

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program  
Regional Water Management Group Meeting**

**September 18, 2019  
City of Salinas Offices**

**RWMG Entity Attendees:**

Horacio Amezcuita – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.  
Shandy Carroll – Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office  
Ross Clark – Central Coast Wetlands Group  
Beth Febus – Big Sur Land Trust  
Mike McCullough – Monterey One Water  
Heidi Niggemeyer – City of Salinas  
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

**Non-RWMG Attendees:**

Kristi FitzPatrick – Nilsen and Associates  
Katie McNeill – Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Karen Nilsen – Nilsen and Associates  
Shinobu Okano – Intern, City of Salinas  
Gary Petersen – General Manager, Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Director

**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Brief Introductions.**

**2. Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin Sustainability Plan:** Gary Petersen, General Manager for the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA), provided a presentation on the status of development of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). He began by describing the formation of the GSA. The SVBGSA was formed in 2017 in response to the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA). The SVBGSA is a new agency, a JPA comprised of the County of Monterey, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, City of Salinas, City of Soledad, City of Gonzales, City of King, the Castroville Community Services District, and Monterey One Water. The SVBGSA is governed and administered by an 11-member Board of Directors, consisting of four agriculture seats, one environmental seat, one CPUC-regulated water company, the City of Salinas, one disadvantaged community or public water system seat, one South County cities seat, one public member, plus one “other GSA eligible entity” seat.

The SVBGSA has authority over six sub-basins, including a portion of the Paso Robles basin. For basins that are high or medium priority and that are critically overdrafted, the deadline for submitting a GSP to the Department of Water Resources is January 31, 2020. GSPs for all remaining medium and high-priority basins are due January 31, 2022. Since the 180/400 Foot Aquifer is both high priority and critically overdrafted, the deadline for submitting a GSP for that basin is January 31, 2020. The GSP for the 180/400 Foot basin has just been completed in draft form. The full draft plan will be posted on the SVBGSA’s website (<https://svbgsa.org/>) and public review will begin October 15. GSPs for the other five basins, plus an integrated plan, will be developed. Gary emphasized that the process has been extremely collaborative, inclusive, and transparent, and has included numerous public meetings.

In March 2019, the GSA board approved a fee to support ongoing operations of the GSA. The GSA will have an annual budget of \$1.2 million, supported by a fee for agriculture of \$4.79 per irrigated acre/year, and for all others, \$2.26 per connection/year.

The basin must achieve sustainability by the year 2040, and must maintain sustainability through at least 2070. Gary noted that key problems include: 1) seawater intrusion, 2) dams in major need of repair, and 3) lack of data. SGMA requires that GSPs include a plan for managing groundwater in a sustainable manner so as to avoid “undesirable results” pertaining to groundwater levels, groundwater storage, seawater intrusion, water quality, land subsidence, and interconnected surface waters. The Salinas Valley 180/400 Foot Aquifer GSP assumes that sustainability must be achieved with *existing* supplies. Chapter 9 of the draft plan describes the projects and programs that will address the basin’s problems, and that will enable the basin to attain sustainability (though not all of these programs/projects will necessarily be implemented). Priorities include invasive species, and optimizing the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP – considering also the potential of seawater extraction, seawater injection barrier). The GSA is also considering other strategies such as desal, recharge of local runoff from the Gabilan Range, recharge from recycled water, amongst others.

Management actions include: outreach and education; reservoir reoperation; best management practices; possibility of retiring ag lands from willing sellers, and fallowing lands; restriction of pumping in the CSIP area; and oversight over pumping from the Deep Aquifer. The GSP lays out a financial framework, consisting of a tiered system. Fees collected from pumping over a certain limit will help pay for projects. Ag water needs to be commoditized, Gary noted.

The first public hearing for the draft GSP will be December 12, 2019. The second public hearing will be January 9, 2020.

There was some discussion about water marketing, and about data. Gary said the GSA’s website will include a portal with access to all public well data. Katie McNeill offered to assist in coordinating with the Regional Board’s data. Ross Clark wondered how the region can move from planning/concept in the GSP to funding and implementation. Gary rephrased the question: “How does the GSA transition to an action-oriented organization?” Should the GSA hire staff or rely on the existing expertise of other agencies and organizations, such as Monterey County Water Resources Agency and Monterey One Water? One thing for certain, he emphasized, is the need to *partner* on projects. Horacio Amezcuita wondered how the regulation of water quality will be worked out between the various agencies (including the Regional Board, DWR, and the GSA). Gary responded that it is still to be determined.

### **3. Proposition 1 IRWM Disadvantaged Community Involvement (DACI) Grant Program**

**Update:** Susan Robinson noted that the current DACI project is follow-up to a three-year project that was conducted previously with State Water Resources Control Board grant funds. That project identified disadvantaged communities (DACs), identified their drinking water and wastewater issues, and then identified potential solutions for a subset of high priority communities. The Salinas Valley DAC Plan was completed in November 2017. The Proposition 1 DACI grant began in July 2018. The DACI project team consists of Karen Nilsen (Nilsen & Associates), Karen McBride (Rural Community Assistance Corporation), and Susan Robinson. The Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW) had been conducting outreach for the project, but are no longer involved in the project due to staffing issues.

Karen Nilsen provided a brief overview of the work that has been done to date. The DACI project has focused on the following communities:

- **Hacienda Apartments:** Hacienda Apartments, a 24-unit farmworker community near the City of Soledad, was not a priority community in the Salinas Valley DAC Plan; however, recently some septic issues have come to light, as well as a nitrate problem. The project team is working with an engineering firm to do a feasibility study to look at both wastewater and drinking water options. The wastewater project will probably involve a connection to the City of Soledad’s system, and the drinking water project will most likely involve digging a new well (since no good consolidation options exist). The feasibility study is expected to be completed within 30-60 days;

then the project team will move ahead with an application for financing. This is a complicated project, and Karen is currently in discussions with LAFCO and the County.

