



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 4/8/2014  
Agenda Placement: 9B  
Set Time: 9:55 AM  
Estimated Report Time: 45 Minutes

## NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Steven Lederer - Director of Public Works  
Public Works

**REPORT BY:** Patrick Lowe, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION MGR - 259-5937

**SUBJECT:** Final Update on the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Director of Public Works requests the following:

1. Accept a final report from the Chairman of the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC) Peter McCrea and Committee Member Jim Verhey on the conclusions and recommendations of the GRAC; and
2. Discussion and possible direction to staff.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Chairman Peter McCrea and Committee Member Jim Verhey will provide a final update on the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC), including Groundwater Sustainability Objectives, Groundwater Monitoring Plan and Expanded Well Monitoring Program; Water Availability Analysis/Groundwater Ordinance Updates, and Education/Outreach. This report was prepared by the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (except where noted).

### **PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. Committee and staff reports.
2. Motion, second, discussion and vote to accept and file the committee's report
3. Direction to staff, if needed

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Is there a Fiscal Impact?                      No

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

**BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION****Report from the GRAC**

In 2009 Napa County began a comprehensive study of its groundwater resources to meet identified action items in the County's 2008 General Plan update. The study, by Luhdorff and Scalmanini Consulting Engineers (LSCE), emphasized developing a sound understanding of groundwater conditions and implementing an expanded groundwater monitoring and data management program as a foundation for integrated water resources planning and dissemination of water resources information.

On February 14, 2011 the Board of Supervisors held a Groundwater Workshop and heard presentations and recommendations derived from the consultant studies: Napa County Comprehensive Groundwater Monitoring Program (LSCE-February 2011) and Assessment of the Feasibility of a Collaborative Groundwater Data Gathering Effort in Napa County (Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS-August 2010). Both studies identified the need for collaborative data gathering and suggested the establishment of a community advisory committee to guide the synthesis of existing information, and the collection and analysis of additional data. Following Board direction and staff/consultant recommendations from the workshop, a draft purpose and composition for a Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee was developed and endorsed by the Watershed Information Center and Conservancy (WICC) Board on May 26, 2011.

On June 28, 2011 the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to establish a Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC), and an outreach effort for applicants began. On September 20, 2011 the Board of Supervisors appointed 15 residents to the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC), and the GRAC held its first organizational meeting on October 27, 2011. The members represent diverse interests, including environmental, agricultural, development and community interests.

The GRAC was created to assist County staff and technical consultants with recommendations regarding:

- | Synthesis of existing information and identification of critical data needs;
- | Development and implementation of an ongoing non-regulatory groundwater monitoring program;
- | Development of revised well pump test protocols and related revisions to the County's groundwater ordinance;
- | Conceptualization of hydrogeologic conditions in various areas of the County and an assessment of groundwater resources as data becomes available;
- | Development of groundwater sustainability objectives that can be achieved through voluntary means and incentives; and
- | Building community support for these activities and next steps.

**GRAC ACTIONS**

From January 2012 until January 2013, the GRAC reviewed and provided feedback on consecutive draft chapters of a proposed voluntary Groundwater Monitoring Plan, the centerpiece of its work to that date. The proposed Plan included a characterization of current groundwater conditions in sub-areas of the County, refinement of criteria used to identify priority monitoring areas, and a proposed expanded monitoring network. The groundwater monitoring program relies on both publicly-owned and volunteered private wells. To fulfill its mission and garner community interest and support, the GRAC developed a Communication and Education Plan, designed to implement the Groundwater Monitoring Plan through voluntary participation. This effort included the development of an outreach brochure and a series of fact sheets on specific topics.

A status update and materials developed by the GRAC and its consultants pertaining to the above were presented to the Napa County Board of Supervisors on April 2, 2013.

Following the Board's interim endorsement of the GRAC's efforts, the GRAC has undertaken the following steps:

- | Provided updates to agriculture industry groups, environmental organizations and others;
- | Led and supported outreach efforts to well owners for volunteer monitoring wells which has been very successful in adding new wells to the Napa County Groundwater Monitoring Program;
- | Hold a joint public outreach meeting of the GRAC and WICC Board (July 25, 2013);
- | Reviewed and recommended modifications to the Napa County Water Availability Analysis and Groundwater Ordinance; and
- | Developed and approved Groundwater Sustainability Objectives.

As of April 2014, the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC) believes that over the past 2+ years it has fulfilled its duties and obligations and would like to present the Napa County Board of Supervisors (BOS) with its final conclusions and recommendations.

## **GRAC CONCLUSIONS**

- The 2011 baseline study by LSCE, which included over 600 wells and data going back over 50 years, concluded that "the groundwater levels in Napa County are stable, except for portions of the MST district". Most wells elsewhere within the Napa Valley floor with a sufficient record indicate that groundwater levels are more affected by climatic conditions, are within historical levels, and seem to recover from dry periods during subsequent wet or normal periods.

- The LSCE Study also concluded that, on a regional scale, there appear to be no current groundwater quality issues except north of Calistoga (mostly naturally occurring boron and trace metals) and in the Carneros region (mostly salinity).

