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

Situation Assessment Themes, Findings & Initial Recommendations for Scott Valley

Scott Valley Basin Advisory Committee
December 13th, 2018

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Presentation Outline

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

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Assessment Purpose

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

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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)
  - Brandon Fawaz / Private pumper
  - Crystal Robinson / Quartz Valley Tribe
  - Drew Braugh / California Trout
  - Jason Finley / Private pumper
  - Michael Stapleton / Residential water user
  - Tom Jopson / Private pumper
  - Tom Menne / Scott Valley Irrigation District
- Supervisors, tribes (Karuk and Yurok), CA Farm Bureau, District staff, DWR and interested parties

Overall Pulse in the Scott Valley

- Groundwater conditions perceived as good by many, but different views of what is understood from science/monitoring
- Wide range of ideas about what to consider as the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is collaboratively developed
- Broad interest to protect the economy and the environment
- Several challenges and potential barriers identified, but also many suggestions on how to address them
- Self-interests are better described than views of group success at this stage, but many ideas about collaboration put forward

Key Themes and Findings

Perceptions of Groundwater Conditions

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

Key finding – Some contested or otherwise different responses on what monitoring and scientific studies show:

- Groundwater levels are not dropping, with exception of dry years
- Numerous lines of evidence demonstrate pumping impacts on rivers
- Literature suggests disconnect between Scott river and small tributaries
- Pumping/streamflow impacts are different in different parts of basin
- Monitoring shows E. coli is present in some areas

Key Themes and Findings

Current or Future Undesirable Groundwater Conditions

Key finding – No concerns among many, but several examples of current and future concerns cited by some.

"The basin refills every year. We have a 'bathtub-like" topography and geology the captures, stores and provides our water… this is life in the basin."

Areas of concern/interest

- Interconnectedness of surface water/groundwater and impacts on rivers
- Wells sunk near rivers – concern flow impairments degrade fish habitat
- Need to conduct more science and better understand system
- Need to manage upper watershed – tree thinning and development

Key Themes and Findings

Main Issues to Consider in Developing a SGMA GSP

Key finding – Wide range of responses on what to explore and consider in developing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

- Plan goals, surface water/groundwater interaction, amount pumped, water budget and water quality
- Impacts on the local economy and subsidies for water use cuts
- Relationship between groundwater pumping and impact on rivers
- How to better balance surface water and groundwater extraction and use/store high flows when available
- How to maintain flows that support healthy fish populations
- Monitoring, enforcement and best agriculture practices

Key Themes and Findings

How to Address Economic and Environmental Issues

Key theme – Broad interest to protect both agriculture and the river, although some think the system is fine.

- Improve water capture/storage and pump at times that do not impact fish
- Identify and consider all information on pumping and salmon
- Acknowledge importance of getting more water in tributaries
- Consider science foundational and independent:
  - Build on existing studies (U.C. Davis researchers widely respected)
  - Model groundwater flows and alternative management scenarios
- Ensure tribes and environmental groups have a seat at the table

Key Themes and Findings

Challenges and Possible Barriers to Success

Key Finding – Many different but connected challenges identified.

- Longtime division between farming and non-farming interests
- Farmers unfairly get blamed as the sole source of water problems
- Dry years create winners and losers relative to water use and allocation
- Coho not acknowledged by some as native to the Scott river
- Perceptions of farmer/water user resistance to change practices
- Uncertainty/ambiguity regarding the law, regulations and enforcement

Key Themes and Findings

Ways to Resolve Identified Challenges

Key Finding – No common theme but several suggestions.

- Identify objective criteria for success and seek common ground
- Listen actively to understand the needs of others (e.g., fish/farms)
- Agree early on a common set of facts and then build the discussion
- Explore and better understand pumping, fish and flow in dry years
- Conduct modeling to identify needed changes in management
- Identify and secure funding to support best practices and restoration projects

"Reasonable ideas and expectations among advisory committee members will lead to reasonable measures that we can all live with."

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Key Themes and Findings

Opportunities and Ways Collaborate

Key Finding – Most focused on describing challenges, yet many important ideas about collaboration still put forward.

- Bring our respective knowledge and educate the public about the process
- Ensure information provided by the technical team informs discussions
- Make sure to have discussions based on information and not just opinions
- Come up with new and novel ways for farmers, tribes and environmentalists to constructively engage each other and find workable solutions
- Ensure all the affected and interested parties are at the table

Key Themes and Findings

What Advisory Committee Success Looks Like

Key Finding – Many spoke to their own interests, but some responses put forward speak to the whole community.

- Water users, districts, tribes and the environmental community collaborate constructively and make it work for everyone (get past "dug in" positions).
- A GSP, supported by all stakeholder interests and the District that…
  - Incorporates technical science, local knowledge and community interests
  - Maintains a sustainable water source and prevents overdraft
  - Protects the local economy and improves best agriculture practices
  - Improves fall flows and protects the environment
  - Helps avoid lawsuits and state intervention

Outstanding questions or issues needing clarification?

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 draft charter:
  - Groundwater Sustainability Agency documents
  - Situation assessment results
  - CCP collaboration experience
- Membership composition
- Advisory committee goals
- Member roles and responsibilities

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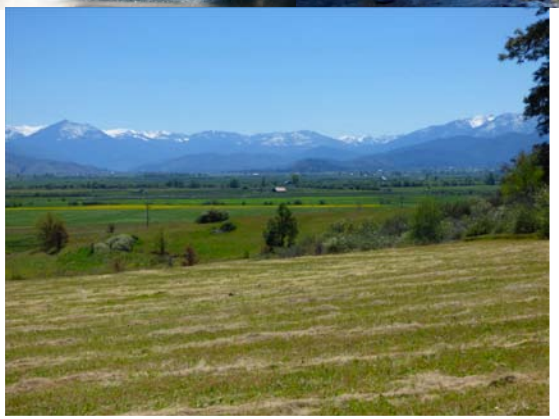
Longer-term Planning Considerations

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 SGMA 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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