

Siskiyou County Sustainable Groundwater Management  
**Butte Valley Advisory Committee Meeting**  
Meeting Summary

September 28, 2022, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
Held in-person at Dorris City Hall and remotely via Zoom

**Meeting Recap:**

1. **Approval of Past Meeting Summary:** Advisory Committee approved the minutes from their most recent meeting held in October 2021.
2. **Announcements and Updates:** included an update from Matt Parker on GSA activities and an update from Pat Vellines on news from DWR. Also included time for comments from the public on non-agenda items (there were none) and updates from Committee Members on basin conditions.
3. **Technical Team Presentation:** included overview of the Annual Report submitted in April, and an overview of the DWR implementation grant requirements. The team also reviewed the determined components that will be included in the grant proposal.
4. **Discussion of DWR Implementation Grant Proposal:** Advisory Committee selected projects and management actions from GSP Chapter 4 to include in the DWR implementation grant proposal.
5. **Reflection on Next Steps:** Advisory Committee reached agreement on next steps for follow-up discussions with the technical team to be held during the week of October 3.

**Next Steps for the DWR Implementation Grant Proposal:**

Members of the Advisory Committee are meeting with Larry Walker and Associates during the week of October 3 to develop an adequate level of detail for the technical consultants to write project descriptions to include in the implementation grant proposal. The projects selected for inclusion in the grant include:

- Ag irrigation efficiency – assessment of best practices/quantified benefit + pilot
  - John Bennett, Don Crawford, Randy Jertberg
- Diversion assessment/tracer study for Butte Creek area
  - Steve Lutz
- Juniper removal project (prioritizing areas, developing costs, pictures of sites)
  - Randy Jertberg, Steve Lutz, Don Bowen, Richard Nelson, Blue Forest Conservation group
- Land repurposing incentive program development (transition to less water-intensive crops, temporary fallowing)
  - Richard Nelson
- Well Inventory/Registration Program Development (County-wide)
  - No volunteers, however, representatives from the Scott and Shasta basins did meet to develop this project which will cover Butte as well.

**Other Action Items:**

- Larry Walker and Associates will follow up with members of the Advisory Committee as noted throughout the minutes.

**Attachments, Links:**

- PowerPoint Presentation Slides (attached)
- DWR updates (attached)
- Fall Newsletter (attached)
- Annual Report: <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gspar/submitted>
- DWR implementation grant [proposal solicitation package with scoring criteria](#)

**Attendees:** see last page

**MEETING SUMMARY:**

1. **Call to Order, Introductions, Agenda Review, and Hybrid Meeting Structure**

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Facilitators Emily Finnegan and Marisa Perez-Reyes convened the meeting and conducted a roll call of Advisory Committee Members participating in person and online, establishing quorum. Emily reviewed the meeting agenda.

## **2. Approval of Past Meeting Summary**

Melissa High motioned to accept the previous meeting minutes and Greg Herman seconded. No members abstained. The October 2021 Meeting Summary was approved and will be posted to the [Siskiyou County SGMA Website](#).

## **3. Public Comment Period**

Members of the public were invited to provide comments unrelated to meeting agenda items. No public comments were shared.

## **4. District Staff Updates**

Matt Parker shared updates:

- The Butte Valley GSP was submitted by the January 31, 2022 deadline. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is now reviewing the Plan and has until January 2024 to determine if they are adequate, incomplete, or inadequate. The District will provide any updates on the progress of DWR's review, but feedback from DWR is not anticipated until Fall 2023 at the earliest. The GSP may be viewed on DWR's SGMA portal: <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/all>
- GSA staff is working with the Environmental Health Department regarding the County's well permitting and application process and will bring information to the Board of Supervisors at an upcoming meeting.
  - Don Bowen asked if there was talk about unpermitted wells. Matt replied that this could be part of a larger discussion related to the well inventory program.
  - Matt also shared that there have been some delays to the process thus far, but they are working on the guidelines. The technical consultant will be involved in conducting the evaluation.
  - Steve Burton asked about the timeline for the development of the guidelines.
- The Stantec Facilitation team is assisting in the development of a "Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document" that will serve as a guide for the GSA to manage the three GSPs. The GSA is gathering input through interviews and a stakeholder survey. A link to fill out the survey will be made available soon.
- The GSA is working to explore and develop opportunities with the community and local entities to improve monitoring and data collection under the current drought conditions that will aid the GSA in improving groundwater reliability for all beneficial users.
  - Upon request for clarification from Melissa High, Bill Rice (Larry Walker and Associates) replied that they are interested in taking depth to water measurements on a monthly basis through the UC Cooperative Extension. There are also several places where they would like to collect water quality data.

Randy Jertberg asked whether the GSA was discussing well metering at all. Randy also asked a specific question about monitoring, which Bill offered to connect with him offline about. Melissa also expressed interest in getting plugged in further, related to the expanded monitoring network.

Matt invited Kyle Knutson (MBK Engineers) to provide information about the letter that the Tulelake Groundwater Plan received. The Tulelake Subbasin GSA received a letter from Oregon's Water Resources Department. Kyle shared about their plan for responding and addressing it.