- In spite of the conclusions reached by LSCE in the first bullet point above, Napa County still does not have adequate science-based answers to critical questions regarding the availability of water in Napa County or the interaction between surface and groundwater resources in Napa County. In addition, future monitoring should try to fill the "data gaps" that exist and will focus on 1) monitoring groundwater-to-surface water connectivity at 5 sites along the Napa River and 2) adding groundwater monitoring wells in 18 Areas of Interest to fill higher priority groundwater monitoring needs and to achieve monitoring objectives (Napa County Groundwater Monitoring Plan 2013 (January 2013) see p. 26-27).

## **GRAC RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Since the 2011 baseline study found no unforeseen groundwater quantity or quality issues, ***the GRAC recommends that Napa County focus primarily on education and outreach to everyone living and working in Napa County to institutionalize water conservation as a community value and to advocate the use of best sustainable practices to achieve this goal rather than relying on new regulations or ordinances.***

Groups could include the Napa County Resource Conservation District, industry and environmental and other community groups. These efforts could be overseen by the Watershed Information Center & Conservancy (WICC).

2. ***The GRAC recommends that only water usage criteria in Tier 1 and the technical deficiencies in the Tier 2 analysis section of the current Water Availability Analysis (WAA) be revised.***

In an effort to implement the groundwater protections described in the existing groundwater ordinance based on well construction and placement, the County Staff had proposed a considerably more complex analysis be done prior to permit filing in an effort to avoid challenges to these permits. However, noting the success of the existing Water Availability Analysis (WAA) and the relatively small number of challenges of discretionary use permits in Napa County on the basis of groundwater use, the GRAC recommends that all of the other aspects of the WAA remain unchanged for now. Policy changes may be warranted if accurate and adequate scientific data on groundwater and its interface with surface water is established and if appropriate CEQA analysis is conducted.

3. ***The GRAC recommends that the BOS continue to build a database of science-based answers to critical questions regarding the availability of water in Napa County and the interaction between surface water and groundwater resources.***

The expanded Groundwater Monitoring Network and Program will advance understanding of groundwater conditions in Napa County. However, there are also many non-groundwater related data sets involved in the understanding of long-term groundwater sustainability. The GRAC also recommends that future studies should consider the scientific uncertainty associated with the existing and new data used as part of those studies. Quantitative measures of confidence should be developed as part of future studies, as appropriate, to ensure that the conclusions from the studies and modeling tools applied during such studies are clearly understood by staff, stakeholders, policy makers, and the general public. These efforts could be overseen by the Watershed Information Center & Conservancy (WICC).

4. ***The GRAC also recommends that the Groundwater Monitoring Plan currently being implemented by the County be positioned primarily as a tool to monitor the countywide progress toward achieving groundwater conservation and quality, and stable groundwater levels.***

With regard to the Monitoring Plan, the GRAC strongly recommends that the BOS continue to pursue, as at our April 2, 2013 meeting, ways to enhance the confidentiality of private well data in order to encourage broader participation by private well owners in the Groundwater Monitoring Program.

We believe that this voluntary approach should maximize public support to optimize the County's future water supplies while helping to determine if any significant changes in groundwater conditions are occurring and provide a factual basis for any future regulations if they appear warranted. This is an intentional effort to build broad community support through an inclusive, voluntary, non-regulatory approach.

## **Staff Addendum**

The Department of Public Works and the staff to the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee (GRAC) would

first like to thank the committee members for their continued commitment to this effort over the past 2 1/2 years. This was an incredible group to work with and it was quite a journey with no shortage of ups and downs along the way. As it turns out, it was also a very timely effort given the current drought and its impacts throughout California. Through the efforts of the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee we are on a path toward insuring the sustainability of our groundwater resources for generations to come.

The following items are noted here because they were an important part of the Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee's work but may not have been fully covered in the above report. Thus they warranted additional information which has been provided in the supporting documents, as noted.

**Groundwater Sustainability Objectives** (see supporting documents - attachment B).

Groundwater Sustainability Objectives were developed and recommended by the GRAC. In their recommendations, the Committee reviews the goal of developing sustainability objectives, provides a definition, and explains the shared responsibility for Groundwater Sustainability. They go on to review the important role of monitoring as a means to achieving groundwater sustainability and the principles underlying the sustainability objectives. The groundwater sustainability objectives are outlined, along with an implementation table which provides additional recommendations on how, metrics of success, by when, by who, and estimated cost ranges.

**Water Availability Analysis (WAA)/Groundwater Ordinance Updates** (see supporting documents - attachment C).

The GRAC reached consensus on the need to address technical deficiencies in the WAA but could not reach a consensus on other proposed changes to the WAA process. The final recommendation represents the majority vote of the committee on the two perspectives that were discussed. With increased public opinion/comment on this very subject due to the current drought, this may warrant additional discussion. The Groundwater Ordinance updates recommended by the GRAC will follow the completion of the Water Availability Analysis updates. Staff intends to obtain additional public input on the WAA, and return to the Board at a future meeting for further direction prior to completing a draft of the document.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- A . Groundwater Resources Advisory Committee Workplan/Timeline
- B . Napa County Groundwater Sustainability Objectives
- C . GRAC Mtg Summary(s) and Memo on WAA-GW Ord Updates
- D . Update on Education-Outreach and Well Owner Outreach for Monitoring
- E . Napa County Groundwater Monitoring Plan 2013
- F . Education and Outreach Brochure/Inserts

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Molly Rattigan