

MEETING SUMMARY September 27, 2016

Colusa Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) – Governance Workgroup Meeting #7

MEETING RECAP

- The group received updates on SGMA planning efforts in Glenn and Butte Counties. Coordination activities with both counties will begin soon.
- Surface water diverters in Colusa and Glenn Counties are meeting Thursday (Sept. 29) to coordinate a Principles document and develop a governance option proposal, much like the PPAC has done.
- The group determined that the three main challenges related to the Sustainability Indicators are: groundwater levels, land subsidence, and groundwater/surface water interaction.
- A Work Plan will be drafted to summarize needed studies and costs associated, including clarification on Proposition 218 timelines and costs.
- Private pumpers continue to voice concern regarding representation in governance.
- A Water Agency will be formed by private pumpers in the Arbuckle area.

For more local information visit the [Colusa County Water Resources Webpage](#).

For information on SGMA visit the [Department of Water Resources SGMA Webpage](#).

MEETING SUMMARY

Opening Remarks

Dave Ceppos introduced himself as the facilitator for the Colusa County GSA formation process and the Associate Director of the Center for Collaborative Policy (California State University, Sacramento) and reviewed the agenda.

SGMA Process Updates

Glenn County formed a Guiding Principles Subcommittee. They have completed a draft Guiding Principles document that has been very well received. It will be finalized in the next few weeks. The Board of Supervisors approved formation of a 7-member Glenn County Private Pumper Advisory Committee, with one member from each Supervisorial District and two at-large members. The first meeting of the Glenn PPAC will be in late October. They are still working on defining the roles of the PPAC. In the near future, 2 supervisors from both Colusa and Glenn Counties will meet to begin the coordination process. When both counties have a good idea of governance, there will be a joint Colusa-Glenn Stakeholder meeting. Glenn is also coordinating with Tehama County regarding the Corning Subbasin.

Vicki Newlin, Butte County Water and Resource Conservation, reported that **Butte County** has completed an assessment of local agencies' interests in SGMA. They have held 3 Governance workgroup meetings. They are forming a Groundwater Pumper Advisory Committee (GPAC). This will go to the Board of Supervisors on October 11. They have polled their local agencies and determined that the Feather River surface water diverters are leaning towards developing their own GSP. They are working on resolving several GSA overlaps county-wide. They have a contract, currently being reviewed by Counsel, with Davids Engineering to provide a "Risk Assessment" as was done for Colusa County.

Question: Supervisor Carter asked Ms. Newlin about their intentions of doing a basin boundary adjustment for the West Butte subbasin. Ms. Newlin replied that the 2016 timeline was not workable. It has a lot to do with the water districts in the West Butte subbasin. They will work with Colusa County to do some sort of coordination agreement, but it is too early now.

Mr. Ceppos invited Thad Bettner, Glenn Colusa Irrigation District, to discuss an upcoming joint meeting of surface water diverters. Mr. Bettner explained that he is trying to pull together the GSA-eligible water agencies in Colusa and Glenn Counties to have a single meeting to develop a Principles document. After that, they would like to get together with the PPAC. It will be helpful to get all of the agencies in Colusa and Glenn Counties on the same page. They will have legal counsel review their Principles document.

Discussion – Groundwater Sustainability Tools

Mr. Ceppos has invited Grant Davids, Davids Engineering, Inc., and Roy Hull, Department of Water Resources Northern Region Office, to today’s meeting to provide their technical knowledge of groundwater conditions in Colusa County, related to the five Sustainability Indicators that we will have to address (we will not have to address Seawater Intrusion). Mr. Ceppos invited Mr. Davids to give a brief reminder of the Sustainability Criteria, and his “Crystal Ball” theories from his June 15 presentation to the GSA Workgroup.

Key decisions are those that will affect availability and costs of groundwater. In order to be sustainable, we have to consider the possibility that there will be limits on use of the resource. The three main sustainability challenges we face in Colusa County are:

1. Groundwater levels
2. Subsidence
3. Groundwater / Surface Water interaction

Mr. Ceppos stated that one purpose of Management Areas could be related to conditions.