## **5. Announcements from DWR and Other Agencies**

Pat provided updates from DWR on the following. See attached flyer for full details.

- SGMA Implementation Grant Program
- Streamlining permitting process – CEQA exemption for groundwater recharge projects. Talk to Tim Godwin: [timothy.godwin@water.ca.gov](mailto:timothy.godwin@water.ca.gov) or call 916-873-4599
- Airborne EM info available on the California Natural Resources Open Data Portal

## **6. Committee Member Updates**

Randy Jertberg shared that compared to previous years, their wells have been lower, but not as bad as Tulelake basin.

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Steve Burton asked about the status of the Forest Service project. Tree removal process potentially underway. Matt asked about the status and members shared that he would have to get in touch. Mentioned that the Antelope Fire may have caused delays. Connect with Blue Forest Alliance.

### **7. Presentation from Technical Team**

Bill Rice, Larry Walker and Associates (LWA), shared updates on the Annual Report submitted in April and hydrological conditions and modeling in the basin. See attached PowerPoint slides.

- **Hydrologic Conditions:** 2021 was a very dry year across the State, but particularly in Butte Valley. Bill shared information about the groundwater elevation levels that were observed in 2022, which are lower on average than 2015. Some of the monitoring well locations are closer to the minimum threshold than others. Laura Foglia clarified the difference between the “soft landing trigger” and the minimum thresholds. The soft landing trigger is an internal indicator for the GSA to consider. The basin is not considered to be out of compliance until they fail to meet the minimum threshold for multiple years. Some of the monitoring locations have fallen below the soft landing/trigger points. All of this information is in the Annual Report.
- **Monitoring:** All monitoring is voluntary. Bill welcomed willing participants to come forward with data.
- **Funding:** Bill shared an update. The City of Dorris received a Small Community Drought Relief Program grant to install water line upgrades, a new drinking water well, and emergency drinking water supply.
  - Melissa added information about the wells. The GSA is partnering with Butte Valley Irrigation District to conduct measurements of wells locally.
  - Richard Nelson asked whether Bill planned to prepare hydrographs this fall. Matt noted that the wells shown in the hydrographs are CASGEM wells that are only collected twice per year in the spring and fall time.

### **8. Discussion: DWR Implementation Grant Proposal**

#### **Background**

Laura shared information about the DWR implementation grant and the timeline for submitting the application. LWA is targeting the end of October to have the proposal finished because DWR has offered to take a first pass at reviewing and return preliminary comments ahead of the final submission at the end of November.

Laura shared information about the scoring criteria for the proposal, noting that the application score is averaged. A single weak component can hurt the overall proposal, so they are going to prioritize projects that are detailed and well thought-out. The GSA will have four years (until June 2027) to implement the grant once they receive it. Reward of funding is anticipated for next summer, 2023.

#### **Determined Components**

The GSA has already decided to include certain items in the grant proposal. The determined components include:

- GSP management and administration
- Fee study and economic analysis continuation
- Stakeholder outreach
- GSP updates, including incorporation of model updates to address data gaps, managing data, responses to DWR comments on 2022 GSP, annual reports, and 2027 GSP update.

#### **Components for Discussion**

Facilitator Emily Finnegan provided framing information about how the Committee will spend the rest of the afternoon to select projects and management actions that will be included in the implementation grant proposal.

#### **Well Inventorying and Registration**

Greg proposed requiring well registration as a pre-requisite for repairing dry wells. Matt added that in the event of a fee system, they may be able to offer reduced fees to those that register. Matt mentioned DWR’s My Dry Well reporting system. He understands folks are resistant, but on the other hand, they need to be in the system to receive aid from the state. The Committee clarified that the County Department of Environmental Health must develop an approach for the entire county.

#### **Irrigation Efficiency**

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Laura provided background information on the proposed irrigation efficiency project and solicited input from members of the AC, particularly if there are pilot project examples. One of the challenges in the Butte Valley area is the amount of wind, which increases the rate of evapotranspiration.

**Juniper Removal Project/ Upland Watershed Management (with Blue Forest Conservation or Butte Valley Irrigation District)**

The group discussed funding juniper removal. Junipers are prevalent in the area and consume a lot of water. The group discussed whether it matters if the project is located within the boundaries of the subbasin. The group's consensus is that if a quantifiable benefit can be attributed to the project, it should be eligible.

Randy shared information about the Gooseneck and Round Valley projects. Butte Valley Irrigation District has a few hundred acres with juniper on it, in the ponding area on Butte Creek. Blue Forest Conservation or the US Forest Service Ranger District could be connected with Gooseneck and Round Valley where there's up to 5,000 acres at least. Much of the area was burned recently.

Laura mentioned that project benefits need to be able to be measured and verified through the life of the grant. Greg contended that it's been proven that the projects result in water savings. Can't they just estimate savings based on water consumption of junipers? Bill replied no, they need to confirm the amount of deep percolation. Bill also mentioned the issue of maintenance. The Forest Service has conducted studies for the Gooseneck and Round Valley projects. Steve Mains suggested they connect with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Don Bowen shared information about the timeline for regrowth. Randy suggested a re-seeding program. The group talked about the Antelope Fire's impacts, specifically. The Eastern Oregon operation cuts and reseeds with grass. They do have to go in within 8-10 years and remove regrowth with loppers. After that, they're clear for many years ahead. Respiration from tree translates very well to groundwater.

