

**Siskiyou County Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Scott Valley Advisory Committee Meeting**

**SUMMARY**

Date/time: June 22, 2021, 3:00 – 6:00 pm

Location: Hybrid Meeting

In Person: Fort Jones Community Hall 11960 East Street Fort Jones, CA 96032

Virtual Online Zoom Platform: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83094518415>

Key contacts:

-Matt Parker, County Natural Resources Specialist, [mparker@co.siskiyou.ca.us](mailto:mparker@co.siskiyou.ca.us) 530.842.8019

-Katie Duncan, Stantec Consulting – Facilitator, [katie.duncan@stantec.com](mailto:katie.duncan@stantec.com) 916-418-8245

-Laura Foglia PhD, U.C. Davis Technical Team Lead, [lfoglia@ucdavis.edu](mailto:lfoglia@ucdavis.edu) 530.219.5692

**MEETING RECAP**

- **Approval of Past Meeting Summary:** The committee approved its May meeting summary for posting on the Siskiyou County Website.
- **Public Comment:** No comment was provided.
- **District Staff and Other Announcements:** Matt Parker provided an update on the GSP development schedule.
- **Presentation on Updated Fee Study and Economic Analysis:** Josue Medellin-Azuara and the UC Davis technical team presented four economic impact scenarios based on various levels of land use change, namely pasture and alfalfa fallowing. The Advisory Committee discussed the accuracy of the model and suggested areas for improvement.
- **Discussion of Surface Water Depletion Sustainable Management Criteria:** The Facilitator summarized the results of the irrigator and surface water ad hocs and launched discussion around the acceptability of the minimum threshold proposed.
- **Discussion of Project and Management Actions and GSP Chapter 4:** The Facilitator presented a brief overview of the proposed changes to the PMAs in Chapter 4. Advisory Committee members should review the slides, which will be posted to the website, before the next Advisory Committee meeting.

View [Siskiyou County's groundwater website](#) for posted meeting materials.

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**Call to Order, Agenda Review and Hybrid Meeting Platform**

The In-Person and Virtual Facilitators thanked all for joining, reviewed the hybrid meeting platform procedures, indicated that quorum had been reached, and called the meeting to order. They then reviewed the meeting agenda.

**Review/Approval of Past Meeting Summary**

The Facilitator obtained consent from the Advisory Committee to post the May meeting notes to the County's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Website.

**Review Action Items**

The Facilitator reviewed action items and provided updates regarding progress toward their completion.

**Public Comment Period**

No comment was provided.

**District Staff Updates and Other Announcements**

Matt Parker provided an update on the revised schedule, which includes the convening of a Special Advisory Committee Meeting in July. The Department of Water Resources did not offer an update.

**Presentation on Updated Fee Study and Economic Analysis**

Josue Medellin-Azuara of UC Merced presented an economic analysis of the Scott, Shasta, and Butte Valleys for four land use change scenarios: 15%, 30%, and 60% retirement of alfalfa and pasture, as well as 33% reduction of alfalfa harvest (foregoing the third alfalfa cutting).

One attendee asked why the economic impacts to commercial fisheries were not quantified in this analysis. Thomas Harter also noted that fish provide ecological and cultural benefits, aside from economic benefits, which are not quantified in this analysis.

Grant Johnson noted that the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations (PCFFA) may be a valuable resource in any effort to estimate the economic relationship of groundwater and fisheries. Grant noted the Yurok have a commercial fishery but have not been able to fish due to low stock numbers.

An attendee in the room introduced the counterpoint that alfalfa farming, not only fisheries, yields a cultural value.

Craig Moyle asked Josue to expand upon next steps.

Andrew Braugh asked how the analysis informs the "reasonableness" criterion for groundwater impact in the non-adjudicated zone? Which metrics will be taken into consideration and how are they prioritized?

One participant requested clarity around which types of job losses are estimated in the model?

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Josue answered that full and part time field workers are accounted for, as well as indirect job losses associated with the drop in consumption.

Theo Johnson asked whether the economic impact analysis included damage resulting from not farming the fields for the year? She also wanted to know whether the model estimated the impact on animals dependent on alfalfa and pasture. For example, a rancher may need to sell a herd if they didn't have access to the same fields as previous years. She expressed that it is unreasonable to expect alfalfa to be fallowed one year and immediately back up the next year.

One attendee expressed that they think this modeling activity is unrealistic. Thomas Harter clarified that this analysis represents the first step in a process for assessing feasibility and understanding the costs and benefits of implementation. The goal of which is to start putting dollar values on the table, as part of understanding the economic impacts associated with various PMAs.

The Committee expressed widespread concern that the data presented in the economic impact analysis lacks the context of the other PMAs. Josue assured the group that the technical team is working on filling in the comparison table now.

Theo Johnson reiterated that farmers and ranchers don't work on one-year time horizons and economic models should keep this in mind.

The Facilitator noted that conducting these analyses is a necessary step in moving toward prioritizing and implementing PMAs.

Various attendees commented on the scenarios presented. Betsy Stapleton noted that this analysis encompasses the entire valley. She asked if the technical team could specifically look at the SGMA area that excludes the adjudicated zone as part of the Valley? Josue noted that the model cannot be applied at the field level.

Josue noted that there are limits to what they can show in the economic analysis, given the time and resource constraints of the study. He underscored that the goal of the conversation today is to learn from the growers, to determine where the weak points of the analysis are.

Spencer Cole, from the UC Merced team, shared that they plan to look at reduced cuttings for alfalfa, the biggest difference being the timing of irrigation. They also plan to evaluate the conversion rate of strawberries and alfalfa (i.e. determine the value of each crop per acre). They also plan to look at converting alfalfa to (nonspecific) lower water use crops.

