

BOARD MEETING RECAP: APRIL 2020

SMGWA Board of Directors Dive into Groundwater Level Discussion

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency's April board meeting was held Thursday, April 23. The meeting, including time for public comment and participation on each agenda item, was conducted via all-remote, web- and phone-based access due to the Santa Cruz County Shelter-in-Place Order response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The meeting's informational session centered on groundwater levels, including both historical and current conditions, as well as the agency's goals for future groundwater levels. Evaluating groundwater levels is one of the state-required elements of the Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The presentation was led by Georgina King of Montgomery & Associates.

The Santa Margarita Basin includes four primary aquifers: Santa Margarita aquifer, Monterey formation, Lompico aquifer and Butano aquifer. Each has unique characteristics and a particular set of users.

- The aquifer closest to the surface is the Santa Margarita. It is about 100 feet deep and is the most vulnerable to fluctuations in climate conditions. That means it recharges the fastest during periods of rainfall, but also depletes the most quickly during dry times or when lots of pumping occurs. Most private well owners draw from this aquifer.
- The next aquifer down is the Monterey formation, which is not a true aquifer and a very few wells pump from it. It is a clay layer found in limited areas of the basin.
- The third layer down, the Lompico aquifer, is the main source of supply for local water districts. It is generally found around depths of 500-700 feet below the surface.
- Finally, the Butano aquifer is deepest and occurs at around 1,000 feet below the surface of the valley floor. Currently, only the Scotts Valley Water District extracts water from this aquifer.

The aquifers aren't evenly deposited throughout the basin. Rather, the underground bowl-shaped basin supports varying levels and depths of each aquifer in different areas. The deeper layers are exposed to the land surface in the upgradient of hillsides, which are the principal recharge zone for these aquifers.

As a required element of the GSP, the SMGWA board must set minimum thresholds for groundwater levels in the basin as well as measurable objectives to ensure the basin's sustainability. The board provided input on the significant and unreasonable conditions that will be used to develop a draft qualitative statement for board review.

During another agenda item at the meeting, the board reviewed the 2020-21 fiscal year budget. The total proposed budget is \$1.185 million including \$645,000 in Technical Services; \$116,000 in Facilitation and Outreach Services; \$65,000 in Administrative Support Services; and \$300,000 to establish a Basin Monitoring Network. Two-thirds of the budget will be funded by a state Department of Water Resources grant and the rest comes from member agency contributions: SVWD 60%, SLVWD 30% and County of Santa Cruz 10%.

The next SMGWA Board of Directors meeting will be held Thursday, May 28 at 5:30 p.m. More information at smgwa.org.



SCOTTS VALLEY
WATER DISTRICT