Mr. Ceppos spoke to lingering questions regarding the kinds of studies and actions that will be necessary, the associated costs and the timeline. Each GSA will have to be funded. There have been discussions of county-wide assessments, specifically Proposition 218. If there is going to be a Prop. 218 assessment, it is many months away. In the interim, there is work that needs to get done. We are going to have to get a handle on the types of studies, timing of studies, costs of studies and how the group is going to generate funding.

Comment: We need to keep history in perspective. Agronomic conditions were very different in the 1960s. Maybe we have more agriculture than we can sustain with the water that is available. A water balance will tell us more, but there is concern about the cost of the study. When surface water districts are cut back, private pumpers may need to cut back the same percentage. We can do these very expensive studies or maybe we can agree to all cut back when conditions warrant that and achieve sustainability that way.

Mr. Ceppos reminded the group that a water budget is required as part of a GSP and it has to be defensible. Water in and out will be at the heart of SGMA implementation.

Mr. Hull mentioned that SGMA is a parallel process, not linear. We will need to be working on several aspects at the same time, including forming governance, conducting studies, developing a GSP, etc.

Mr. Bettner commented that from a water district perspective, a lot of the work that is required by water districts, work that they are already doing, can be folded into a GSP. For example, DWR is looking at revising Ag Water Management Plan requirements, water districts are doing water budgets, there is a new requirement to complete a drought response plan, and the districts are required to measure and report diversions. These are tools they have to utilize to meet state requirements. We don't know what the future will look like so this group is trying to form governance with every possible scenario in mind. There are things that this group could be doing now that may seem expensive but in the long run will be worthwhile. We should figure out how to get these things done and figure out how to pay for them sooner than later. Ultimately, these tools will help inform governance.

Question Mr. Ceppos asked if the concern is that the water districts are doing these things already and the white areas are not. **Answer:** Mr. Bettner replied that they are already doing these things and it would be wise to coordinate and do them basin-wide.

Question: Would this be the County's responsibility? **Answer:** It should be everyone's responsibility.

Mr. Ceppos asked Mr. Bettner his estimate of costs of these studies to their landowners. Mr. Bettner replied, maybe \$1.00 per acre, if that.

Question: Do all surface water districts, including the smaller districts have to do these studies? **Answer:** All districts that are part of the Bureau of Reclamation have to complete these studies and all districts over 10,000 acres are also required to complete these studies. Any district that wants funding must also comply.

Ms. Newlin mentioned that they hire two students each year to do groundwater level monitoring and data input and it costs them \$4,000-\$5,000 per year.

Comment: Water districts are required to measure intakes and outputs. All of their wells and conveyances are metered. The County could require all wells to be metered and start a program of keeping track of use, without the data being public. This is a good tool and makes everyone equal.

Comment: The GSP regulations require reporting annual extractions utilizing the best available data. Somehow we will have to get a handle on this.

Mr. Ceppos asked Mr. Hull to talk about the 2017 subsidence resurvey and when the data will be available. It will be a complete resurvey of the entire Sacramento Valley. The last survey was done in 2008. The data should be available by fall, 2017.

Supervisor Carter asked Ms. Fahey about details of Colusa County's Proposition 1 grant project. The project is a monitoring and data management program and includes developing a much more robust monitoring program than what we currently have, including monitoring for all five sustainability indicators. It will be completed by the end of 2018. Mr. Davids and his staff are working on this project and it is in the beginning stages.

Mr. Ceppos outlined the types of studies that we have been talking about today:

- Ag Water Management Plan

- Data on surface water diversions and outflows
- Well metering
- Localized subsidence studies
- Basin-wide water budget
- Prop 218, when can this start and what will it cost

Ms. Newlin reported that the water balance completed in Butte County cost \$135,000 and the Butte Basin water model cost \$300,000. Taking into consideration their staff time dedicated to the modelling effort, she figures they have invested into these studies approximately \$600,000-\$700,000.

Mr. Ceppos stated that we are looking at these items to illustrate that there will be price tags associated with what we need to do. How are we going to get the funding for this? We have the valley-wide subsidence study, the water district studies and the Prop. 1 project all in the works. Where does this leave us in terms of what our lift will be? What will this cost?

Ms. Fahey stated that there are clearly a lot of data gaps and work we have to do. An estimated cost for a water budget for the Colusa subbasin is \$200,000-250,000. This makes a good argument for working together to fill in the gaps, as one GSA. If we are pooling our resources, including funding resources, and doing these studies basin-wide instead of district wide, it will be easier on everyone's finances and other resources.