The Facilitator asked the Advisory Committee whether there are gaps in those planned scenarios that they would like the technical team to account for?

One attendee expressed interest in modeling the economic efficiency of converting irrigation systems.

Thomas asked whether it would be possible to do these estimates in terms of permanent retirement (not annual) and include some of the downstream effects of retirement. And if so, what percentages would be informative for the growers?

Josue confirmed that such an analysis would be possible.

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Crystal Robinson suggested that PMA prioritization be based on a wet year/dry year determination (i.e., MAR/ILR not possible in dry years).

One attendee asked whether growers could be backcredited for efficiency measures and management actions that have already been installed or enacted. Crystal Robinson noted that measures put in place prior to the passage of SGMA would be ineligible. Josue noted that credit for those measures would depend on how the actions impact the water level from a water balance perspective.

**Discussion of Surface Water Depletion Sustainable Management Criteria**

The Facilitator reported summaries from the ad hoc meetings.

The Irrigator Ad Hoc (6/7 and 6/16) discussed the underlying causes of surface water depletion and the impact of SGMA wells specifically. The group discussed the achievability of thresholds in relation to management actions. Irrigators are in favor of continuing to express SMCs as percentages.

The Surface Water Ad Hoc (6/17) discussed the surface water depletion SMC and expressed concerns about the SMC MT being sufficient for fish.

CDFW Memo

Tom Jopson presented the CDFW Memo dated May 3, 2021, [2021-5-3 CDFW Ltr to SWRCB re Scott River Best Available Scientific Information for Instream Flow Criteria.pdf \(ca.gov\)](#). Tom noted that the report indicates approximately 22 cfs is needed in the river in order for fish to travel upstream of the gauge. To get the fish further up the system, the report indicates approximately 50 cfs is needed. Tom noted that up to this point, there has been a lack of clarity around the exact flows needed in the river for fish.

Crystal noted that since other non-SGMA metrics (TMDLs and Public Trust, for example) lack numeric targets, the Tribes really desire for the Committee to use numbers to establish a minimum threshold for surface flow.

An attendee shared their concern with setting the Minimum Threshold at the level indicated in the report because in dry years, the threshold would not be met. The attendee suggested setting the higher cfs as a Measurable Objective.

Crystal suggested that a mix of management actions should be adopted so that the threshold can be met.

The group discussed how an Undesirable Result could be avoided.

An attendee noted that when flows are low, fish spawn lower in the river system.

Janae Scruggs from CDFW clarified that the first memo discussed today is an attachment to a larger package. She suggests contacting Joe Burgo for follow-up information.

Presentation on SMC Threshold

The Facilitator shared a brief presentation on setting the Surface Water Depletion SMC Minimum Threshold.

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Advisory Committee members shared that they would like the aspirational target (Measurable Objective) to be a specific number rather than a percentage.

The Facilitator asked the Advisory Committee to weigh in on whether the thresholds presented are acceptable.

Thomas explained the thought process behind how the Depletion Reversal model was produced.

The Advisory Committee discussed how the data could be presented in a more intuitive manner (difficulty around depletion reversal).

The Facilitator suggested that the technical team could put together a dashboard to track compliance with depletion reversal. Some participants shared disagreement around the value of making the data accessible, citing concerns that the information presented in the tool may be misinterpreted.

One participant noted that MAR and ILR actions are limited, since the subbasin is not working with a lot of water to begin with and it is not clear where the recharged water would be stored.

The technical team noted that the feasibility of the scenarios depicted in this presentation have not been evaluated yet.

It was noted that the location of aboveground vs belowground storage does make a difference to the efficacy of recharge.

One participant suggested setting the interim milestones in a curve rather than a straight line, noting that better management strategies take longer to implement. They are concerned the subbasin may fail the first review if the first milestone is set in a linear relationship to the end goal.

**Discussion of Project and Management Actions and GSP Chapter 4**

The Facilitator presented slides about changes to Chapter 4 of the GSP on PMAs, which are going to be posted to the website and reviewed at the next Advisory Committee Meeting.

**Meeting Adjourns**

The Facilitator thanked all for participating and adjourned the meeting.

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**MEETING ATTENDEES**

*\* = virtual attendee*

***Advisory Committee Members***

Tom Menne, Scott Valley Irrigation District

Crystal Robinson, Quartz Valley Tribe

\*Andrew Braugh, CalTrout, Environmental/Conservation

\*Paul Sweezey, Member-at-Large

Michael Stapleton, Residential

Tom Jopson, Private Pumper

Jason Finley, Private Pumper

***Absent Committee Members***

Bill Beckwith, Fort Jones, Municipal/City

Brandon Fawaz, Private pumper

***District Staff***

Matt Parker, County of Siskiyou Natural Resources Specialist

***Technical Team***

Dr. Thomas Harter, UC Davis

Claire Kouba, UC Davis

\*Kelsey McNeill, UC Davis/Larry Walker Associates

Peter Reifenlein, UC Davis

Kate Johnson, UC Davis

\*Josue Medellin-Azuara, UC Merced

\*Spencer Cole, UC Merced

***Agency Staff***

\*Janae Scruggs, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

\*Jessica Boyt, California Department of Water Resources

Chris Watt, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Paul Nelson, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

\*Shari Whitmore, National Marine Fisheries Service

\*Eli Scott, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

***Absent Agency Staff***

Pat Vellines, Department of Water Resources

Bryan McFaddin, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

***Facilitator***

\*Katie Duncan, Stantec

Craig Moyle, Stantec

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\*Marisa Perez-Reyes, Stantec

***Members of the public***

\*Jack Rice

Betsy Stapleton

Charnna Gilmore SRWC

\*Bonny Nichols

Theodora Johnson

\*Grant Johnson

\*Cherie Stephen

\*Chris Brown

Dona Farnam

Blair Hart