

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

January 25, 2023, 3:00 – 5:00 P.M.
Held online via Zoom

Action Items:

- Matt Parker will upload the September 2022 Meeting Minutes to the Siskiyou County Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) website, including the PowerPoint presentation slides from the meeting.
- Pat Vellines, California Department of Water Resources (DWR), will identify the hotline for reporting unpermitted wells and share it with Advisory Committee (AC) members.
- Richard Nelson will share a link to the documentary he mentioned, related to illegal water use in the region.
- If the information is publicly available, Matt will share the response being drafted by the Tulelake GSA to the letter which was sent by Oregon's Water Resources Department.
- Larry Walker and Associates (LWA) will share a draft version of the Annual Report by the end of February, for Advisory Committee members to review and provide comments. If any members of the public would like to review it, they should contact Matt.
- Prior to next meeting, GSA staff will identify other entities who are pursuing juniper removal projects or would have project proposals in mind. The GSA and technical team will also identify potential funding sources to pursue, including funds for wildfire mitigation and forest thinning.
 - Pat will also look into grant funds that may be available by the State for juniper removal projects.
 - Matt will touch base with Supervisor Haupt about which wildfire mitigation grants the County has submitted applications for.
 - Don Bowen will share information about a fuel reduction study and juniper removal project from the early 2000s. He will also share information about a Bear Bar project.
 - AC members should investigate whether there are significant private lands available for juniper removal projects.
- Matt will investigate the progress the County has made towards preparing grant applications that could cover activities like juniper removal and forest thinning, and utilize the County's capacity to support appropriate grant applications.
- The GSA will invite potential project partners to participate in the April Advisory Committee meeting, including the US Forest Service and Blue Forest Conservation.
- Matt Parker will make the Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) data factsheets prepared by DWR available to those interested in accessing them.

Attachments/Links:

- PowerPoint Presentation Slides (attached)

Attendees: see last page

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. Call to Order, Introductions, Agenda Review, and Virtual Meeting Structure

Facilitator Marisa Perez-Reyes reviewed virtual meeting guidelines. Chair Richard Nelson convened the meeting and conducted a roll call of Advisory Committee (AC) Members, establishing quorum (see Attendance on last page). Richard also reviewed the meeting agenda.

2. Approval of Past Meeting Summary, Notice of 2023 Meeting Schedule and Formats

Greg Herman motioned to accept the previous meeting minutes and Randy Jertberg seconded. The September 2022 Meeting Summary was approved and will be posted to the [Siskiyou County SGMA Website](#).

Marisa shared the dates and format for the Butte Valley Advisory Committee meetings anticipated to be held in 2023 which include:

- April 26 – in person only
- July 26 – online only
- October 25 – in person only

Marisa explained that the reason for the alternating in-person/virtual format is to save on staff budget and reduce travel time for AC members. Richard solicited input from the Committee about their preferred format:

- Greg and Randy both prefer in person.

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

- Don, Randy, and Richard all prefer to have both options available.

On the topic of improving hybrid meetings, Randy suggested using Starlink to establish an internet connection.

District staff will take Committee responses into consideration when planning the April meeting.

3. Public Comment Period

Members of the public were invited to provide comments unrelated to meeting agenda items. No public comments were shared.

4. District Staff Updates

Matt Parker shared updates from the GSA on the following items:

- Advisory Committee Terms and Roles:
 - The Environmental/Conservation seat is currently vacant. The application period will be open between February 15 and March 15. Applications will be reviewed and approved by the GSA Board in early April.
 - Chair and Vice-Chairs will be playing a more active role in conducting these meetings, moving forward. Both roles will be confirmed at the April meeting. Chairs will be given the opportunity to continue in their role, otherwise they will go through a nomination process.
- The Board will review a draft well permitting guidelines at their February 7 meeting.
 - This will be the first time that members of the public as well as the Advisory Committee will have the opportunity to weigh in. Depending on the feedback received during that meeting, the Board may direct the Advisory Committee and GSA staff to review the guidelines and provide feedback.
 - Matt will send the Board materials to the SGMA email list on the Friday preceding the Board meeting.
 - Don followed up on the Advisory Committee's discussion at the September meeting about unpermitted wells.
 - Matt replied that the Well Inventory Program component which was submitted as part of the DWR Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Implementation Grant application includes an enforcement element.
 - In the meantime, there is a hotline to call to report unpermitted wells. Pat Vellines (DWR) did not have the phone number readily available but will share it after the meeting.
 - Richard mentioned a helpful documentary on illegal water use in the region. He will share information on it.
- DWR SGM Implementation Grant
 - Matt provided an overview of the components which were included in the DWR SGM implementation grant application.
 - The Committee discussed the necessity of securing additional grants to fund juniper removal. Randy asked for additional information about why the grant didn't include all that much juniper removal.
 - Laura Foglia (LWA) and Matt shared that the SGM implementation grant is not well suited for juniper removal (i.e., it would not have scored well according to the grant criteria and would have been a sizable portion of the ask from a cost perspective), and so they kept the focus of Component 7 Upland Management on assessing the impacts to groundwater of removing juniper.
 - Actual juniper removal projects will need to be coordinated with partners, which could include Blue Forest Conservation and the US Forest Service.
 - LWA offered to evaluate other potential funding sources for juniper removal.
 - The Committee agreed to circle back to this discussion under the Committee Member Updates and Discussion item of the Agenda.

