

Siskiyou County Sustainable Groundwater Management  
**Shasta Valley Advisory Committee Meeting**  
Meeting Summary

April 27, 2023, 3:00 – 6:00 P.M.  
Held in person only at the Shasta Transit Station

**Action Items:**

- Matt Parker to follow up with Chris Watt to discuss whether the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) would like to add the Scott and/or Shasta Valleys to the groundwater well sampling schedule for 2023.
- Pat Vellines offered to connect Ayn Perry with Tito Cervantes at DWR, on the topic of their crop surveys.

**Attachments/Links:**

- PowerPoint Presentation Slides (attached)

**Attendees:** see last page

**MEETING SUMMARY:**

**1. Call to Order, Introductions, and Agenda Review**

Chair John Tannaci opened the meeting, conducted a roll call of attendees, established quorum, and reviewed the Agenda.

**2. Approval of Past Meeting Summary**

Committee Members discussed progress on the previous meeting's action items:

- Justin Holmes was going to connect with Larry Walker Associates (LWA) about Safe Harbor projects.
- Grant Johnson was supportive of the idea of updating the Shasta model, which is currently awaiting funding from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Implementation grant.
- The group discussed available funding, noting:
  - Matt and Grant exchanged a few emails offline.
  - LWA submitted several grant applications to fund updates to the model. They were successful in receiving some funds to update the Scott Valley model.
  - Eli Scott, Regional Water Quality Control Board, reminded the group about equipment available through monitoring projects.

No revisions to the previous meeting minutes were offered. Blair Hart motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Grant. The Committee voted to approve and post the January 26, 2023 Shasta Valley Groundwater Advisory Committee Meeting Summary to the GSA website.

**3. Public Comment Period – Non-Agenda Items and Updates from Other Agencies**

Members of the public and representatives from other agencies were invited to provide comments unrelated to meeting agenda items and updates from their agencies, respectively.

Chris Watt, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board), shared that the groundwater well sampling dataset collected in the Scott and Shasta Valleys in 2021 is available along with a memo. The paper copy has been provided to Matt and he plans to share the data with LWA. They are working to pull the data into an electronic file, which will become shareable through LWA but not posted on the Water Board website. He thanked those who volunteered their wells for sampling.

- In response to a question from a member of the public about whether the Regional Water Board planned to sample this year, Chris replied that it wasn't on their schedule, but is open to discussions with the GSA if it's desired.

Charles Perez, Big Springs resident, asked whether the State is still in a drought and provided a comment expressing concerns with trucked water supporting illegal marijuana grows.

Eli Scott, Regional Water Board, shared that conditional TMDL waivers for Scott and Shasta (which allow waste to be discharged from those agricultural valleys) were renewed for the next two and a half years. In the next two and half years, he plans to collaborate with local stakeholders in the grower, rancher, and fishery communities to prepare for the next waivers/permits.

Ginger Sammito, member of the public, shared that water is running in the Big Springs canals and that water trucks are present there, though she's unsure whether they are currently taking water. Ginger believes that the draft well permit

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application raises more questions than it provides answers and shared that she sees the exclusion of wells serving fewer than 15 connections as a big issue.

#### **4. District Staff Updates**

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

- DWR approved the Shasta Valley GSP this morning, as well as the Scott Valley GSP. There is no news on the Butte Valley GSP yet. Matt congratulated the Committee and said that the corrective actions are minor and have to do with data collection, which the technical team was already planning to address.
- The Advisory Committee charter has been amended to allow vacancies to be filled at any time. The charter now also explicitly delineates the two private pumper seats, as one from the east and one from the west side of I-5. The seat west of I-5 is still vacant and Matt encouraged volunteers to apply.
  - Any Committee Members who wish to step down should contact Matt.

Gregg Werner requested an update on about identifying and securing grant funds. What are the basin's financial needs?

#### **5. DWR Updates**

Pat Vellines provided updates from DWR:

- Draft awards for the DWR SGM implementation grant will be released in June.
- The basin's Annual Report was submitted by the April 1 deadline.
- There is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) technical workshop on 180-day permits coming up on May 3.
- Pat will be retiring from DWR on May 12 and Michelle Dooley will be the new Regional Coordinator.

Pat shared additional information about the shortfall in available funds and the plan to identify more money in the State budget.

