a 2018 evapotranspiration study confirmed their team's approach is reasonable, if not perfect.
  - When asked if the well inventory activity would help calibrate the model further, LWA responded that it wouldn't add much since existing well logs are already in DWR's database. In the case that some people have well logs that weren't shared with DWR, then yes the inventory could support the model.

## 10. Updates on Groundwater Related Projects

### a. Scott Valley irrigation District (SVID) Recharge Project – Laura Foglia

In the interest of time, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

### b. Scott River Watershed Council Projects – Charnna Gilmore

Charnna provided updates on the following projects underway by the Scott River Watershed Council, see PowerPoint slides for details.

- Scott River Mountain Meadow Restoration Planning & Implementation (ranked as a Tier II PMA)
- Scott River Tailings Comprehensive Restoration Planning (Tier I)
- Grouse Creek Restoration Planning (n/a)

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- French Creek, Sugar Creek, and Patterson Creek Instream Restoration Implementation (Tier I)
- Scott Valley Fuel and Forestry Projects (Tier II)

**c. Tailings Projects – Amanda Cooper**

Amanda shared information about the Yurok Tribe's project in Tailings to relocate a farm ditch to improve instream conditions and access for juvenile and adult salmon in Sugar Creek, through restoration activities including off-channel habitat, or farm efficiency projects. The \$7 million project includes both design and implementation. They will be working with the Watershed Council. They hope to bring preferred alternatives in 2025 with implementation in 2026. The project focuses on 4200 acres and 6.2 miles of river. On the topic of monitoring, Amanda indicated that it would likely extend beyond two years. The best point of contact is Daniel or Justin.

**d. Others:**

Theo shared an update about the farm efficiency/water use survey responses, which they hope to pass along to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for their consideration during a technical committee meeting in Davis this October. There is an opportunity to set up cost sharing for increasing irrigation efficiency which would be helpful because the limiting factor for installing center pivots has been funding (i.e., the demand exists).

Tom shared that he previously couldn't receive funding for farm efficiency improvements because he had difficulty proving that the saved water would go back in the river. Sari replied that the survey would also quantify past improvements that have been made.

The farm efficiency survey had a 30% response rate. The Committee discussed whether they thought the survey would've had a better response rate if the County had distributed it. Matt called attention to the need for paid staff at the County or its partners to help administer the survey, like the Agriculture Department and/or Cooperative Extension.

**11. Open Committee Member Discussion**

Due to a shortage of time, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

**12. Closing, Action Items, and Future Agenda Items**

At the time of this meeting, the date for the next Scott Valley Advisory Committee meeting was scheduled for October 24. It was later updated to October 26. Items for the Agenda are anticipated to include:

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

**13. 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:

- Data gap analysis and monitoring network expansion
  - Charnna Gilmore
  - Sarah Schaefer on behalf of Bonnie Bennett
  - Amanda Cooper
  - Michael Stapleton
- Recharge
  - Jim Morris
  - Theo Johnson
- Uplands Management
  - Charnna Gilmore
  - Bonnie Bennett
  - Jim Morris

Although it is not anticipated that the well inventory topic will be discussed in an ad hoc meeting, Michael Stapleton and Theo Johnson shared that they would like to be involved in discussion when it is.

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**MEETING PARTICIPANTS:**

\* online, listen-only participants

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Amanda Cooper  
Bonnie Bennett  
Brandon Fawaz – left early, during Agenda Item 8  
Charnna Gilmore  
Jim Morris  
Michael Stapleton  
Theo Johnson  
Tom Menne

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Tom Jopson

Agency Staff and Members of the Public:

Alyse Briody, California Department of Water Resources, Northern Region Office  
Angelina Cook, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance  
Betsy Stapleton  
Dan Wessell, Department of Environmental Health, County of Siskiyou  
Jim Patterson, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
John Tannaci, Shasta Valley Advisory Committee Chair  
Linda Söller, UC Davis  
Richard Marshall, Siskiyou County Water Users Association  
Sarah Schaefer, Quartz Valley Indian Reservation  
Sari Sommarstrom  
\*Adam Weinberg, Water Rights  
\*Janae Scruggs, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
\*Leah Grassman, Scott-Shasta Valley Watermaster District  
\*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  
Kelsey McNeill, Larry Walker and Associates  
Olin Applegate, Larry Walker and Associates