

Board Meeting Recap: June 2020

SMGWA Board Discusses Goals for Groundwater Levels

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency's June board meeting was held Thursday, June 25. The meeting, including time for public comment and participation on each agenda item, again 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 focused on minimum thresholds and measurable objectives for the chronic lowering of groundwater levels in the basin, a discussion that was led by Georgina King of Montgomery & Associates. The board also received a presentation from Sierra Ryan (County of Santa Cruz) on introduction to projects and managements actions that might be utilized to achieve sustainability of the basin.

How minimum thresholds and measurable objectives are set for each representative monitoring point depends on what changes in groundwater levels are desired. When the goal is to maintain current levels, an historical average could be used. In areas where recovery is desired, an achievable goal will be determined utilizing the groundwater model, which can estimate the effects of various projects and management actions.

There are three aquifers where chronic lowering of groundwater has occurred and increased water levels are desired:

- Santa Margarita Aquifer in the Pasatiempo area
- Monterey Formation in the Scotts Valley area
- Lompico Aquifer in the Scotts Valley area

Maintaining levels elsewhere in these aquifers and also in the Butano Aquifer are the measurable objectives the SMGWA board is currently considering. Developing sustainable management criteria is an iterative process where objectives, goals and necessary actions for achieving them can be adjusted if needed as more data becomes available.

The SMGWA board also reviewed the most-current version of the statement of significant and unreasonable for chronic lowering of groundwater levels: "Significant & unreasonable chronic lowering of groundwater levels occurs if lowered levels materially impair groundwater supply or cause undue financial burden for a significant number of the Basin's beneficial users or uses."

This statement, which is meant to be very general, was updated reflecting input received during the May Board meeting and written comments submitted by Board members after the meeting.

In other action, the SMGWA Board approved the agency's 2020-21 budget.

The next SMGWA Board meeting will be held Thursday, July 23 at 5:30 p.m. More information at smgwa.org.



SCOTTS VALLEY
WATER DISTRICT
