

**West Placer Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Community Meeting – February 16, 6 to 8 p.m.
McBean Pavilion in Lincoln**

Community meeting overview

The West Placer Groundwater Sustainability Agency held its second public meeting on February 16. At least 38 people signed the sign-in sheet.

The meeting included the panel members:

- Josh Huntsinger, Placer County Agriculture Department
- Chris Hanson, Placer County
- Tony Firenzi, Placer County Water Agency
- Jennifer Hanson, City of Lincoln
- Audie Foster, California American
- Brett Storey, Placer County
- Jim Mulligan, City of Roseville

Josh provided an overview of the meeting, followed by several speakers who provided information about the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Chris Hanson), the state of the groundwater basin (Tony Firenzi), stakeholder assessment findings, next steps and how people can engage/become involved in the development of the groundwater management plan (Chris Hanson).

For a copy of the presentation, visit www.westplacergroundwater.com.

Questions and answers

Are you going to meter residents to make sure we are under 2 acre-feet?

While it is too early to speculate, it is our goal to be as least intrusive as possible while also staying true to the groundwater management act and its rules and regulations. It isn't our intent to add meters to any wells at this time.

What is a capital project? Could someone drill a well on private property?

Capital improvement projects are for municipal work (the county or the cities) needed to either add, expand or rehabilitate infrastructure. For the purposes of groundwater infrastructure, there might be a need in the future to add additional groundwater monitoring wells, which would be placed in the public right of way. In the event we need to place wells on private property, we would work that out with the property owner.

Why is the north part of Lincoln showing lower water levels?

The sustainability of the groundwater basin overall is healthy and we continue to monitor areas of concern. There is a known increase in groundwater usage, especially during the recent drought, in the South Sutter Water District area, which they are managing and looking at ways to encourage the use of more surface water. Again, those areas of concern aren't alarming, but are being managed and monitored.

When is the next monitoring period in the groundwater basin?

We are monitoring and tracking groundwater levels on a monthly basis. The area in north Lincoln is managed outside of this effort and measured by the State Department of Water Resources. The next time that area is monitored is in April.

You identified four areas under remediation? Will it be a future problem?

The areas under remediation and mitigation include Alpha Explosives on Nader Road (about five miles northwest of Lincoln), the current landfill off Fiddymont, the Lincoln landfill and the Union Pacific Railroad site. We do not expect them to be a future problem as the contaminant level does not appear to be expanding.

Will residential water rates be impacted by the groundwater management act?

For decades, we have been working on the management of the basin (monitoring activities, for example), which include some of the same activities needed to comply with this new law. We don't anticipate costs rising as a result of the groundwater management act at this time. Agencies expect to continue to pay for costs needed to remain compliant with the law, but don't anticipate that any of these costs would translate into higher rates.

Is there an active effort to divert water off Bear River and proactively recharge the basin?

No, but there is the ability to actively recharge the groundwater basin. And, other discussions are happening to increase that ability. Some of the agency partners are currently studying where to directly recharge. One potential for recharge is for private users to flood their orchards. In our initial evaluation, this option looks like a favorable method. We would need to work with and gain participation from private landowners to do this.

Is the old Lincoln dump a concern for groundwater contamination and what is being done?

That site is under specific monitoring and reporting requirements and subject to regulations from the State of California Regional Water Quality Control Board. In addition, the site is under a cleanup and abatement order, requiring implementation of a corrective action plan which included, among other things, improvements to contain the site's discharge and dispose of it in the city's sewer system.

Camp Far West is used as a recharging system. How are you going to deal with recharging if the Centennial Reservoir Project is built and water is taken out from higher elevation in the future?

Lake Camp Far West is not a part of the Western Placer Groundwater Sustainability Agency but it is our intent to work with them, as some of their jurisdiction is within the GSA area. As it relates to creating more storage in the Bear River, Placer County, Placer County Water Agency and South Sutter Water District are in active discussions, through the environmental process, for the proposed reservoir to ensure that there will always be runoff that will recharge the subbasin. Part of our discussion has been potential impacts to the groundwater basin if that project were to be built. If that project were to alter the current hydrology, it is our hope and our expressed interest that that the project would mitigate any changes to the basin. We won't know what the environmental process results will say until later this year to make sure it doesn't negatively affect our groundwater basin. Incidentally, Nevada Irrigation District (the project lead for the proposed reservoir) is considering joining the West Placer Groundwater Sustainability Agency. They, too, have a keen interest in the sustainability of the basin.

Have you looked at the PG&E groundwater level data from 1976? It can provide historical data.

We have not. But we are looking for data and people that want to partner to share their knowledge of historical groundwater conditions.

This effort seems like a solution looking for a problem. Anyway we can use the “wait and see” approach?

Since this groundwater basin is relatively healthy compared to others in the state, our local agencies spent a great deal of time in Sacramento advocating our interests prior to the passage of the new law. However, the North American Subbasin has been designated a “high priority” basin (due to potential future population growth) and as such, must be managed pursuant to the law. This means that we must move forward with these efforts. We believe we can put a groundwater sustainability plan together without assessing fees or add additional levels of bureaucracy.

