

Board Meeting Recap: Sep 2020

Board Advances Development of Groundwater Sustainability Plan

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency (SMGWA) is just over a year away from submitting its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), a requirement of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Board members have contributed to drafts of the introduction and basin setting sections of the GSP, and working on to developing sustainability measurement criteria for the GSP.

The agency's September board meeting was held Thursday, Sept. 24. The meeting, including public comment on agenda items, again was conducted via all-remote, web- and phone-based access due to the coronavirus outbreak.

At the meeting, the board began reviewing the fourth and final sustainability indicator it needs to consider: reduction of groundwater in storage. Groundwater in storage is directly related to groundwater levels, however, the metric for this indicator is the volume of water pumped instead of groundwater elevations. The board has already reviewed and continued providing input on degraded water quality, depletion of interconnected surface water and chronic lowering of groundwater levels. (While there are six indicators in the SGMA process, only four apply to the SMGWA.)

Also, the board reconsidered the minimum threshold for nitrate and decided to keep the level previously chosen (3mg/L). As the board was informed at the beginning of the SGMA process, the sustainability measurement criteria are complex and will be reviewed and possibly changed several times before including it in the final draft of the GSP.

As the agency continues to develop its GSP, the staff is now identifying possible projects and management actions that would help the basin achieve sustainability. Board members will learn about and discuss those projects at future meetings. The potential projects will be evaluated using the groundwater model to determine the effectiveness of the projects along with the estimated costs for each project.

The next SMGWA Board of Directors meeting will be held Thursday, Oct. 22 at 5:30 p.m. At that meeting, the board will hold a discussion on the definition of "undue financial burden," as used in the statements of significant and unreasonable conditions in the basin, roles and responsibilities of private pumpers as defined in SGMA, proposed changes to the agencies bylaws, water budget and groundwater model simulations.

More information at www.smgwa.org.