

**Napa Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan Public Meeting**  
**Via Zoom**  
**October 6, 2021**  
**Summary of Questions and Comments**

**Scope of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) and the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)**

- *Which GSA manages the Putah Creek watershed in Napa County?*  
There is no GSA for Putah Creek watershed. Not every watershed has a GSA. The Napa-Sonoma Valley Groundwater Basin includes two subbasins—one for Napa Valley Subbasin and one for the Napa-Sonoma Lowlands Subbasin (which includes the Carneros area). A GSP is not required for the Napa-Sonoma Lowlands Subbasin because it is a very low priority.
- *I live in the hills above Calistoga. Is my well affected by or included in this GSP? How does it affect me?*  
The GSP is for the Napa Valley Subbasin which generally includes only the valley floor. If you live in the hillsides, the plan will not apply to you.
- *Is there a separate GSA for the Carneros area?*  
No. The Napa-Sonoma Lowlands Subbasin (which includes the Carneros area) is a very low priority groundwater basin and is not required under SGMA to form a GSA or develop a GSP.
- *SGMA requires the GSP to describe the six undesirable results in their own language. In reviewing the documents for the GSP, I was surprised to see language describing these results with an emphasis on liability and averaging of the data. Why is liability in these descriptions? Some of the descriptions place the responsibility of the undesirable results on the GSA for any actions on their part. Why would this be part of the description to place the responsibility on the GSA (the Napa County BOS) rather than the responsible parties? Are the taxpayers, voters or Napa County considered to be responsible when they are not the responsible parties? The GSA should reject these descriptions in the GSP.*  
The GSA is responsible for ensuring that the basin is managed adequately and they will be held accountable. If they do not manage the basin to ensure groundwater sustainability, DWR, in consultation with the State Water Board, can determine that the GSP is inadequate and the State Water Board has the authority to intervene and identify steps to address deficiencies in basin management. Liability refers to regulated sites under the purview of different agencies related to the sustainability indicator of degradation of water quality. The GSA does not need to duplicate what other agencies are doing but is responsible for making sure that Projects and Management Actions implemented by the GSA don't cause contaminant migration or interfere with control of contamination.
- *In the first public meeting David Morrison stated that the focus of the GSA and the Advisory Committee was groundwater and not surface water. But one of the Undesirable Results of poor groundwater management is the interconnection between the groundwater and surface water, where surface water is impacted by groundwater extraction. The surface water is*

*pertinent and should be recognized as a bellwether of the condition of the groundwater and is therefore important to the proposed management plan.*

The GSA's focus is on groundwater. Depletion of interconnected surface water is one of the six sustainability indicators and is being addressed in the GSP.

- *Will cities like St. Helena be able to enact their own rules and regulations re groundwater?*  
The GSA has the authority to make decisions on groundwater which will apply to the cities.
- *An analysis of the reasons for rejection and acceptance of four other GSPs would have been useful for helping the public understand the GSP submittal by the Napa County GSA.*  
We agree. We have asked our consultant, LSCE, to review the four GSPs for critically overdrafted basins that have been evaluated by DWR. Two of these GSPs have been approved; none of the GSPs have been rejected. DWR identified deficiencies in the other two GSPs that the GSAs need to address. DWR commented that these two basins need to define sustainable management criteria in the manner required by SGMA. In one basin, DWR identified the lack of consideration of available water quality data to describe basin conditions and establish sustainable management criteria. In addition, one GSP did not set sustainable management criteria for one of the sustainability indicators. DWR noted that interim criteria should be submitted and that the GSA should not defer setting criteria.

### **Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee**

- *Why is a super majority of voting members required and who established this policy? Other than APAC, what other Napa County advisory committee requires a super majority?*  
The GSA established the requirement for a super majority because a majority will not create the broad consensus that we are seeking here. A supermajority encourages policies, plans and actions that have broader support and are supported by diverse interests and reduces conflict. For some actions, the Board of Supervisors will require a supermajority and some state legislative actions require a supermajority. A supermajority is useful to get broad based policy to benefit the widest range of stakeholders and it will create a more lasting and effective management strategy.
- *Why are surface water rights holders granted seats on the Advisory Committee given that the plan can only address ground water?*  
Surface water may be affected by groundwater pumping. We want to make sure we have a complete picture and have stakeholders that reflect all interests.
- *The meetings of the Advisory Committee have been compressed in the final months before the deadline to present their results to the GSA. Can you describe the problems that required this compression at the end?*  
We are operating with a deadline of January 1, 2022 for submittal of the GSP to DWR. The GSPAC has to finish its work, hold public hearings on the Plan before the GSA and then submit the Plan to DWR after approval by the GSA. There have been extensive debates among different interests trying to achieve a fair outcome and Plan. We were given less time by the state than other GSAs and it is a lot of work to move from the alternative plan that was developed prior to the GSP. There has not been enough time. In particular, there has

been extensive debate regarding interconnected surface water and groundwater.

