California State University Sacramento
Center for Collaborative Policy

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Implementation of the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in Siskiyou County, California

Situation Assessment Themes, Findings & Initial Recommendations for Butte Valley

Butte Valley Basin Advisory Committee
December 12th, 2018

Presentation Outline

- Assessment Purpose, Process and Interviewees
- Overall Pulse in the Butte Valley Basin
- Key Themes and Findings
- Questions, Clarifications and Reactions
- Initial Recommendations: Next Steps
- Longer-term Planning Considerations
- Charter Discussion

Assessment Purpose

- Enable introductions between the facilitation team and different stakeholders, tribes, County Supervisors, District staff, and other interested parties.
- Learn about the range of perspectives, issues and interests surrounding groundwater use/management.
- Present and discuss themes and findings with advisory committees in three basins – Scott, Butte and Shasta.
- Utilize results to devise an optimal governance structure, schedule and workplan for each committee.

Assessment Process

- Phone interviews and some face-to-face meetings.
- All meetings confidential, non-attributable.
- Participants encouraged to be candid.
- CCP staff conducted analysis of findings and prepared report for District staff and committee consideration.
- Report findings and recommendations structured to foster committee discussion of governance/next steps.

List of Interviewees

- Advisory committee members (most, not all).
  - Carol McKay – City of Dorris
  - Don Bowen – Residential water user
  - Greg Herman – Private Pumper
  - Patrick Graham – Butte Valley Wildlife Area (CDFW)
  - Richard Nelson – Private pumper
  - Steve Albaugh – Private pumper
  - Steve Lutz – Butte Valley Irrigation District
- County Supervisors, CA Farm Bureau, District staff and DWR staff.

Overall Pulse in the Butte Valley Basin

- Groundwater conditions broadly perceived as good, with a few highlighting possible present and future sustainability concerns.
- Several planning ideas but also some skepticism about SGMA and an identified need for more education and information.
- A range of different but connected challenges identified – suggested solutions focus on committee structure/function.
- Many stress the importance of collaboration and community outreach and education.
- Success seen as a sustainable water supply for agriculture, municipal areas and the environment

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Key Themes and Findings

Perceptions of Groundwater Conditions

Most common theme – Conditions perceived by many as good as long as previous winter snowpack is sufficient.

- Monitoring not showing major declines
- Waiting on DWR monitoring data from west side areas
- Recharge occurs quickly in spring after heavy snow year
- No water quality issues detected yet (e.g., nitrates)
- No surface water/groundwater interconnection like Shasta and Scott Valley

Key Themes and Findings

Perceptions of Groundwater Conditions

Additional finding – A few sustainability concerns cited.

- Minor drop in groundwater elevation during summer though not significant
- Some long-term residents needing to dig deeper wells
- Drought, lack of rain or snowfall, and products that require more water may lead to future sustainability challenges

"We have a unique situation here in Butte Valley as the 14,000 ft. Mt. Shasta provides a large amount of water in creeks on the south end of the valley, and disappears into underground volcanic formations. This gives us enormous opportunity each year for replenishment of our groundwater supply."

Key Themes and Findings

Main Issues to Consider in Developing a SGMA GSP

Key themes – Some skepticism of SGMA process, need for public education and a plan that sustains water without overregulating.

Key finding – Several planning topics and concerns identified.

- Figure out how much we are pumping in relationship to underground aquifer supplies – if there a problem, determine how to address it
- Determine how much can be pumped and how much agriculture and other development can occur
- Provide education on why this planning process vital for the local economy and natural environment

Key Themes and Findings

Main Issues to Consider in Developing a SGMA GSP

Key finding – Several planning topics and concerns identified.

- Consider how to develop a flexible plan that does not overregulate
- Work to achieve sustainability while protecting private property
- Set standards and metrics for maintaining ideal groundwater levels
- Build efficiencies/best practices into farming practices (i.e., water use)
- Address concerns around metering and potential costs associated with future groundwater monitoring efforts

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Key Themes and Findings

Challenges and Possible Barriers to Success

Key Finding – Many different but connected challenges identified.