7. Other Agency Updates

This item was advanced on the Agenda. Pat Vellines shared information about the applications that DWR received for the grant funds:

- There were 82 applicants of the potential 94 basins that could have applied, one of which was deemed ineligible. \$200 million is currently available and \$780 million was requested. DWR is hoping that SB 170 could add an additional \$60 million to the total amount, therefore, they will wait until the end of the legislative session when the state budget is approved to list the final awards (possibly August or September).
- There are at least 4 rounds of review conducted internally, including review by DWR's Financial Assistance Branch in April. Draft grant awards won't be released until June. There will be a public comment period on the

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

draft awards. Following that, internal notifications occur and the final awards won't be released until at least October 2023.

- This round prioritized funding for non-critically overdrafted basins, which includes Siskiyou.

5. Update on Preparations for the Annual Report

Laura Foglia, Larry Walker and Associates (LWA), shared updates on preparations for the Annual Report to be submitted in April 2023 and provided an overview of hydrological conditions and basin modeling efforts. See attached PowerPoint slides. Highlights included:

- Overview of contents of Annual Report, which include:
 - GSA progress in GSP implementation (including AC meetings)
 - Data collected from the monitoring network
 - Groundwater extractions, surface water supply, total water use and changes in groundwater storage
- Hydrographs showing groundwater elevations through September 2022. The hydrographs include the upper and lower measurable objectives, soft triggers, and minimum threshold metrics. They also include predictive trend lines.
 - Hydrographs generally show a downward trend in groundwater elevations, with very little recovery.
 - Some hydrographs include asterisks, to indicate that they may be missing measurements.
- John Bennett asked how extraction is being measured and verified.
 - Laura replied that, as with the GSP, extraction is estimated based on land use, crop patterns, and irrigation type.
 - Laura reminded the group that there is a component in the grant application for procurement of flow meters that can be distributed on a voluntary basis. At this point, though, there is no mandatory requirement for well metering, so estimation is the next best option.
- John shared concerns about the quality of a neighboring subbasin's GSP and whether Butte Valley might eventually be asked to prove they aren't using water that's going to somebody else.
 - Laura replied that she's aware of interconnectivity with other basins. They are working on coordination.
 - Matt added that a response is being drafted by the Tulelake GSA to the letter which was sent by Oregon's Water Resources Department. He will share the response if it is publicly available. Pat confirmed that DWR is involved in those conversations between Oregon and Tulelake.
- Richard reflected that only one well has reached the soft landing point. This basin has a tremendous buffer, between the water entering and the water used. The groundwater elevation drops aren't as severe as could've been the case and a pretty significant level of recharge is occurring.
 - Laura added that the winter doesn't seem to recharge as much as before, but the summer isn't dropping as much either. So there is some effect happening they don't quite understand. The model is up to 2018. When they get this new funding, they'll update their model to the current date and be able to make predictions down the road.
- Don Bowen asked if the grant application included an isotope study to determine how old the water is. Don shared that, anecdotally, the wells he knows of are down 5-10 feet compared to previous years. Don added that the model shows water going to the Lower Klamath. He thinks that's where their water is going.
 - Laura added that the wells like his can be incorporated into future years. They didn't have enough previous data to be included in the official monitoring network. Once they've collected enough backlog, though, they can incorporate them.
 - Bill shared that isotope and noble gas studies are included in the application. The isotope study will tell them the distance the groundwater travels and the elevations.

A draft version of the Annual Report will be distributed to the Advisory Committee for comments by the end of February. The final version will be submitted by April 1. If any members of the public would like to review it, they should touch base with Matt.

Pat shared that it's likely the Butte GSP is in the first or second batch of reviews, since they submitted a single plan to cover the Basin. We can expect to see results as soon as the summer. Unless a plan has significant issues that warrant an incomplete determination, DWR will likely provide conditional approvals, with corrections to be made in the Five-Year GSP Updates.

Janae Scruggs, CDFW, shared that they've hired a Water Rights Coordinator for the region, Philip Cramer. Others such as herself will still be involved.

- Matt prompted Steve Burton to share about new role changes for CDFW's Butte Valley Wildlife Refuge.

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

6. Committee Member Updates and Discussion

The Advisory Committee started to continue the discussion on juniper removal:

- Matt asked whether anyone has approached the local Resource Conservation District (RCD) to see if they can spearhead juniper removal projects.
 - No AC members had contacted the RCD.
 - Don Bowen suggested that it might be possible, but he is feeling frustrated by grant processes.

