

Sierra Valley Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Summary: Feb.28, 2022

Project Website: www.sierravalleygmd.org/sierra-valley-groundwater-sustainability-plan

Data Portal: <https://sierra-valley.gladata.com>

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Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

The fifteenth meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the Sierra Valley (SV) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was an in-person meeting, with a zoom webinar option for remote participation. The video recording is at https://youtu.be/X-V9Flila_E. The meeting agenda was reviewed, followed by introductions.

There were 15 participants: 8 TAC members, 7 project team members, and 2 members of the public.

Project Updates

GSP Submission and DWR Public Comment Period

The Sierra Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was submitted to DWR and is now posted on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Portal at <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/preview/125>. A public comment period is open through April 23, 2022. Comments submitted after that date may not be fully considered in DWR’s review of the GSP. Comments can be submitted at <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/comments/125>.

DWR Subsidence Report

Subsidence refers to the lowering of the earth’s surface. This is due to dewatering of clay layers. InSAR (satellite) data measures changes in the elevation of the ground surface and DWR has been contracting for InSAR data collection. The latest data became available in the last two weeks, showing both annual and cumulative subsidence. Gus Tolley showed a composite graph of wells in the areas of Sierra Valley experiencing subsidence, which illustrate decreasing groundwater levels – which contributes to the dewatering of clay layers in the aquifer. It was noted that a correlation was not done to compare groundwater levels and subsidence levels, and groundwater levels alone do not determine subsidence. All data is available at <https://sierra-valley.gladata.com/default.aspx>.

Annual Report

The Annual Reports are due to DWR on April 1st of each year. The report summarizes hydrologic conditions for the preceding water year (October 1 – September 29) and progress towards implementing the GSP. The reports include hydrographs for each of wells in the monitoring networks (see sample below), along with maps of groundwater extraction and

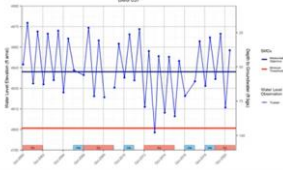
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groundwater storage. Tables will also include 1) the minimum thresholds and measurable objectives for each monitoring point and 2) total agricultural and municipal water use.

Example RMP Hydrograph



Grant Opportunities

Laura Foglia noted that the Planning Committee is tracking upcoming grant opportunities to identify potential applicants, to help bridge the gap until DWR Round 2 grant funds are available in mid-2023. Currently, California Department of Fish and Wildlife is (CDFW) issuing watershed restoration grants for either planning or implementation. Grant priorities include wildfire response and prevention, managing headwaters for multiple benefits, and protect and restore mountain meadow ecosystems. If awarded, funding would focus on filling data gaps to better understand fire impacts, recharge characterization, and flows throughout the valley. This includes additional data on groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs). The ultimate goal is to develop projects that benefit the upper and lower sections of the aquifer.

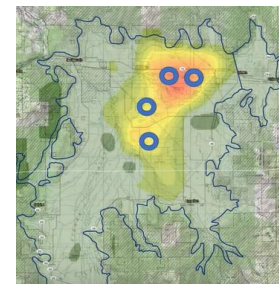
Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) Surveys

DWR is conducting surveys across California flying arrays underneath a helicopter. Tentatively, the flight will take place in the second half of May. LWA submitted recommendations for the flight lines. Information is available online at: <https://water.ca.gov/programs/sgma/aem>.

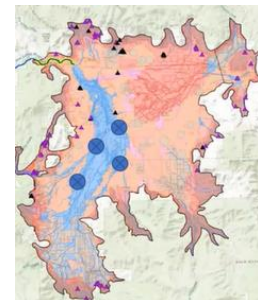
Implementation Planning and Early Activities

Monitoring

Dwight Smith reported that four land monuments (brass caps) will be installed to assess ground elevation and complement the InSAR data. The land monuments and vertical measurements will be assessed by land surveys. The monuments are located near the areas of subsidence. It was noted that subsidence varies over distance and year-to-year. General locations for the monuments are on the right.



Four shallow groundwater monitoring points will be installed to address data gaps related to GDEs. They will be equipped with transducers and telemetry to provide data on water levels and temperature. The costs for the shallow groundwater wells and the monuments are covered by the existing grant. Conceptual locations for the shallow groundwater monitoring points are shown to the right.



Meters have been replaced or repaired on 1/3 of the high-capacity wells (20 of 60) to increase the accuracy of measurements.

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Pilot Projects

The Low Efficiency Precision Application pilot program will replace (retrofit) an irrigation pivot to lower pressure “bubbler” heads which reduces wind drift losses. The pilot includes installation of soil moisture meters to better time irrigation. This will be a demonstration effort. The converted pivot will have its own flow meter to compare to baseline water use and crop yield on a per ton basis. The results will be documented and made public. That is part of the agreement with the volunteer participants. Information will be presented to the Board and included in future grant applications. The application will be submitted by the Board; it proposal builds on the work of Rachel Hutchinson and Michael Hogan. It would be very helpful to understand the feasibility of different recharge opportunities. If awarded, early discussions would be held with the Fish and Wildlife Commissions for Sierra and Plumas counties.

Future Outreach and Engagement

Judie Talbot explained that quite a few activities occurring in the future: DWR programs such as the Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and InSAR data collection; grant opportunities; pilot projects; and the Annual Report. During development of the GSP, information was shared with interested parties through email blasts, summary sheets, and newsletters. Other approaches could include briefings and updates to other organizations, outreach at community events, and/or ad hoc committees. These activities would supplement information provided at Board meetings.

TAC members were asked for their feedback on what worked, what didn't, and suggestions for improvement regarding TAC meetings and broader outreach. A separate meeting will be scheduled to conduct a debrief and think about future outreach. This has been a long process and is worth discussing. All participants were thanked for engaging in this process, working with information that was often not intuitive, and providing thoughtful and insightful suggestions for improving the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

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Participants

TAC MEMBERS

X = attendance

	Organization, Name		Organization, Name
	Agricultural Commissioner, Plumas-Sierra Willo Viera		Sierra County Environmental Health Elizabeth Morgan
	City of Loyalton Jerry Gerow		Sierra Valley Groundwater Mgmt. District Paul Roen
X	Feather River Land Trust Ken Roby	X	Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District Rick Roberti
X	Feather River Trout Unlimited William Copren		Sierraville Public Utility District Thomas Archer
	Hinds Engineering Greg Hinds	X	UC Cooperative Extension Tracy Schohr
X	Integrated Environmental Restoration Svcs. Michael Hogan		Upper Feather River IRWM Uma Hinman
X	Plumas Audubon Jill Slocum		USFS – Plumas National Forest Joe Hoffman
X	Plumas County Tracey Ferguson		USFS – Tahoe National Forest Rachel Hutchinson
	Sierra Brooks Water System Paul Rose		

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

X	CA Department of Water Resources Debbie Spangler and Pat Vellines (alt.)		CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Bridgett Gibbons
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TECHNICAL TEAM & PLANNING COMMITTEE

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|---|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| X | Laura Foglia, LWA Project Manager | X | Gus Tolley, DBS&A |
| X | Betsy Elzufon, LWA | X | Dwight Smith, McGinley & Associates |
| X | Kristi Jamason, Planning Committee | X | Judie Talbot, Outreach Facilitator |
| X | Jenny Gant, Sierra Valley GMD | | |

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- X Carl Butz
- X Chris Spencer