- Still need more information about the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and what we are supposed to do with the plan we develop
- Concerns about prohibitive costs to farmers and ranchers
- Perception of agriculture versus environment – allocation, recreation, economy
- Entrenched views and resistance to change if change is needed
- Community resistance to SGMA implementation before it is well understood

Key Themes and Findings

Ways to Resolve Identified Challenges

Key Finding – No common theme but several suggestions related to advisory committee structure and function.

- Some perceive no barriers – get data, consider it, and come up with a plan
- Have a strong committee that reflects the range of community interests
- Conduct community outreach and develop consistent educational messaging
- Integrate information, show a willingness to compromise and be transparent
- Bring in U.C. Davis technical team to help committee understand scientific information, what needs to be done, what is the aim and function of the plan

Key Themes and Findings

Opportunities and Ways to Collaborate

Key Theme – Many stress the importance of collaboration.

- Engage each other respectfully, have a thorough discussion and get technical support – all of these things can contribute to consensus solutions

- Build an effective advisory committee that reflects the diversity of interests in our community and allows us to maintain local control

- Educate the community about the importance and value of planning and bring their input into the process – utilize local communication sources

"The advisory committee will help us identify solutions and maintain local control. A strong committee will help also help us to communicate this important message to the wider public and secure their input and buy-in to the process."

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Key Themes and Findings

Opportunities and Ways to Collaborate

Key Theme – Many stress the importance of collaboration.

- Work together locally to develop a basin-specific plan for Butte Valley, as we are unique compared to Shasta Valley and Scott Valley
- Make sure to bring in relevant local knowledge and experience
- Take advantage of this collaborative planning process to get past political polarization – it's problematic, not easy, but we need to do it

"We need to do this groundwater planning now or we're not going to have water later. Or worse, someone is going to tell us to stop pumping. If we don't do this now, the future for our kids and grandkids will be bleak."

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Key Themes and Findings

What Advisory Committee Success Looks Like

Key Theme – Again, focus on collaboration and mutual benefits.

- A sustainable water supply for both agriculture and the environment
- We listen to each other, address needs and challenges, advise the county on what we see as workable solutions, and county responds to our input
- We contribute to a workable and flexible plan that doesn't overregulate and need to be constantly revisited
- We develop and agree on a management process for how we change/limit our consumption if we face undesirable groundwater conditions
- Outreach and education in the community helps us get buy-in to solutions

Questions, clarifications and initial reactions?

Initial Recommendations: Next Steps

- Finish recruiting and building out full advisory committee membership composition.
- Facilitate Brown Act education and training.
- Discuss and agree to a committee governance structure.
- Develop a workplan and regular meeting schedule.
- Begin integrating science with support from the technical team.
- Collaboratively develop and implement a communication and engagement strategy as SGMA work unfolds.

Initial Charter Discussion

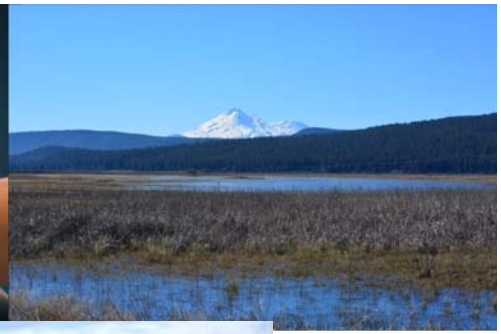
- What is a charter and why have one?
- Sources of information for the charter
  - Groundwater Sustainability Agency documents
  - Situation assessment results
  - CCP collaboration experience
- Membership composition
- Advisory committee goals
- Member roles and responsibilities

Longer-term Planning Considerations

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies must:

Consider "all interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater" including:

- Agriculture
- Domestic users
- Public & private water systems
- Tribes
- Environmental users
- Disadvantaged communities
- Others



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Longer-term Planning Considerations

Groundwater Sustainability Plans must:

- Describe the basin conditions, using a hydrologic conceptual model
- Describe the basin-specific monitoring network
- Establish minimum thresholds and measurable objectives to avoid undesirable results:
  - Groundwater-level declines
  - Reduction in groundwater storage
  - Seawater intrusion
  - Water quality degradation
  - Land subsidence
  - Surface water depletion
- Identify projects and management actions needed to achieve or maintain sustainable conditions within 20 years
- GSP must be completed by January 31, 2022 or triggers state intervention

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