The Committee asked clarifying questions about the **SGM Implementation Grant** proposal:

- Randy requested additional details about how the money in the implementation grant would be distributed.
 - Laura shared details for how the funding will be distributed across the components and the group reviewed the grant components on-screen.
 - Richard asked whether the AC would have input in developing the detailed budget before it is approved by the GSA Board.
 - Facilitator Emily Finnegan suggested adding this as a discussion item at the July or September meeting, after DWR releases the draft grant award.
 - Matt mentioned that they also have to determine whether an RFP is required to bring consultants on board.
 - Greg Herman raised a question about the grant administration rate of 10%.
 - Laura specified that the 10% rate is required by DWR. She also clarified that the grant does not cover anything that could be viewed as overhead, like travel reimbursement.
- John Bennett asked a question in the chat, about how the PMAs included in the GSP were taken into account for the grant application.
 - GSA staff and consultants explained the process the Advisory Committee underwent in September to review the PMAs from Chapter 4 of the GSP and put forward priorities for the technical team to develop into the components which were submitted. This process included references during the AC meeting to the PMA Chapter 4, as well as follow-up ad hoc committees to clarify scopes of work for the application. Matt will post the September presentation slides on the SGMA website.

The Committee continued their discussion on **juniper removal**:

- Prior to next meeting, the GSA will identify other entities who are pursuing juniper removal projects or would have project proposals in mind.
- Committee members suggested pulling someone from the US Forest Service to attend the April meeting. There was also a suggestion for having someone from Blue Forest Conservation; Randy went on a great tour with them recently. Randy provided additional details:
 - Blue Forest has projects planned, but they are falling short on available funds.
 - Richard noted that US Forest Service projects are notoriously burdensome because they need to go through National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, unless the activities are covered under a categorical exclusion.
- Matt asked AC members to provide input on whether there are significant private lands available for juniper removal projects.
 - Greg Herman noted that Sierra Pacific and several families have significant land holdings. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been conducting a lot of juniper removal for sage grass, which may be connected. NRCS also has a good source of funding.
 - Don Bowen mentioned a large juniper removal project from the early 2000s that he is aware of. Following this meeting, he will dig up any information he can find related to the fuel reduction study.
- Marisa noted that the AC has the power to form ad hoc committees to continue discussions outside of regular meetings, should that be an option the members want to pursue prior to meeting in April.
- Pat checked the California grants portal and didn't see anything that would be an obvious match for juniper removal, but she will continue to ask around.
- Randy noted that uplands management is about more than just juniper removal. There is real need for forest thinning. There are many pines in the forest that are using groundwater and contributing to elevated fire risks. He took this comment to the forest superintendent. Any crews that are out there to remove juniper should consider also thinning pines.
- Don Bowen mentioned a Bear Bar project. He will try to find more information.
- The Committee discussed exploring the connection to wildfire mitigation funds:
 - Laura found fire prevention/fuel reduction grants posted on Cal FIRE site: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/>

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

- Matt shared that Supervisor Haupt has been involved in fire resiliency efforts and has supported the push for applying to various grants. Matt will touch base with him to see what's in the works.
- Don noted that the Inflation Act may include some wildland reduction funds.
- Richard echoed the opportunities for tying groundwater management to wildfire mitigation.
- [Link to information about wildfire funding in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill](#)

Richard asked Matt and Laura to investigate these grant applications and see if they can get something together, through coordination with the County.

7. Other Agency Updates

Pat Vellines (DWR) expanded on the update she provided earlier to note that:

- AEM survey data factsheets are available. She has sent them to Matt.
- Pat also noted that she plans to retire this summer and a new DWR regional coordinator may be present with her at the April meeting.

8. Closing, Next Steps

Marisa shared about the Board Workshop on Strategic Planning for SGMA, to be held on February 7. The meeting will be in person at the Board of Supervisors Chambers in Yreka with an option to join virtually. The Workshop will seek direction from the GSA Board on the development of a Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document, including a discussion of results from stakeholder assessment interviews and the draft Strategy Document vision statement, goals, and strategies. There will be a second workshop to discuss specific tactics or actions.

The next AC meeting will be held in person on Wednesday April 26. Additional information (including whether a virtual option will be offered) will be distributed closer to the date. Topics for future meetings include:

- Implementing juniper removal projects in coordination with other partners.
- Reviewing DWR draft grant awards and discussion of detailed budgets.

9. Meeting Adjourned

The meeting adjourned by 5:00 P.M.

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

MEETING PARTICIPANTS:

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Richard Nelson (Chair)
Greg Herman
Don Bowen (Vice-Chair)
Randy Jertberg
Don Crawford
Steve Burton

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Melissa High
Howard Wynant
Steve Lutz

Agency Staff and Members of the Public:

Janae Scruggs, CDFW
John Bennett
Pat Vellines, DWR
Philip Cramer CDFW

Project Team:

Matt Parker, GSA staff
Marisa Perez-Reyes, Stantec
Emily Finnegan, Stantec
Laura Foglia, Larry Walker and Associates
Bill Rice, Larry Walker and Associates
Katrina Arredondo, Larry Walker and Associates
Helen Zhou, Larry Walker and Associates