
SANTA MARGARITA Groundwater Agency

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Board Meeting Recap: Nov & Dec 2020

SMGWA Board Finishes 2020 with Workshop, Two Meetings

To round out 2020, Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency held three productive public meetings, including an informational session for private well owner representatives in the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin. The agency welcomed two new board members in December, while continuing to develop the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), a requirement of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SMGA) that is due in early 2022. All meetings, including public comment and participation on agenda items, were conducted via all-remote, web- and phone-based access due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The private well owner meeting on Dec. 2, which was broadcast on Facebook Live in addition to a virtual meeting platform, provided an overview of the GSP process and the role of private well owners (PWOs), including so-called de minimis pumpers, which are those who operate a well that pumps 2 acre-feet or less per year for domestic purposes (typically a well serving one to four households). The role of PWOs has been a part of the discussion since SMGWA was created in 2017, and the meeting aimed to engage with well owners to describe the interactions between the groundwater basin and private water use, and discuss ways individual well users can be good stewards of the aquifer. The conversation also touched on whether fees may be applied to these groundwater users in the future, though there currently are no plans for PWO fees. Meeting participants were given the opportunity to give feedback and ask questions of staff, consultants and board members during the meeting.

The agency's November board meeting was held Monday, Nov. 16. The meeting included an update on the Youth Outreach Program, including the Groundwater Steward Summer Program, an ongoing effort to involve and inform youth and young adults in the Basin about the local groundwater issues and the SGMA. The board revisited the agency's potential role in implementing Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) identified in the GSP. Staff suggested that tapping into projects already being pursued by member agencies could be a way to maximize the benefit of work already being done in the Basin. PMAs must be included in the final GSP but do not need to be "shovel ready" activities.

At the agency's December board meeting, on Wednesday, Dec. 9, two new board members were acknowledged. The San Lorenzo Valley Water District board appointed newly-elected directors Gail Mahood and Tina To to be the District's representatives to the agency with Lois Henry as the alternate. The December meeting was structured as a workshop on groundwater conditions in the Santa Margarita Basin. The board received a refresher on basin conditions, then staff and consultants gathered input from the board and public on locations and types of groundwater problems, consequences of those problems and proposed solutions. The information will assist the upcoming groundwater modeling efforts to help identify solutions to undesirable basin conditions.

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



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