



Board Agenda Item 9

DATE: February 22, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Steven E. White, Director
Department of Public Works and Planning

SUBJECT: Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Pleasant Valley Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Approve Resolution adopting the Pleasant Valley Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan for portions of Fresno County in the Pleasant Valley Groundwater Subbasin where the County serves as Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

Approval of the recommended action will adopt the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for the Pleasant Valley Subbasin (PV Subbasin). The GSP covers the entire PV Subbasin, but the County's approval only covers those portions where the County serves as the Groundwater Sustainability Area (GSA).

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Your Board may determine not to approve the recommended action; however, it would result in delay of submitting the required GSP by the February 28, 2022 deadline, as the County would be obligated to prepare a separate GSP for the portion of County lands that have been included in the GSP. If the GSP is not submitted by the deadline, intervention from the State Water Resources Control Board (State) could occur, which would result in the State managing local groundwater resources in the Subbasin.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approval of the recommended action may result in an increase in Net County Cost. The Board approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) No. 20-081 between the County and Pleasant Valley Water District on February 25, 2020. The MOU provides that each party shall bear all costs with respect to its activities. To date, activities have been limited to Department of Public Works and Planning staff participation at various implementation meetings resulting in a cost of approximately \$4,000. The costs associated with the GSP were funded through Proposition 1 grant for GSP development and monitoring facilities within the Subbasin. Department staff costs are and will be absorbed within the Department's Water and Natural Resources Org 43600300 FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget. If there are significant implementation costs beyond the Department's allocated resources, staff will return to your Board for direction and to request additional resource allocation.

DISCUSSION:

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed into law September 16, 2014, and codified at Water Code sections 10720 to 10737.8, established a new structure for managing California's groundwater resources at a local level by local agencies. SGMA allows the formation of locally controlled

GSA in the State's medium-priority groundwater subbasins. Each GSA is then required to develop and implement a GSP to meet the sustainability goal of the basin to ensure that it is operated within its sustainable yield without causing undesirable results. The statutory deadline to establish a GSP in a medium-priority groundwater subbasin is January 31, 2022. Under a grant agreement between the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Pleasant Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (PVGSA), as amended on June 30, 2020, however, DWR is requiring GSP development to be completed by February 28, 2022. Failure to timely form a GSA and implement a GSP in a groundwater basin could result in the State Water Resources Control Board asserting its power to manage local groundwater resources. Staff believes that your Board's approval of the GSP before February 28, 2022, will be timely.

On February 24, 2017, the Pleasant Valley Water District (PVWD) submitted a notice of intent to DWR to form a GSA for the Pleasant Valley Groundwater Subbasin (PV Subbasin). However, portions of the Subbasin are outside of PVWD's jurisdictional boundary, and the County is the only other local government agency in those portions of the Subbasin.

On May 7, 2019, the Board directed staff to notify the DWR that the County intends to serve as a GSA for those portions of the Subbasin that are not within the PVWD or City of Coalinga's jurisdictional boundaries.

On February 25, 2020, the Board authorized the execution of an MOU with PVGSA for implementation of SGMA within the Subbasin.

The City of Coalinga is also included within the PV Subbasin and has formed its own GSA and entered into a separate MOU with the District. The City of Coalinga's water supply is imported from Central Valley Project (CVP) water, which they receive under a water service contract with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). The areas where the City serves as the GSA do not overlap with the areas where the County serves as the GSA.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Pleasant Valley Subbasin is located in Fresno County in the San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin and is estimated to total 48,159 acres. In November 2018, DWR reclassified the basin's groundwater overdraft conditions from a low-priority basin to a medium-priority basin. The Subbasin is adjacent to the Westside Subbasin of the San Joaquin Valley Basin to the east and north of the Kettleman Plain Subbasin. The Subbasin is bounded on the north by the Joaquin Ridge, on the west by the Tertiary and older marine sediments of the Coast Ranges, on the south by the Kettleman Hills and Plains and Kings County line, and on the east by the Guajarral Hills and Westside Subbasin.