With all the growth and new homes around Lincoln and no new storage infrastructure, what is being done to reduce impacts to the groundwater basin?

The City of Lincoln, and all other land use agencies, complete water master plans or water assessments based on growth that is identified in either the General Plan or associated specific plans. These assessments identify water use needs through build out.

For Lincoln, the city only pumps 10 percent groundwater, and the other 90 percent is water imported from Placer County Water Agency. This same ratio will remain as Lincoln builds out. In the future, 90 percent will be purchased from Placer County Water Agency contracts, and they have sufficient water supply to meet those demands.

In the City of Lincoln stormwater permit, we also address capturing runoff as part of the new development standards. It requires use of different strategies to allow for stormwater infiltration into the ground.

As it relates to balancing growth and protecting the unique rural and ecological assets of Placer County, the Board of Supervisors will consider the adoption of the Placer County Conservation Program in 2018 to ensure that there are protections in place to maintain natural areas, such as riparian habitat that aids in groundwater recharge, scenic landscapes, and pastoral lands while balancing the need for economic growth and development. The City of Lincoln is also a participant of this plan.

In addition, the Placer County General Plan includes many goals, policies, standards, and implementation programs to protect and preserve groundwater. An example is Water Resources Policy 6.A.13 that requires the county to protect groundwater resource from contamination and overdraft by pursuing conservation efforts including, among other things, protecting recharge areas and encouraging use of surface water to supply major municipal and industrial demands.

Who is involved with the implementation of the groundwater management act?

Both the State Department of Water Resources (the lead agency) and the State Water Resources Control Board could participate if deadlines and approvals of regulations are not met for this effort. We work directly with the Department of Water Resources to meet all requirements to maintain local control of our groundwater. However, if we do not decide how to locally govern ourselves we can lose local control and the State Water Resources Control Board will step in.

How do I know which Groundwater Sustainability Agency I am in? How will they work in coordination?

As we discussed earlier, portions of western Placer County will be managed under the South Sutter Water District GSA. Which area you are in is based on who you pay your water bill to. In terms of coordination, Placer County executed a Memorandum of Understanding (a legal document) with South Sutter Water District. This document ensures we have rights to participate regarding how they go about their business, to ensure equity in the portion of their Groundwater Sustainability Agency that is within Placer County and the memorandum specifically states that South Sutter Water District may not supersede the county's land use authority in those areas. Our GSA is also coordinating with the Sacramento Groundwater Sustainability Agency and the two potential GSA's in Sutter County.

Will there be a fee if there is a meter on my well?

At this time, it isn't our intent to install meters or assess fees.

Who determines sustainability level? Does the number change as population grows?

Over the years, several estimates of the sustainable yield have been done by several agencies and consultants based on comprehensive studies and assessments. Sustainable yields should be regularly reassessed and may be adjusted in accordance with a specified planning framework to take account of any new information or changes. For example, the addition of new groundwater recharge facilities can be a reason to re-evaluate the sustainable yield.

The sustainable part of the plan requirements is that we look out to 2042 and make projections based on urban and agricultural use, and how much we think will come out of the basin. Then we will look at recharge. If there are gaps, we will decide how to get more water in the ground to make up the gap – stormwater runoff, flooding orchards, etc. We are monitoring and planning for the future, and will adjust accordingly.

What about agricultural wells to the east – outside the basin itself – how will they be governed?

The legislation only requires groundwater sustainability agencies be developed for Department of Water Resources identified sediment filled groundwater basins. Watersheds that feed water in the basins might be considered in the future. The groundwater sustainability agencies will not have authority outside of the groundwater basin, nor does the state have legislation over those areas. This may change in the future.

What is the cost to run the Groundwater Sustainability Agency? Does it go back to the taxpayer?

For clarity, this effort doesn't include the creation of a new agency. Therefore, there is no additional staff or more infrastructure. We will operate much like we've done in the last 10 years (implementing the existing Groundwater Management Plan), which has been to monitor and manage the groundwater basin using existing staff and resources. There will be some initial costs to develop the groundwater sustainability plan, which would include monitoring and plan development. We estimate that to be about \$1.5 million split among several agencies and funded over several years. We are also hoping to obtain grant funding from the State of California to achieve the fulfillment of the plan, much like we were able to do with some early outreach and planning effort last year. In the end, we don't see a long term increase in each agency's cost.

Is there a projected final impact (cost) for those large users?

We aren't looking to extend costs to large users. We would like to work collaboratively with private property owners on the use of wells to monitor levels.

What is California American Water's role in this effort?

California American Water is a private water company regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission. They provide water utility services in Western Placer County, just north of the border of Sacramento County. They will participate in the management of the groundwater basin in West Placer to share technical, financial and management information. While California American Water has some groundwater wells, it uses surface water contracts and obtains those sources from Placer County Water Agency.

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