Mr. Ceppos stated that it is important for the County to know which agencies are in and out so they know what the white areas look like. This translates into responsibilities for the County which translates into costs.

Question to PPAC: How do you see this getting funded? **Answer:** Assessments to all landowners through Prop. 218.

Mr. Ceppos cautioned that the Prop. 218 process will take time. We won't do a Prop. 218 until the GSA is decided and there is work that needs to be done now. How will we fund this effort during the delay? Will the County have to pay?

Supervisor Carter replied that the County has limited resources. Maybe we could get some grant funding. But, to get to the 218 process, there are studies that have to be done for that, and costs involved. Some districts have already contributed funds to our GSA planning efforts. At some point everyone, including the private pumpers, will have to pitch in. How this will be done, we don't know.

Jesse Cain, City of Colusa mentioned that for just the City of Colusa to complete a Prop. 218 process, it costs them \$25,000.

Question: Do we have a breakdown of agricultural acres vs. private pumper acres? **Answer:** Mr. Davids replied that there are 54,000 private pumper acres or 17% of the agricultural area, and 272,000 acres in total water agency area.

Question: Can we get acreages for the districts that have filed to be GSAs vs. white areas vs. non-noticed GSA-eligible agencies?

Shelly Murphy (Colusa County Water District) estimated that approximately 76,000 acres would be private pumpers plus non-participating agencies.

Ms. Murphy mentioned that Sutter County estimates SGMA costs at \$8 million over 20 years. CCWD is approximately 14% of total acreage in Colusa County. They have estimated about \$1.50/acre per year over 20 years for their landowners to cover \$8 million total cost. They are thinking that they would still share the costs with the group, but they would assess their own landowners. Or the county could do a County-wide assessment.

Mr. Davids mentioned that all acreage information is organized in GIS and he can break it out any way. He said that the County paid for a summer intern that logged wells based on well completion reports in the county. All of this information is contained in that database.

Question: Regarding Prop. 218: Do we need to wait until we have our GSAs in place to begin this process? Can the County start it sooner? **Answer:** We have to know what we are paying for. We will need to know what our costs are.

Mary Randall, Department of Water Resources, Northern Region Office mentioned that we will need a Work Plan to be considered for grant funding. She also noted that the preference for upcoming Prop. 1 funding will be for GSAs. She anticipates the grant solicitation package to be released in summer, 2017. There will be scoping workshops. Ms. Randall highly recommended that we have a presence at these meetings. It's a lot easier to get the tools in the language before the draft comes out. There is only \$86 million available for the Prop. 1 Grant program, and there are 127 basins subject to SGMA, with more than one GSA per basin. That is not a lot of money, so we are likely going to have to fund much of GSP development ourselves.

Mr. Williams described the PPAC proposed three-tiered funding mechanism which includes a per-parcel fee, per-well fee, and per-acre-foot fee.

Question: The basin is in pretty good shape. What level of expense do we need? Can everyone be accountable? What level of policing is required? **Response:** What about the people that will not cooperate? How do we deal with that?

Question: Wouldn't the non-compliers fall out of the way and be under the State? **Answer:** No, it doesn't work that way.

Question: What if a Prop. 218 vote fails? **Answer:** That's the conundrum statewide – how do we fund this thing?

Ms. Newlin reminded everyone that if the State has to come in it will cost far more.

Mr. Ceppos noted **Action Items** from the discussion:

- Comprehensive Work Plan with phases of studies to be considered; include needed studies, cost estimates, timing. This will be funded by the County (Fahey, Davids)
 - Ag Water Management Plan
 - Water balance
 - Groundwater model
 - Surface water diversions and outflows
 - Well metering

- Localized subsidence studies
- Overall water budget
- Monitoring program
- Breakdown on acreages in different ways (white area = private pumper area)
 - White area vs. Water Districts in Colusa County only
 - White area + non participating districts vs. Water Districts in Colusa County only
 - Cropping patterns/land use in white areas
- Preliminary information on Prop. 218, when can this start and what will it cost

Ms. Fahey gave an overview of the September 15 Governance Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Williams described the PPAC's proposed governance structure as an all-inclusive model in which the County utilizes its current functions. They tried to develop a model with the least amount of overhead and the greatest amount of efficiency.