### **Potential Management Actions**

- *Has there been any discussion about assessing rural homeowners a fee or requiring metering like the ill-fated proposals in Sonoma County?*  
This is an option that the GSA could decide to take in the future depending on the circumstances. The County's general fund will be used to support plan implementation. The need for additional funding may come up but has not yet been discussed.
- *Can policies to ensure ground water sustainability include prohibiting deforestation in the watersheds for vineyard?*  
No--land use authority lies with the County not the GSA. The County has land use authority. GSA can only regulate the groundwater.
- *Does the plan affect applications for new construction?* Not at this time. Stopping development is not an option. SGMA is just one state mandate. There is another state mandate that requires the County and the cities to build new housing. We need to be smarter about managing our groundwater and in the future, the Plan may consider placing limitations on groundwater use.

### **Current Water Use and Well Pumping Data**

- *I have a spring on my property that drains to the storm drain. Can I use this water or put it back in the ground for credit?*  
You can use the water. It has to be permitted by the County for drinking water use. The GSA has not established a market for credit but it could be done in the future.
- *I have seen trucks labeled POTABLE WATER filling their tanks from hydrants around town. What is happening here?*  
Trucked water is common in Napa. Private water haulers get water from various local sources and take it to people who need water. Water is trucked from where it is to where it is needed. This is happening throughout the state. It is not regulated by the County and is a widespread practice.
- *What if I have a working well that is not recorded?*  
There are many wells in the Subbasin that were not permitted or recorded because well permits were not required until the 1960s or 70s. If your well was not permitted or recorded, there is no requirement that you change your practices. This may change in the future as the GSP is implemented.
- *How can I know my well water use compared to my neighbors that include vineyards?*  
Napa County monitors only some wells in the Subbasin, so we don't know how much water is pumped from every well. You can talk to your neighbors to find out their water use.

- *What is the current breakdown of water usage among groups of different users in the county?*

We are considering water use data for the Subbasin, not for the whole county. The majority is used by agricultural irrigation (approximately 2/3). About one third is used by businesses and homes. Some is used by groundwater-dependent ecosystems. A small amount (two to three percent) is pumped by St Helena for municipal purposes.

- *Homes are not the issue in volumes of water used.*

We need to consider all the landowners and users of groundwater because they all contribute to the problem and the solution. Solutions involve everyone.

- *Does County approval of new developments and wineries currently require estimates of water use? If not, will it be required in the near future?*

Yes, the County requires a Water Availability Analysis (WAA) for any discretionary project that may use groundwater. The WAA and the groundwater ordinance are being revised to reflect current conditions. Drafts should be out later in October.

- *Which entity regulates private water sales and trucking from wells and reservoirs (non-city) in Napa County?*

Private water sales and trucked water are not regulated. Water haulers are regulated only to make sure that tanks meet standards for holding drinking water. The City of Napa has developed regulations about how trucked water may be used.

- *Is the recycled water from Napa San used for recharging the sub-basin?*

Not currently—recycled water is used for landscaping and agricultural irrigation.

- *Can the public easily view the production and levels of the monitoring wells over history?*

The GSA website includes a link to an interactive map where you can find the wells that are being monitored and the data. See this link: [Interactive Maps | Napa County, CA](https://www.countyofnapa.org/Interactive-Maps) ([countyofnapa.org](https://www.countyofnapa.org))

- *Regarding well water use, Napa County could recommend local discussion and collaboration to increase transparency. Is this something Napa County or the GSA will recommend to neighbors with well and groundwater problems? Should the GSA assist in this transparency by requiring all neighbors to place meters on their wells and publish the results for all to consider in their discussion with the neighbors for a solution to their problems?*

Yes, we encourage discussion and collaboration, and we recommend that you talk with your neighbors. The use of well metering is an issue that the GSA will need to consider. Well logs are considered to be proprietary information by the state. We are committed to transparency in this process. We are sharing all meeting minutes and making meetings open to the public.

- *How can there be a question of enough water when the State of CA is already discussing the possibility of rationing water?*

The long-range forecast from NOAA is showing a good chance of below average rainfall this winter. Our reservoirs are at 20 to 60% capacity. Overall, the groundwater basin has less

storage over the past year or two. Management of our water is critical.

### **Public Meetings**

- *Can you tell us how many have attended tonight?*  
Approximately 40 people attended out of 78 who registered.
- *When will questions and answers and presentations from the public meetings be made available?*  
Questions and answers, agendas and the presentations from the in-person meetings held on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and September 29<sup>th</sup> were posted on the County's website on October 12 and the link emailed to all registrants and participants. Additionally, Frequently Asked Questions, a handout on modeling and a survey are also available on the website. Materials from the Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> Zoom meeting will be posted as quickly as possible. All materials related to the all three public meetings can be found here:  
<https://www.countyofnapa.org/3251/Past-Events>