- Grant Johnson clarified the timeline for when work can begin. Although the contract likely won't be in place until late fall or January, they will be reimbursed for work based on what they see in the award. Laura Foglia, LWA, shared that they have ideas for ways to improve next year's Annual Report, if they can start work. Pat asked Laura to send a follow-up email to her to forward to Kelley List.
- Laura asked about why the comment period is so long and Pat replied it's so they can hopefully fold in additional awards with the budget revision.
- Gregg highlighted the importance of continuing discussion about additional funding sources, given the basin isn't likely to receive the full reward. The fee study is included in the DWR SGM implementation grant request.
- The Committee asked why they didn't get funding from CDFW in Shasta. Janae Scruggs, CDFW, said they offered comments on it, and they should be able to resubmit.
- Pat added that the ask from the non-critically over-drafted (COD) basins, which are prioritized in this award, is much less than the COD basins, so they're more likely to get those funds.

#### **4. District Updates (continued)**

Emily Finnegan, Stantec Facilitator, provided an overview of considerations on potential hybrid options for future Advisory Committee Meetings in light of the recent removal of the COVID-19 state of emergency and solicited input from the Committee on their preference between the three options available:

- 1) No teleconferencing option is provided. Committee Members and members of the public all participate in-person.
- 2) A teleconferencing option is provided. Members of the public have the option to participate in-person or remotely. Committee Members participate in-person.
- 3) A teleconferencing option is provided. Members of the public have the option to participate in-person or remotely. Committee Members could choose to participate remotely either: under the Brown Act, at a publicly accessible and noticed teleconference location within the basin boundary; under AB 2449, if they meet the "just cause" or "emergency" conditions; or as members of the public, without their voting authority.

Some Committee Members expressed support for option 3:

- Grant pointed out that it's a large county, and people outside the basin are also interested in tracking the conversation. He pointed out the importance of having a remote option for public participants, and highlighted that people have busy lives, particularly those raising children who cannot be left unsupervised. It makes sense for the Committee to avail themselves of current technology.

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- Gregg was also in favor.

Some Committee Members added considerations about option 1:

- Blair shared that the Planning Commission is leaning towards option 1 for the sake of transparency. He would defer to County counsel.
  - Natalie Reed added considerations about the necessity for stable audio and video connection for remote Committee Members.
- Tristan Allen supported option 1 for the purposes of operating a smooth, uninterrupted meeting.

The group concluded that they would pursue option 3 with the understanding that Committee Members may only use the virtual option twice per year and they need to communicate with Matt in advance to provide emergency or just cause. A quorum still needs to be present in person.

Ayn Perry, Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District (RCD) and member of the public, applauded the decision and added that since the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meeting options have significantly improved the accessibility of meetings to members of the public. She encouraged the County to focus on improving the capacity of public agencies to provide virtual options. Emily added that facilitation can help prevent disruptions.

## **6. Receive Input on Draft County Well Permitting Guidelines**

Matt Parker introduced colleagues Hailey Lang and Dan Wessell, County Environmental Health, and Natalie Reed, GSA legal counsel, and set up expectations for this discussion. Executive Orders (EO) N-7-22 and N-3-23 require counties to coordinate with GSAs when reviewing and approving applications for well permits, with exceptions for de minimus water users and public water systems. A draft permitting review process was brought to the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors in February, where the Board acted to request input from the Groundwater Advisory Committees for the basins across the County. The materials were distributed to the Advisory Committee members electronically in advance of this meeting.

Justin Holmes remarked on the basin's complex hydrogeology, expressing doubt that anyone truly understands how the water moves, and that it's likely different on the west and east sides. He asked whether there will be an appeal process to challenge determinations that are made by the certified hydrogeologist (CHG)?

Tristan shared additional concerns that CHGs would not want to subject themselves to the liability associated with signing off on the evaluations. Tristan asked what the County would determine to be "nearby," for the EO's statement on impacts to nearby wells.

Natalie provided information about the indemnification agreement, which is the standard one used for land use entitlements under the planning department.

Blair noted that under conjunctive use, everyone has a right to use the water under their property unless it hurts their neighbor, however, his well has been dried up by his neighbors. He wants to know why he can't redrill his well to go deeper to reestablish his original well use.

- Grant noted that this well permit process would help to prevent situations where shallower wells go dry as a result of newer, deeper wells being drilled by neighbors and could prevent situations like Blair's, moving forward.

Tristan said the process doesn't address the issue of domestic wells that pump more than 2 acre-feet per year for the purpose of illegally growing marijuana.

In response to a question about whether the GSP allows for increased pumping or not, Laura replied that the basin should not substantially increase consumptive use. They used a land and water-based approach to estimate consumptive use.

- Tristan observed that there is little to no productive agricultural lands being added. In fact, the basin is developing on top of some ag lands, increasing the pressure on surface water. Laura echoed that not significantly increasing the irrigated acreage was the decision that most people were on board with.
- John asked if there is enough water "in the bank" to permit more wells? Laura replied that they don't know yet. There's a big chunk in the plan with data gaps that need to be addressed. No one has all the information right now, and because the data is too sparse, the data points they do have may not be representative of real trends.

