

MEETING SUMMARY | January 11, 2016

Colusa SGMA Public Meeting

Local Planning Effort

BRIEF MEETING RECAP

- Supervisors Denise Carter and Kim Dolbow-Vann opened the meeting and encouraged attendees to educate themselves about the new Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and get involved in local planning efforts to implement the law.
- Colusa County Water Resources Coordinator Mary Fahey presented on the key elements of SGMA, early County efforts to advance the law locally, and next steps.
- Representatives of local water and irrigation districts joined a Panel discussion to share their interests in local SGMA implementation through the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies.
- Next steps: Two additional meetings are scheduled in January that will address local SGMA implementation (each meeting is open to the public):
 - Colusa County Groundwater Commission Special Meeting
 - When: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016
 - Where: Colusa County Farm Bureau, 520 Market St., Colusa
 - Time: 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Initial SGMA Governance Working Group Meeting
 - When: Tuesday, January 19th, 2016
 - Where: Colusa Industrial Properties, 100 Industrial Blvd., Colusa
 - Time: 9 a.m. – 12 noon

Colusa County Water Resources Webpage: <http://www.countyofcolusa.org/index.aspx?nid=656>

MEETING SUMMARY

Introduction

Center for Collaborative Policy Facilitator Dave Ceppos opened the meeting and turned to Colusa County Supervisors Denise Carter and Kim Dolbow-Vann to provide introductory remarks. Each Supervisor emphasized the importance of groundwater for Colusa's agricultural economy. The new Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) affords an opportunity for Colusa residents to work together to manage and maintain local control of this valuable resource. The Supervisors also acknowledged that there are unknowns ahead and therefore stressed the importance of local groundwater users getting involved in the process. They thanked the crowd of nearly a hundred attendees for making time in their schedules to attend this initial informational meeting.

SGMA Background and Early Implementation Steps in Colusa County

Mary Fahey, Water Resources Coordinator for Colusa County, introduced herself, presented on the core elements of SGMA, and described how local planning efforts are getting underway. Later in the meeting a panel of individuals that represent water agencies or districts added to

the presentation by briefly speaking to their respective interests in SGMA implementation. The main elements of the presentation included the following:

- SGMA Background
- Preparations to Advance SGMA Locally
- Recent SGMA Activities
- Early Implementation Steps in Colusa County
- Next Steps

SGMA was passed by the State legislature, signed by Governor Brown, and became law on January 1, 2015. SGMA requires that eligible local agencies in all high and medium priority groundwater basins form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) by June 2017 and prepare Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) by January 2022. Local agencies with water planning, management or land use planning authority can form GSAs. Two subbasins in the area, Colusa and West Butte, are subject to SGMA. Smaller subbasins in the west are not subject to SGMA. Ms. Fahey emphasized that no one has a better understanding of local groundwater resources than Colusa County water leaders and residents, and thus SGMA presents an opportunity to advance management at the local level and ensure long-term sustainability. The State maintains oversight of groundwater management planning efforts, and will serve as a backstop if local planners fail to create GSAs or develop and adopt GSPs.

Key SGMA implementation milestones include the following:

- January 1, 2016 – Basin boundary emergency regulations and SB 13 became law
- June 1, 2016 – GSP regulations adopted by DWR
- June 30, 2017 – Deadline to form GSAs
- July 1, 2017 – Counties affirm GSA status
- January 31, 2020 – GSPs complete for critically over-drafted basins
- January 31, 2022 – All other GSPs complete

More information on SGMA can be found on the Department of Water Resources website: <http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/>

In Colusa County twenty-six agencies are eligible to become GSAs. Areas that fall outside the service boundaries of these agencies and districts, termed “white areas”, will be represented by the County. (Private pumpers who extract less than 2 acre feet per year of groundwater are not subject to SGMA). To date, GSA notifications in Colusa County have been filed by the following agencies and water districts:

- Provident Irrigation District and Princeton-Codora-Glenn Irrigation District
- Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
- Colusa County Water District
- Reclamation District 1004
- Reclamation District 108
- County of Colusa

Towards the end of her presentation Ms. Fahey invited representatives of eligible agencies that have filed to become GSAs to join a Panel discussion. The Panel afforded the opportunity for these agencies to briefly share their respective interests in SGMA and GSA formation specifically, and groundwater sustainability across the County more generally. Panel members included the following:

- Thad Bettner, Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
- Bryan Busch, Reclamation District 108
- John Garner, Princeton-Codora-Glenn Irrigation District and Provident ID
- Doug Griffin, Colusa County Water District
- Terry Bressler, Reclamation District 1004

At various stages during the presentation, as well as after the Panel discussion, the facilitator took questions from the audience. Comments, questions and concerns from members of the public included the following:

- Comment: We need to ensure that well owners are properly represented at GSA governance working group meetings.
- Comment: It will be advantageous in keeping the State at a distance if we work together on groundwater management planning under SGMA.
- Comment: I am interested to learn how fees may be levied in the future.
- Comment: It took 10-15 years before Arbutle realized any benefits from the Tehama-Colusa Canal. I am concerned this will also be a long process.
- Question: Are the cities considered private pumpers? Response: The cities are considered a land use authority and are eligible to become GSAs.
- Question: Should cities file as GSAs? Response: Suggest speaking with the County about this issue, and also attending upcoming GSA working group meetings.

As an initial step to prepare for local SGMA implementation, the County acquired a DWR facilitation support services grant. The County has since contracted the impartial facilitation services of the Sacramento State University Center for Collaborative Policy to bring interested parties together and foster collaboration. The County has also contracted Davids Engineering to conduct a Countywide groundwater assessment and will share initial results of this study at upcoming meetings of the Colusa Groundwater Commission.

Throughout her presentation Ms. Fahey stressed the importance of cooperation among all interested parties across the County. Moreover, coordination with Yolo County to the south, Glenn County to the north, and other counties to the east will be necessary given the extent of the Colusa subbasin. Local SGMA implementation, Ms. Fahey noted, will require residents to work together and address common interests in groundwater sustainability. Given that SGMA affects everyone in the County, Ms. Fahey encouraged attendees to think of the law as a golden opportunity to proactively advance local groundwater planning efforts.

Interested parties may view Ms. Fahey's presentation on the Colusa County website at: <http://www.countyofcolusa.org/DocumentCenter/View/5980>

Next Steps

The facilitator noted two upcoming meetings that will explore groundwater issues (each meeting is open to the public):

- Colusa County Groundwater Commission Special Meeting
 - When: Wednesday, January 20th, 2016
 - Where: Colusa County Farm Bureau, 520 Market St., Colusa
 - Time: 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
- Initial SGMA Governance Working Group Meeting
 - When: Tuesday, January 19th, 2016
 - Where: Colusa Industrial Properties, 100 Industrial Blvd., Colusa
 - Time: 9 a.m. – 12 noon

Closing Comments

Supervisors Carter and Dolbow-Vann thanked all attendees for their time and interest in sustainable groundwater management. Private pumpers in particular were encouraged to get involved in the process. The Supervisors noted that the local Groundwater Commission will convene a subcommittee to explore private pumper representation in local SGMA planning efforts. Each emphasized that successful implementation of SGMA in Colusa County will depend on people getting involved in the process.