The GSP covers the entire Subbasin, the majority of which falls within the Pleasant Valley Water District's boundaries. As mentioned above, several small areas along the northwestern and southern edge of the Subbasin, totaling approximately 9,249 acres, extend past the District's boundaries and fall within the jurisdiction of Fresno County. The County is the GSA for portions of the Subbasin outside of the District's boundaries that lie within Fresno County. On February 25, 2020, the County and the District entered into an MOU to develop a single plan for the entire Subbasin.

The City of Coalinga has entered into a separate MOU with District for areas within the city limit boundaries.

WATER BUDGETS:

Groundwater pumping during the historic water budget period of 1998-2017 for the Subbasin averaged an annual extraction of 34,400-acre feet per year. For the GSP's current year (2019) water budget, groundwater pumping was estimated to be 43,300-acre feet. The projected water budget (2042-2072) it is anticipated to average 23,336 to 24,436-acre feet per year.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT CRITERIA:

The GSP establishes sustainable management criteria (SMC) for each of the undesirable results required by SGMA including chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction in groundwater storage, land subsidence, surface water depletions, and water quality. Criteria for seawater intrusion was not included as this area is not subject to this issue.

The sustainability goal of the GSP is to ensure that by 2042 groundwater pumping is measured and managed to maintain groundwater levels in the Subbasin so that a reliable water supply for current and future beneficial uses is afforded the landowners without experiencing undesirable results. This goal will be met by balancing water demand with available water supply to stabilize declining groundwater levels without significantly and unreasonably impacting water quality, land subsidence, or interconnected surface water. The goal of the GSP is to correct and end the long-term trend of a declining water table, understanding that water levels will fluctuate based on the season, hydrologic cycle, and changing groundwater demands within the Subbasin and its proximity.

It is the intent of the GSP participants to work collaboratively to continue to better understand the basin characteristics by establishing a coordinated network of monitoring points and reporting requirements. This will help to recognize existing hydrogeological patterns and to better refine SMCs in future Plan updates. It is also the intent of the GSP participants to establish criteria and implement programs and projects to monitor and manage groundwater levels and storage, protect water quality, and reduce the effects of subsidence in a manner that is open to the public and stakeholders and considers the needs of all beneficial users.

PROJECTS AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

The GSAs have identified a number of potential projects to help achieve groundwater sustainability, and additional projects may be added or developed as GSP implementation proceeds. The existing City of Coalinga Wastewater Treatment Facility has been contributing to aquifer recharge, since it treats and percolates effluent originating from imported surface water, but additional larger projects are required to augment the water supply to help overcome the Subbasin's groundwater overdraft. Some of the individual projects have been included in the Westside San Joaquin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) to pursue project funding, while other projects are more Subbasin-wide projects. It is envisioned that projects will be implemented as joint GSA efforts, by individual GSAs, or implemented by individual landowners or stakeholders.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

Groundwater will be sustainably managed by the PVGSA, in cooperation with other GSAs in the Subbasin, including the County. If issues are identified in the annual evaluations of the GSP implementation efforts within the portion of Fresno County GSA area, the PVGSA will work with the County to address the concerns.

The County will continue to work with the PVGSA to meet SGMA requirements and maximize the benefits of local groundwater resources. The adoption of the GSP including portions of Fresno County GSA area by your Board is necessary to ensure that the Subbasin is entirely covered by adopted GSPs to meet the deadline requirements of SGMA.

Upon approval of the GSP, including the Fresno County GSA area, the GSP will be submitted to DWR for review and evaluation under Water Code, section 10733.4. Once DWR has performed a completeness review of the GSPs, they will then post the GSPs on its website for a 60-day public comment period. Once posted, DWR will have two years to issue an assessment of the GSP. The assessment by DWR may include an approval or may include recommended corrective actions to address any deficiencies identified in the GSP.

Under Water Code, section 10728.6, the California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to the preparation and adoption of a GSP.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI #50 - February 25, 2020

BAI #16 - May 7, 2019

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - Resolution

On file with Clerk - Pleasant Valley GSA's GSP

CAO ANALYST:

Ron Alexander