

**ACWA Groundwater Committee
Meeting Recap
Thursday, March 4, 2021**

Chair: John Woodling
Vice Chair: Michael Markus
ACWA Liaison: Lauren Bernadett
ACWA Analyst: Soren Nelson

Groundwater Committee Members: Log in to your [ACWA.com account](#) to access presentation materials archived on the [Groundwater Committee webpage](#).

Agenda: [Link](#)

Department of Water Resources Update (DWR SGMO Management Team)

Steven Springhorn, acting Deputy Director for Statewide Groundwater Management, provided an update on the SGMO team's recent and upcoming efforts. He expressed appreciation for ACWA's engagement in the SGMA implementation process through the Groundwater Committee. Mr. Springhorn reported that his team is focused on critically overdrafted basins, with one year of GSP review complete and more one year to go. DWR wants to make sure that they are providing assistance as other plans are being submitted.

Craig Altare reported that 18 overdrafted basins have submitted GSPs. Plans have also been received from three non-critically overdrafted basins ahead of the 2022 deadline. When DWR assessments are released, they will include a cover letter, statement of findings, and staff report assessment that explains findings of staff. Mr. Altare provided an overview of regulatory pathways available to DWR when reviewing GSPs and recommending actions. He also provided an overview of the assessment release timeline and approach.

Mr. Springhorn wants to highlight the importance of the land use and SGMA nexus. DWR would like to begin a conversation of what this looks like, where assistance is needed, and where conversations need to happen. He encourages members to look at DWR's dry well reporting website. DWR is very close to completing its Statewide AEM surveys – members should expect a webinar later this spring. DWR has also launched a new AEM webpage. DWR staff want to work closely with basins to make sure these flights are a value add for agencies. Finally, statewide datasets (2018 Statewide Land Use and Statewide InSAR Dataset) will be online in Spring 2021.

Keith Wallace reported that next week (3/8) is national groundwater awareness week. DWR will be using social media platforms to share various educational videos. DWR will also be reaching out to GSAs to support outreach and engagement efforts. DWR and the State Water Board Hosted a 2/18 joint webinar on SGMA with more than 400 attendees. Recording is available on YouTube.

Q&A:

- John Woodling: Are you far enough along to have a sense of how many plans will be found adequate or inadequate?
- DWR: It's too early to tell, but we are striving for consistency in our review of plans.

- Derrik Williams: If you update your GSP in less than 5 years, does that change your update timeline to every 5 years since your last update?
- DWR: We will look at the Water Code and follow up.

- Zoe Rodriguez del Rey: So what does this implementation schedule look like for Alternatives?
- DWR: Regarding timeline for alternatives, they follow a similar timeline as GSPs, but have different due dates. Alternatives are required to submit annual reports and update their alternatives every five years.

- John Woodling: Is this going to be led by the SGMA group? Where does ACWA need to pay attention to be engaged?
- DWR: There's a lot on our plate, but we want to be part of the conversation. PPIC and EDF are active in this space. DWR wants to make sure its hearing the outcome of those conversations so that the state can align resources with those outcomes. We haven't ironed out who will lead this effort.

- Tony Morgan: Is a GSA that voluntarily prepared a GSP for a Low priority basin obligated to prepare annual reports and 5 year updates to the GSP?
- DWR: We don't see an exemption from annual reporting or periodic updates in SGMA for low/very low priority basins.

State Water Resources Control Board Update: (Sarah Sugar, Groundwater Management Program)

Sarah Sugar presented on regulatory pathways for SWRCB intervention on GSPs, including fee structure, board investigations, actions for GSAs that submit no plans or incomplete plans. Ms. Sugar asked that interested parties view the February [joint DWR/SWRCB webinar](#) for more information.

ACWA Federal Issues Update (David Reynolds, ACWA)

ACWA Director of Federal Relations, Dave Reynolds, reports that the ACWA Federal Affairs Committee met on Feb 16. Mr. Reynolds provided an update on the extension of the WIIN Act. ACWA held its annual DC conference on February 24, which enjoyed excellent attendance. The \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill is moving through Congress. ACWA has been particularly interested in two pieces of the package: low-income water rate assistance and language that would make funds available to special districts. ACWA and other organizations are asking for

\$8 billion in relief for unpaid water bills; so far, \$1.1 billion has been allocated. Language that would allow special districts to access relief funds is not currently in the bill, but we expect another attempt to insert the language in the Senate. Congress will turn next to the recovery bill, which is focused on infrastructure. ACWA is part of a coalition that is advocating for reclamation projects to be included. Mr. Reynolds also reports that the ban on earmarks has been lifted for public projects.

ACWA State Legislation Update (Kristopher Anderson, ACWA)

Kristopher Anderson, ACWA Legislative Advocate, reports on bills related to groundwater that have been introduced so far in the 2021-22 Legislative Session. Mr. Anderson reports that ACWA does not anticipate seeing bills aimed at amending SGMA itself. Rather, legislation seems focused on mitigating some of the impacts of SGMA implementation. ACWA is tracking the following bills:

- AB 252 (Rivas)
- AB 350 (Villapuduo)

Update on GRA's Strategic Plan, Initiatives, and Events (Abigail Madrone, Groundwater Resources Association)

Abigail Madrone gave a brief presentation on GRA's strategic plan, initiatives, and events. If you are interested in collaborating in reviewing the DWR Groundwater Update 2020 report, please contact Abigail at amadrone@westyost.com

Introduction to the Groundwater Management District Association (GMDA) (Steve Walthour, GMDA)

Steve Walthour presented an overview and history of the GMDA. Organizations interested in joining the GMDA should contact Steve at swalthour@northplainsgcd.org, or 806-922-7402.

Flood-MAR: Getting to Solutions (Jim Wieking, DWR)

Presentation from Jim Wieking on Flood-MAR efforts over the last three years, including an overview of the Flood-MAR network.

Updates from Subcommittees

a) Legislative Issues

The primary role of the subcommittee is to take a closer look at groundwater legislation and convey thoughts to SLC and ACWA staff. The subcommittee has been discussing how to support DWR with budget requests for \$60 million in SGMA implementation funding. Next meeting is March 23.

b) SGMA Implementation

The subcommittee has been working to identify well-defined problems and sort them into categories. Some of those categories are: data gaps, stream depletion, tools and data, water

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rights. Working on potential recommendations or actions for how ACWA can address some of these issues. Subcommittee is trying to be forward-looking and envisioning SGMA implementation 5 years out. Next meeting is March 16.

c) Groundwater Quality

The subcommittee has met twice, with 15 participants from a diverse range of members. More participants are welcome. The subcommittee is cognizant of not being duplicative of ACWA Water Quality Committee. Topics of discussion have included: water quality impacts of recharge, urban stormwater infiltration, salinity and nutrient management, lack of water quality data from wells, water quality needs of SGMA compliance, & DAC water quality needs.

Drafting ACWA's Updated Policy Principles (Michael Markus, Vice Chair)

The last time ACWA's groundwater policy principles were updated was in 2009. They need to be refreshed to reflect SGMA and other developments in the last decade. A small committee of the Chair, Vice Chair, and subcommittee chairs will put together working draft that will be run through each subcommittee on specific topics as needed. That draft will be reviewed by the committee as a whole before being presented to the ACWA Board of Directors in 2-3 months.