Gregg inquired about the permanence of the process.

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- Natalie clarified that it would be adopted by resolution, not an ordinance. The Public Trust findings would be a requirement indefinitely and there is a strong chance that the language in the EO will be memorialized in legislation.
- Justin Holmes commented that it may ultimately prove useful for the basin to have this process in place, notwithstanding the Executive Order mandate, if it helps them achieve long-term sustainability.

The Committee expressed a desire for the process to be flexible enough to address emerging concerns associated with increased residential pumping. There are concerns that potential impacts from increased use of groundwater wells for residential subdivisions may overtake impacts from increased irrigated agriculture (since those lands are more built-out).

- Grant urged the County to treat domestic wells in subdivisions differently from rural domestic wells. The ordinance should not grant blanket approval of domestic wells. He urged the County to consider cumulative impacts for the watershed, and that nuance needs to be hashed out and layered into the guidance.
- Gregg suggested the County consider “grandfathering in” replacements for existing production wells and that no new wells, whether ag or residential (for a large subdivision), should be categorically exempt, given that any new groundwater use may push the basin out of equilibrium.

The Committee discussed how the cumulative impact of domestic well pumping in the basin is not currently known. Developing such an estimate would likely require either metering (which one participant noted could cost approximately \$15,000 per meter) or a voluntary well inventory program.

- Ayn (member of the public) asked if crop use surveys would be helpful in this regard. Is cannabis a category in the DWR survey? Pat replied that it is and suggested she could connect Ayn with Tito Cervantes at DWR.
- Ginger (member of the public) asked where the cut-off for water system connections comes from.
- The group clarified that the process includes language to prevent drilling domestic wells over a certain size.
- Ginger asked how the GSP tracks incremental changes to the groundwater table based on new permits.
  - Laura replied that no new permits have been issued.
  - Additionally, the GSA doesn't have the location or number of domestic wells in the Valley. They discussed the idea of including a well inventory program in the SGM implementation grant. Once they have a number, they can estimate the volume but right now they don't have the domestic wells included in the plan because they don't have the information.
  - Laura noted that right now, other subbasins aren't estimating the full two acre-feet per year (AFY) for domestic wells.
    - Grant elaborated that, taken in whole, the cumulative impact could be a lot and 2 AFY may be a high estimate.

Members of the Committee remarked that a CHG may find it difficult to determine whether a new well is not likely to interfere with nearby wells, since the phrase can be interpreted broadly. They asked about the County's ability to make such a determination, to which Matt and Natalie responded that the County doesn't have the ability to conduct that evaluation and they would need to look to a CHG.

- On this topic, members of the Committee suggested that once the basin's groundwater model has been updated, it could be used to help conduct the evaluations.
- Grant observed that taking a conservative approach to something you don't fully understand makes the most sense.

Blair raised concerns around the EO potentially overstepping existing water rights. Natalie clarified that the EO's authority stems from the governor's powers in a drought emergency. Grant expanded on his earlier point that this process could help prevent the “race to the bottom” mindset.

Gregg suggested the County consider allowing a certain amount of pumping under a categorical exemption, but once the amount is exceeded it would trigger the regulation. He also suggested that the County consider adding a metering requirement for new wells, to measure new impacts to the aquifer.

Matt clarified that determinations on permit applications would likely be routed directly to the GSAs' decision-makers, not the Advisory Committee, given the potential for legal conflict.

The feedback from each of the basins will be summarized for the Board to hear and act on at one of their May or June meetings. Matt expects the Board to tell the GSA to revise the process based on the Advisory Committees' feedback and then it would go back to the Board to adopt. Matt will share the revised process with the Committee when it is available.

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**7. Break**

The Advisory Committee took a 10-minute break and reconvened at around 4:50.

**8. Highlights from the Annual Report**

Laura shared information about the Annual Report which was submitted this month. She provided an overview of hydrological conditions and basin modeling efforts. See attached PowerPoint slides. Key take-aways include continued drought conditions and an overall decrease in groundwater storage, though she noted that those wells are on the west side and may not be representative of the entire basin. There is a good explanation for what is happening there, in the Annual Report.

Laura shared information about specific wells in the basin, to demonstrate how groundwater elevations have responded to the precipitation events this winter.