**Diversion Assessment/ Tracer Study/ Monitoring well in Butte Creek area**

The Committee discussed the Tier 3 Butte Creek Diversion Relocation project. Butte Valley Irrigation District holds a water right for diversion. The Committee discussed putting in monitoring wells near the diversion site, installed in the basalt near the recharge area. The wells may need to be on Forest Service ground; receiving that approval could take many years, per Steve's input. Perhaps the Irrigation District could be persuaded to install the well themselves. Matt suggested taking this offline.

**Recharge**

Don Bowen asked about the recharge potential in the Gooseneck area and suggested including grass lands recharge in the grant. Bill requested Don send photographs or specific locations on a map.

**Land Repurposing and Incentive Program Development**

Richard suggested the GSA consider compensating farmers for abandoning high water use crops. Can the GSA incentivize abandonment of high water use crops? Richard Nelson already did it on their own garlic crop. Randy shared that Sierra Cascade abandoned carrots for the same reasons as Richard.

Laura asked if the question relates to repurposing lands to other crops or if the land would be retired? Richard replied that in their case they are putting in rye, wheat which are low water use. Probably less than 5% what the garlic was using. They're transitioning to less water-intensive crops, and only applying irrigated water twice per year. Greg shared that they have fallowed up to two thirds of their land and are growing wheat and rye, which don't require irrigation at all.

The group discussed conducting an economic analysis, which would evaluate perspectives from growers and businesses.

Matt asked for more details about the fallowing program Richard is proposing. He mentioned CRP land fallowing, putting land in conservation reserve or something similar.

- The DWR grant could not be used to provide those incentives, but it could be used to develop that program. Pat weighed in about land repurposing, like USDA, DOC. Laura tied this to GRA examples, like Pixley.
- The group is supportive of using the grant to fund development of a land repurposing program
  - Pat suggested connecting with Tito (water conservation guy at DWR)

**Irrigation Efficiency, continued**

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The group discussed soil moisture meters. Don Crawford asked about developing educational materials to distribute to farmers regarding low flow irrigation option. Emily mentioned crop efficiency is a shared concern in the other basins and suggested maximizing the impact.

Randy suggested developing a system to hold water to irrigate crops later. They water during the afternoon not because it's efficient but because it has to get done.

Richard added that he has been looking into testing the difference between pulse irrigation (shorter duration spurts) rather than applying it all in one go. Preliminary results are not suggesting that there is an appreciable difference.

John Bennett may have information for Laura.

Don Crawford made a return on his investment in power savings exclusively within three years.

Laura emphasized that DWR cannot pay for big capital projects but they can fund pilots in a few areas and quantify the benefits.

### **9. Reflection on Next Steps**

The Advisory Committee deliberated on next steps developed a game plan. Members will meet with LWA during the week of October 3 to develop an adequate level of detail for the technical consultants to write project descriptions to include in the implementation grant proposal. The projects selected for inclusion in the grant include:

- Ag irrigation efficiency – assessment of best practices/quantified benefit + pilot
  - John Bennett, Don Crawford, Randy Jertberg
- Diversion assessment/tracer study for Butte Creek area
  - Steve Lutz
- Juniper removal project (prioritizing areas, developing costs, pictures of sites)
  - Randy Jertberg, Steve Lutz, Don Bowen, Richard Nelson, Blue Forest Conservation group
- Land repurposing incentive program development (transition to less water-intensive crops, temporary fallowing)
  - Richard Nelson
- Well Inventory/Registration Program Development (County-wide)
  - No volunteers, however, representatives from the Scott and Shasta basins did meet to develop this project which will cover Butte as well.

These meetings will be scheduled with Bill Rice and will be hosted online. The outcome from the meetings will be detailed 2-page project descriptions.

### **10. Meeting Adjourned**

The meeting adjourned by 6:00 p.m. as is the group practice.

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**Meeting Participants**

\*= virtual

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Don Bowen (Vice Chair)

Melissa High

Greg Herman

Steve Lutz

Randy Jertberg

\*Richard Nelson (Chair) (joined at 3:30)

Don Crawford (joined at 4:00)

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Steve Burton

Howard Wynant

Agency Staff and Members of the Public:

Pat Vellines, DWR

\*Kraig Beasley, Tulelake Irrigation District

\*Janae Scruggs CDFW

\*Philip Cramer CDFW

\*Kyle Knutson, MBK Engineers with Tulelake

\*Nick Patterson, Lassen Canyon Nursery

Project Team:

Matt Parker, GSA staff

Marisa Perez-Reyes, Stantec

Emily Finnegan, Stantec

Laura Foglia, Larry Walker and Associates

Kelsey McNeill, Larry Walker and Associates

Bill Rice, Larry Walker and Associates