

MEETING SUMMARY

Turlock Groundwater Subbasin Management

Public Workshop #1

May 31, 2017 | 6pm-8pm | Denair Community Center
3850 N. Gratton Road, Denair, CA 95316

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP), CSU Sacramento

A. Background

In September 2014, Governor Brown signed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), marking a fundamental shift in the management of water resources in California. Under the legislation local agencies are charged with the responsibility to form groundwater sustainability agencies (GSA) to create and implement groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) leading to sustainable groundwater basins. The ultimate goal is to create GSA(s) and GSP(s) that are responsive to the interests of beneficial users and groundwater users while simultaneously protecting the long-term reliability of the resource.

To assist with this effort in the Turlock Subbasin, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has provided professional facilitators from the California State University Sacramento's Center for Collaborative Policy (Center) to conduct a series of public workshops and stakeholder interviews to assess stakeholder interests, concerns and goals for GSA formation, intra-basin and, inter-basin coordination. The feedback received from this workshop and others will help identify stakeholder interests, perspectives and develop recommendations for an outreach and engagement plan for GSP development activities.

B. Meeting Objectives

The purpose and goals for this workshop were to:

- Provide an overview of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).
- Discuss roles of various organizations in SGMA including the Turlock Groundwater Basin Association (TGBA) as the workshop convener, and the newly formed East Turlock Groundwater Sustainability Agency (East Turlock GSA) and West Turlock Groundwater Sustainability Agency (West Turlock GSA).
- Provide an update on GSA formation activities to date.
- Receive public input on best practices for stakeholder outreach and preferred methods of engagement.

C. Turlock GSA Formation Update

Stephanie Lucero, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) facilitator, opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Michael Cooke, City of Turlock, introduced himself and provided

welcoming remarks. He encouraged stakeholders to work collaboratively to comply with the State regulations and share common resources.

Interested stakeholders may submit questions to turlockgroundwater@gmail.com or access workshop information and documents via the TGBA website: <http://www.turlockgba.org>.

Walt Ward, Stanislaus County provided a brief overview and invited participants to share what they know about SGMA. Responses varied, but most people knew of SGMA, but wanted more information. Presentation highlights are as follows:

- TGBA began in 1995 and developed strong working relationships. What used to be voluntary groundwater management is now state mandated, but within local control.
- The initial element of SGMA requires local agencies with water or land-use authority to form GSAs by June 30, 2017. If agencies fail to accomplish this task, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) will intervene.
- The basin overlies two Counties, as well as many cities, Community Service Districts, and private landowners.
- The Turlock Basin is well-managed compared to the surrounding basins in critical overdraft. In these basins, pumping exceeds recharge rates and creates conditions of land subsidence, drawdown interference, and dry wells.
- Once GSA formation occurs, the GSAs begin the GSP development process. The Turlock basin must complete GSP development by January 31, 2022.
- The Turlock basin created two GSAs; the East and West Turlock GSAs. These public agencies created a Joint Powers Authority and submitted notification for exclusivity for the Turlock basin between the two GSAs. After a 90-day period, if no other GSA submits notification that overlaps, these two GSAs will be the exclusive GSAs of the Turlock basin.
- Consistent messaging, information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and constant agency transparency is central to the success of SGMA efforts.

D. Stakeholder Open Discussion and Comment Session

Unless otherwise noted, TGBA Staff provided responses.

- With all the groundwater basins in CA, is there some formal information sharing across the basin agencies?
 - There is no formal structure in place but there is information sharing across agencies. Each basin is required to coordinate with adjacent basins as well as with other GSAs within the basin.
- Is the deadline the same for GSA formation in all basins?
 - Yes, the deadline for all GSA formation is June 30, 2017.

- How do the GSAs cover the ‘white spaces’ on the map?
 - The counties are responsible for representing the white spaces. The GSAs are developing stakeholder groups to keep those communities involved and represented.
- Is there an advisory board set up by the State? Are your rules subject to SWRCB review?
 - The GSAs develop their own rules and strategies for achieving sustainability. If the SWRCB deems those inadequate, they may intervene.
- What is the status of GSP development?
 - The GSP is in the very preliminary stages of the data-gathering phase.
- Is the GSP a 50-year plan?
 - Yes, there is a 50-year planning horizon with a 20-year implementation horizon.
- What kind of data are you gathering, and from whom?
 - Current data gathering efforts focus on existing hydrologic data from hydrogeological models, groundwater levels, and water quality data, in addition to well location and construction data.
- Do laws require well drillers to submit data?
 - Shortly after SGMA was enacted, well-drilling data was released to the public.
- Is there better control over drilling permits?
 - Yes. The domestic wells are still considered de minimis (less than 2 acre feet (AF) per year used for domestic purposes) and are exempt; however, irrigation wells are required to submit pumping data.
- Does Turlock Irrigation District (TID) monitor wells?
 - Yes, the TID is a member of TGBA, which serves as the monitoring entity for the Turlock basin. TGBA measures groundwater level information twice per year and reports that data to the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) Program. GSAs will incorporate CASGEM data into the GSP development process.
- Has the SGMA model or structure been implemented in other states?
 - California is the last of the 50 states to create a groundwater management program. The programs in other states are very similar to the SGMA model.
- Will the GSAs share administration staff for the next five years? Will each GSA operate separately?
 - The TGBA is the information-gathering group right now, but will transfer all authority and operations to the GSAs.
 - GSAs are still in the formation phase and will determine if and how administration staff will be shared.
 - The GSAs will operate separately, but are working to develop a single GSP for the Turlock Subbasin.
- Is this a budgeted item then? Who provides the funding for GSA administration?
 - The recently released Prop 1 grant funds PSP will provide aid in GSP development.
 - TGBA received grant funding for facilitation services.

- East and West Turlock GSAs have appointed boards, but eventually need staffing and funding. These items will be determined by the GSAs.

After questions and discussion completed, Ms. Lucero introduced the workshop evaluation survey and offered participants the opportunity to stay and discuss concerns in small groups.

E. Summary of General Stakeholder input and Breakout Sessions

East Turlock Group

- **Concerns:**
 - How will SGMA affect everyday life?
 - How will SGMA influence water rights?
 - Will pumpers be given credits for surface water supplementation?
- **Methods of communication:**
 - Newspapers (Modesto Bee and Turlock Journal) are preferred.

All Basin

- **Concerns:**
 - What is in it for me?
 - Who needs to be involved?
 - How can we get a better understanding of the science behind SGMA (e.g. how sustainability indicator are developed)?
 - Will GSP development result in a better understanding of who is using the groundwater, and in what percentages?
- **Methods of communication:**
 - Email is preferred.
 - Newspapers notices are appreciated.

West Turlock Group:

- **Concerns:**
 - What is the future of water reliability and water quality?
 - Who are the agency representatives?
 - What are the costs associated with SGMA?
 - What are the SGMA requirements?
 - How will recharge come into play?
 - What threats does the SWRCB pose?
 - What threats face surface water?
 - What is involved in the GSP review process?

- Will there be appropriate enforcement?
- **Recommendations:**
 - Continue the discussion of recharge in GSP development.
- **Methods of communication:**
 - Email and newspaper were the preferred outreach methods.
 - Participants emphasized the need for information early on.