

Board Meeting Recap: May & June 2021

Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan nears completion

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency held board meetings Thursday, May 27, and Thursday, June 24, both of which were conducted via all-remote, web- and phone-based access due to the coronavirus prevention guidelines. The Board is working to develop the state-mandated Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), aiming to complete a draft for review at the July 29, 2021, board meeting.

During the May meeting, Sierra Ryan, Interim Water Resources Manager for the County of Santa Cruz, shared a proposed metering program for non de-minimis private pumpers who extract more than 2 acre feet of water from the Basin annually. Only a small number of private pumpers meet this criteria. The metering requirements would go into effect by the end of 2022.

Board members also began learning about the GSP content and review process, including what to expect during the public comment period that will begin in July. Representatives from The Nature Conservancy and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife shared what their respective agencies are looking for in GSPs and answered questions from the board.

In other action in May, consultant Miller Maxfield, Inc., provided a short overview on the Communications & Outreach Plan, its purpose, structure and use; and the Board approved the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

In June, Technical Consultant Georgina King from Montgomery & Associates presented updates on the statuses of the various sections of the GSP, which is due to the Department of Water Resources in early 2022. The Board reviewed the GSP Sustainability Goal and several sections of the GSP. The Sustainability Goal, which was initially developed in fall 2019, works to address chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater in storage, degradation of water quality and depletion of interconnected surface water. Measures that the SMGWA member and cooperating agencies will take to achieve Basin sustainability are focused on increasing Lompico aquifer groundwater levels in the Mount Hermon / south Scotts Valley area. The most immediate action will be to expand conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater using existing infrastructure, King explained.

Board members also are in the process of reviewing four sections of the draft GSP and will provide comments back to staff in advance of the July board meeting. The next SMGWA Board of Directors meeting will be held Thursday, July 22, at 5:30 p.m. More information at www.smgwa.org.