- Committee Members held detailed discussion about particular monitoring wells and data collection methods. Laura noted that the TSS monitoring well that was installed in Gazelle isn't online yet.
- Laura confirmed there were flows in Willow Creek this year, up until the pumps were turned on. The monitoring well data showed recovery in Willow Creek right away, whereas it took up to 3-6 weeks in other areas. Justin Holmes added details about how the creek is appearing and disappearing in places.
- Laura shared that it took more than a week for the water to travel from one point to another in the Scott ditches. Justin Holmes added that part of ditch maintenance is keeping the ground wet, to facilitate recharge.
- Laura shared that they plan to use the model next year to do an even better job to show changes in storage.

**9. Receive Input on Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document**

Emily Finnegan and Marisa Perez-Reyes (Stantec) presented the findings from the stakeholder assessment conducted in fall 2022 in preparation for the Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document. The presentation included the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, Vision Statement, Goals, and Strategies. Emily and Marisa solicited the Committee's input on recommended actions for each strategy. See attached presentation slides.

**SWOT analysis**

- Justin Holmes expressed an interest in expanding the reach of this document, noting that it is important for people in southern California and metro areas to understand the challenges that northern and rural Californian communities are experiencing with groundwater.
  - Emily responded with reflections about the level of awareness she's observed in conducting work in southern California. There does seem to be an understanding about the costs and unreliability of imported water. She also reflected on DWR's concerted effort to bring GSAs together through Forums.
- Grant reflected on the value of conservation as the most cost-effective opportunity.
- Tristan emphasized prioritizing local control and long-term partnerships.
- John Tannaci supported the continuation of this group's strong citizen advisory role.

**Decision-Making**

- Grant suggested the GSA coordinate with State and federal agencies including CDFW, DWR, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. He highlighted the Shasta Valley basin's interconnected surface waters as grounds for involving surface water groups.
- Ayn, member of the public, suggested the GSA coordinate with the Shasta Valley RCD, given their similar mission and earlier partnership. The RCD is interested in advancing monitoring in the basin and are working to help track down funding to support LWA.
- Gregg remarked that there are strategies in the GSP that will require coordination with land use planning agencies.
  - Blair added that there is currently no coordination occurring between cities and counties on the topic.

**Funds and Resources**

- The Committee discussed the staffing need for support with identifying, applying for, and especially managing grants.
  - Matt shared that departments across the County need more staff for grant administration work.
  - Part of the grant application is to hire a technical person who can go in the field.

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- Matt shared examples of how they're working together with other entities to subcontract with groups like the RCD, or restoration and monitoring groups. Ayn and Grant jumped in with examples. The need doesn't have to be filled with permanent staff.
- Gregg remarked that to implement three GSPs, you need three Matt Parkers. The group pointed out that having one person responsible for three basins is a vulnerability and emphasized the need for there to be back-ups.
  - Blair commented on the difficulties of hiring County staff due in part to challenges with offering competitive wages in an area with such a small tax base.

**10. Committee Member Updates and Discussion**

John Tannaci shared that The Nature Conservancy is in discussions about Parks Creek Ranch. He also provided updates about SPI Nursery, which is planting trees at a high rate.

Pat shared that her role will be filled by two people, one of which will be Monique Gaido.

Blair asked how the AEM data is being incorporated. Laura replied that she will be building it into the model and can bring it to the Advisory Committee for future discussion.

**11. Closing, Next Steps**

Matt noted that the timing for the July meeting may be adjusted and further details will follow.

**12. Meeting Adjourned**

The meeting adjourned by 6:00 P.M.

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**MEETING PARTICIPANTS:**

Advisory Committee Members Present:

John Tannaci, Chair  
Lisa Faris  
Gregg Werner  
Grant Johnson, Vice-Chair  
Justin Sandahl  
Justin Holmes  
Blair Hart  
Tristan Allen

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Steve Mains  
Robert Moser

Agency Staff and Members of the Public:

Angelina Cook, Shasta Headwaters  
Ayn Perry, Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District  
Charles Perez, Big Springs resident  
Chris Watt, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Colleen Alvarez  
David Webb, Friends of Shasta River  
Dustin Linder  
Eli Scott, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Ginger Sammito  
Heidi Martin  
Janae Scruggs, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Monique Gaido, California Department of Water Resources  
Nick Joslin, Mt Shasta Ecology Center  
Pat Vellines, California Department of Water Resources

Project Team:

Matt Parker, GSA staff  
Natalie Reed, GSA counsel  
Emily Finnegan, Stantec  
Marisa Perez-Reyes, Stantec  
Laura Foglia, Larry Walker and Associates  
Kelsey McNeill, Larry Walker and Associates  
Dan Wessell, Siskiyou County Environmental Health  
Hailey Lang, Siskiyou County Environmental Health