- **Walnut Ave:** This community consists of three small water systems plus some domestic wells outside of the City of Greenfield, totaling 27 connections. Wells in this community have shown high nitrate, and one well has 1,2,3-TCP. The City of Greenfield will sponsor an SRF loan/grant application for this project. It is a pretty straightforward project; however, one road block has been trouble attaining responses from community members on an income survey. The community cannot apply for financing unless it can demonstrate DAC status; but for various reasons (including possibly the current political climate and confusion about the project), community members are reluctant to submit the median household income (MHI) survey forms. Engineering and environmental firms have been lined up and are ready to begin, as soon as the MHI survey is complete.
- **Middlefield Road:** This community, located just north of Salinas, consists of two small water systems with high nitrate levels. The project is a proposed consolidation with Cal Water. A nearby water system, Gabilan Mutual Water Company with about 162 connections, has also expressed interest in participating in the consolidation. The project team will be bringing in Heather Lukacs, formerly with EJCW and currently with the Community Water Center, to do outreach for this community. Discussions are currently underway with the County as to whether it could potentially act as project sponsor for this project. This is a complicated project, longer term.
- **City of Greenfield:** The City needs major improvements to its wastewater treatment facility. They are in the process of assessing those needs. Once the infrastructure improvements are identified, the project team will assist the City in preparing an application to the State for financing.
- **San Ardo:** San Ardo needs a drinking water system upgrade. The project team has been reaching out to provide support.

The project team has also assisted with the following projects:

- **Springfield Road:** The project team has provided outreach and other assistance to help Pajaro Sunny Mesa CSD in developing a drinking water solution for this community, which is located north of Moss Landing.
- **Apple Ave:** This project was identified in the Salinas DAC Plan, and implementation was begun prior to (and separate from) the Prop 1 DACI grant. The project has been “fast-tracked” for implementation through AB72 funds, a State fund set up specifically for shovel-ready drinking water projects.

**4. Pure Water Monterey Update:** Monterey One Water has been working with the City of Salinas on implementing a large-scale storm water project for which they were awarded \$10 million through Proposition 1 Storm Water Implementation Grant funds. Mike McCullough provided an update on the project, called Pure Water Monterey. He emphasized the importance of collaboration in implementing this suite of projects. Project components include the following:

**Reclamation Ditch:** Water is pumped from the Rec Ditch to the Salinas Pump Station and then onto the Regional Treatment Plant. Rec Ditch water includes ag runoff and City of Salinas storm water, providing Monterey One Water with a new water source for recycling. This project is now substantially complete.

**Blanco Drain:** Blanco Drain drains 6400 acres in the Salinas Valley, including water from ag tile drains. Water flows from Blanco Drain to the Salinas River every day of the year – representing a substantial water supply. The project consists of constructing a pump station and conveyance pipeline. They are nearing completion of this project, and plan to do start-up testing in mid-October.

**Communications Tower:** Construction of this tower provides an important line-of-site between the Rec Ditch, Blanco Drain, and the Seaside injection wells. The tower is close to being operational.

**Moving Storm Water to Storage:** Phase 1A of this project consists of diverting dry weather and wet weather diversions to the Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility. Phase 1B (which Mike calls “the Holy Grail”) is to put that storm water in surface storage and pump it back to the Regional Treatment Plant for reuse. This is a \$5-6 million project. Construction will begin in a few weeks.

**Advanced Water Purification Facility:** Mike referred to this project as the “Crown Jewel.” Once Monterey One Water treats the water, it gets sent to an injection site in the Seaside Groundwater Basin. Marina Coast Water District built the pipeline and owns 28% of it; Monterey One Water has access to the rest of the capacity. The project includes a 2-million gallon storage tank that acts as a kind of buffer.

Beginning in 2013 with the Notice of Preparation for environmental, the Pure Water Monterey project is now nearly complete – just 6.5 years later, quite remarkable! Mike noted several lessons learned over the course of the project, but emphasized above all that collaboration is key – not easy, but key. Collectively, Monterey One Water and its partners have been trying to create a legacy. They’ve successfully shifted the regional mindset to “all water can be reused.”

In summary, the main components of Pure Water Monterey consist of:

1. Source Water: This includes the Rec Ditch project (completed) and Blanco Drain (93% complete).
2. Conveyance Pipeline: Completed
3. Advanced Water Purification Facility: 94% complete
4. Injection Wells: 95% complete

The project will be producing water by the end of 2019.

Heidi Niggemeyer asked whether the Blanco Drain project would be taking water year-round. Mike responded that he didn’t foresee water being taken year-round (they have enough water during the wet season, so they don’t need to divert wastewater), though possibly in drought years. Heidi asked whether Monterey One Water was looking to expand in order to be able to take wet season flows, and Mike responded no (it’s a matter of storage). Horacio asked where the water would be injected. Mike responded, 500’ deep. Katie McNeill asked about the lifespan and Mike responded, 50+ years for all infrastructure. In 20 years they’ll probably need to start upgrading the electrical components. The State Revolving Fund loan program requires the agency to hold money back to develop a capital improvement plan. Susan asked whether storm water could be used as a seawater barrier. Mike responded that the Regional Board requires all injected water be treated to a certain level, and treating water for that purpose would be too expensive.

**5. Other Business.** Susan asked everyone to please send her ideas for future RWMG meeting agenda items, including projects they may be working on, or topics they would be interested in hearing about.

*The next RWMG meeting will be held on October 16, 2019, 1:30PM – 3:30PM, location TBD.*