

COMMENTS/CONCERNS/ISSUES
Santa Rosa Plain SGMA Workshop
July 11, 2016
Santa Rosa Utility Field Operations Training Center

COMMENTS ON GOVERNING BOARD PROPOSAL

Composition/Representation of the GSA:

- Will GSA members be elected?

The GSA does not require a special election; members would be selected by the board/council of the GSA-eligible entity.

- One person said that six of eight appointments receive water from the Russian River and only two of eight represent users of groundwater, therefore users of groundwater are under-represented. This person is not sure if the balance is sufficient.
- One person suggested eliminating one of the appointments from the Board of Supervisors or the Water Agency Board of Directors so that there are seven board members.
- Another suggested that a representative of domestic GW users should be added to the eight, for a total of nine.
- A suggestion was made that the eight GSA-eligible agencies should collectively appoint five board members. This composition would be based on what is needed to make SGMA work, versus political boundaries. The composition should balance the interests of the Santa Rosa Plain. The five interests should include:
 1. agriculture,
 2. environment
 3. rural well owners
 4. science professional, and
 5. urban water users.

NOTE: The person who suggested this composition provided additional information after the meeting, including: The first four interests should be appointed by relevant organizations and the 5th interest (urban water users), appointed by the county. This model is based on the Sonoma County's appointees to the Golden Gate Bridge District, where the Board of Supervisors select from candidates recommended by the Mayors and Councilmembers.

- One person said that each jurisdiction should have autonomy on deciding who to appoint because of concerns about two supervisors on the board.



- One person noted that the recently released regulations for creating a GSP are very good. Board will have to comply.
- In one speaker's opinion, the board seems heavily comprised of people who use water and not so heavy on representative of environmental resources. This person wants a shift from so many water users and more toward environmental users.
- Someone wants to have knowledgeable people who understand the issues on the board. They mention that 18% of groundwater users have a majority of the decision making power. Instead of every city having a representative, there should be one representative from Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmembers because this composition would better reflect users.
- One person commented that there should be a focus on science in order to minimize and that there should be independent scientists representing agencies; another person commented that he has seen technical/science groups (which deals with science) and user groups (which assess impacts).



COMMENTS ON ADVISORY BODY PROPOSAL

- One speaker noted that the advisory body should be similar to the technical advisory group for the North Coast Resources Partnership, where the work is based on science. The recommendations of the technical group have been adopted by the board every time, but one, although no governing rules require the board to accept.
 - Someone expressed concern that with 18 people, consensus could be difficult. There should be allowance for the advisory body to agree/disagree.
 - The Russian River is affected by water use; so there should be a Russian River representative on the advisory body.
 - Someone expressed a desire for strong representation of science community. Another person agreed with this and added that jurisdictions shouldn't have someone from their own council to serve on advisory body if they have someone on the governing board.
- One person said that the advisory body structure should be codified and that power should be strong enough to ensure that actions have the force of scientific opinion.
 - What is the role of advisory body?
The Advisory Body is an advisor: its main role is to advise on the development of a GSP. It is not intended to get into human resource issues or day-to-day issues. Its role is similar to a planning commission.
 - It was emphasized that there should be clearly defined roles for the two bodies.

GSA GOVERNANCE QUESTIONS

- Does the law specify that the local agencies are the governing bodies?

The law defines who is eligible to be a GSA. Other basins in California have included non-eligible entities on the decision-making body, with voting power. In other words, non-GSA eligible entities can serve on the GSA board, through the governing agreements that are created.

- Who holds the GSA accountable? Who is enforcing? What are the strategies for carrying out plans?

The GSA will be a new legal entity with a governing board. Two state agencies (Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board) will be in an oversight role to ensure that the GSP complies with SGMA, including the GSP regulations. These agencies can put the basins on probationary status to ensure that plan is implemented and bringing the basin into sustainability.

- What is the glue that holds GSA together? What prevents municipalities from going it on their own?

SGMA allows for individual SGA-eligible entities (like cities) to go it on their own, but in Sonoma County we are highly motivated to work together because we don't want the state to come in. GSP regulations are specific that if there are multiple GSAs and/or multiple GSPs in a basin (called a "fractured" basin), there are stringent requirements for coordination.

- How do you weigh ideas/input from public on GSA formation? *It is an iterative process. Staff will compile feedback, share online. Share with our elected officials.*

- How will decisions be publicized? Those should be made readily apparent.

The GSA will be a public entity subject to the Brown Act; agendaized meetings; etc. And we welcome press coverage!

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- How do we handle the watershed/Bulletin 118 boundaries? What about the areas of inflow that are outside the boundaries?

One of the limitations of the law is that there are very stringent boundaries, and it doesn't always follow science. GSAs have authority over SGMA basins only, although they can have an interest



in the connected watershed. Envision that GSA understands what's going on; ensure that recharge is protected and enhanced; could monitor; develop collaborative projects that benefit basin. The GSA will also be interested in ensuring that land use changes don't impair or harm the basin. The GSA must be outward looking, however there is no clear answer on this issue.

It's possible at the next phase to change boundaries of the watershed. DWR will also periodically reprioritize basins. In addition, the County of Sonoma is committed to countywide groundwater management.

- If you don't have monitoring of rural residential users, how will you know if they are not agricultural users (for example small farmers or marijuana growers)? There will be overlap.
New technologies can help estimate groundwater use through evapotranspiration. People will self-report; but the GSA could do reality check.
- If an entity like Nestles comes in, is the GSA the agency that would say 'no'?
The GSA doesn't control land use. This is a city/county function. The County already has water availability maps and zones, so development is limited in water scarce areas.
- Can the GSA go beyond what the state is requiring us to do regarding de minimus users? Could we require that all wells be metered?
The GSA cannot require metering of "de minimis" users, those who are using less than 2 acre-feet of water annually for domestic purposes. Entities using under two acre feet annually can be metered if they are using water for business and/or agricultural purposes.
- Could GSA provide a subsidy for metering or a financial penalty?
The GSA could provide a subsidy to incentivize meter installation, but could not penalize de minimis users who don't install meters.
- Where can we find additional information on what qualifies/doesn't qualify for domestic purposes? How do we figure out enforcement of non-domestic uses?
The State Board has information on its website for domestic uses under SGMA. There are ways to approximate domestic use with mapping, etc.
- Is the baseline for groundwater measurements January of this year? What do we know about the baseline levels?
January 2015 is the baseline for SGMA. The GSA is not required to address undesirable results before this time. Have pretty robust network of wells in Sonoma Valley and are getting more wells on line in Santa Rosa Plain; there are even some records that go back to the 50's in some areas.