Mr. Williams said that after the last Subcommittee meeting his interpretation is that this model will not be accepted because the water districts feel they are giving up too much power. This concerns him because of potential fragmenting.

Mr. Williams stated that there will be a water district formed in Arbuckle by the private pumpers in that area. If the approach from the water districts is that they want to do their own thing, the private pumpers want to make sure they are part of this. He gets the sense that the districts are not going to work with us.

Mr. Ceppos stated that the Districts are meeting and will present their proposal and we will go from there. Recall that the County has a net they have thrown over the entire basin. He asked Supervisor Carter for her perspective on this.

Ms. Carter said that her personal perspective is that we are in negotiations now. The PPAC has done a great job putting their proposal together. The water districts are also part of our county and they need to have a representative piece also. This is a healthy discussion and healthy negotiation. We haven't heard a coordinated response from the water districts yet. All of us are going to have to give and take. The County is not going to relinquish overlap until we come to some sort of consensus on governance. Ms. Carter really hopes that we can come to agreement on a single GSA. She would like to wait to see what the water districts have to say and move the conversation forward from there. The County has invested a lot into this process and would like to see it succeed.

Mr. Williams again expressed his feeling that the water agencies are not going to accept the PPAC proposal. This is why some are moving forward to form a district in Arbuckle.

Many felt that we need to hear the proposal that the water districts come back with and work from there.

Next Steps

- October 3 PPAC meeting
- September 29 Surface Water District meeting
- October 11 GSA Workgroup Subcommittee meeting; hear Water District proposal
- Develop Work Plan (Davids)
- 2X2 meeting of Colusa and Glenn County Supervisors
- Joint Subbasins Meetings – Colusa, Glenn, Butte

Note: See **Appendix A** for a summary of the estimated dollar amounts discussed today

Participant List

➤ Thad Bettner	Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
➤ Bryan Busch	Reclamation District 108
➤ Lorraine Marsh	Colusa County Groundwater Commission/Private Pumper Advisory Commission (PPAC)
➤ John Garner	Princeton Codora Glenn and Provident Irrigation Districts
➤ Shelly Murphy	Colusa County Water District
➤ Dan Ruiz	Westside Water District and Maxwell Irrigation District
➤ Chuck Bergson	City of Williams
➤ Jesse Cain	City of Colusa
➤ Jim Wallace	Colusa Drain Mutual Water Company
➤ Vickie Newlin	Butte County
➤ Darrin Williams	Colusa County Groundwater Commission/PPAC
➤ Derrick Strain	PPAC
➤ Jeff Moresco	Colusa County Groundwater Commission/PPAC
➤ Bill Vanderwaal	Provost and Pritchard Engineering
➤ George Pendell	Stony Creek
➤ Sharon Ellis	Glenn County Landowner
➤ Carol Perkins	Butte Environmental Council
➤ Luke Steidlmeyer	Attorney
➤ Roy Hull	Department of Water Resources
➤ Theresa Bright	Landowner, Jeffries Ranch
➤ Oscar Serrano	Colusa Indian Community
➤ Kim Gallagher	PPAC
➤ Jeff Moresco	Colusa County Groundwater Commission/PPAC
➤ Grant Davids	Davids Engineering, Inc.
➤ Denise Carter	Colusa County Supervisor
➤ Jeff Sutton	Tehama Colusa Canal Authority
➤ Mary Randall	Department of Water Resources, Northern Region Office

Staff

- Mary Fahey Colusa County Water Resources Coordinator
- Dave Ceppos Center for Collaborative Policy

Appendix A: Summary of estimated costs discussed today:

GCID landowner costs for required studies	\$1.00/AF or less
Butte County groundwater level monitoring and data input	\$4,000-\$5,000 per year.
Butte County water balance	\$135,000
Butte Basin groundwater model	\$300,000
Butte County long term, to-date groundwater modeling effort (including staff time)	\$600,000-\$700,000
Water Balance for Colusa Subbasin	\$200,000-\$250,000
Proposition 218, City of Colusa	\$25,000
Sutter County estimated SGMA implementation over 20 years (*Sutter County is doing an Alternative Plan)	\$8 million
CCWD estimated 20-year costs to landowners based on Sutter County's \$8 million estimate	\$1.50/acre per year for 20 years