

# Big Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee (GSPAC)

Virtual Conference Call

February 18, 2022, 11:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

## Meeting Summary

The Big Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee (GSPAC) met on February 18, 2022, via Zoom videoconference. Below is a summary of key items discussed during the meeting. This document is not intended to be a meeting transcript; it focuses on the main points of the group’s discussion and highlights action items and recommendations that arise from the meeting. The agenda and full recording of the videoconference meeting is available on the Lake County Water Resources website at:

[http://www.lakecountyca.gov/Government/Directory/WaterResources/Programs\\_P/Advisory\\_Committee\\_Documents.htm](http://www.lakecountyca.gov/Government/Directory/WaterResources/Programs_P/Advisory_Committee_Documents.htm)

### ACTION ITEMS

- For all GSPAC meetings and related topics, comments may be submitted to the committee via email at [water.resources@lakecountyca.gov](mailto:water.resources@lakecountyca.gov). Please include “GSPAC” in the subject line of all related emails.
- GSPAC committee members should encourage potential candidates for open seats to join us during upcoming GSPAC meetings.
- Individuals interested in filling the empty GSPAC seats should send Marina Deligiannis an email at [Marina.Deligiannis@lakecountyca.gov](mailto:Marina.Deligiannis@lakecountyca.gov) indicating which open seat they are interested in filling and to provide comments as to why they are suitable for the role.

### GSPAC RECOMMENDATIONS

- During this meeting, the GSPAC did not provide any recommendations to the Big Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Board of Directors.

### 1. ROLL CALL

GSPAC Attendee Name	Member	Status
Brenna Sullivan	Lake County Farm Bureau	Present
Pat Scully	Scully Packing Company	Present
David Weiss	Bella Vista Farming Company	Present
Peter Windrem	Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch	Present
Kyle Reams	Kelseyville Unified School District	Present
Sarah Ryan	Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians	Present
Scott Hornung	Lake County Special Districts	Present
Valerie Nixon	Lake County Land Trust	Present
Marina Deligiannis	Lake County Watershed Protection District	Present

### 2. REVIEW AND APPROVE JANUARY 28, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The GSPAC was offered the opportunity to provide comments on the January 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes. GSPAC Lead, Marina Deligiannis, asked if there were any questions, clarifications, or comments on the meeting minutes from the previous GSPAC meeting.

Sarah Ryan provided a correction to page 4, noting that data is collected every hour, not every 15 minutes as stated, on Adobe and Kelsey Creeks.

Brenna Sullivan made a motion to approve the January 28, 2022 meeting minutes. Valerie Nixon seconded the motion.

Deligiannis introduced the new meeting participants in attendance: Marisa Perez-Reyes, Stantec Facilitator; Laura Hall, Lake County Community Development Department; and Craig Wetherbee, Lake County Environmental Health Department.

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**3. BIG VALLEY GROUNDWATER UPDATES**

**3.1. Brief report of current groundwater conditions and drought-related information**

Deligiannis gave an update on groundwater conditions and drought-related information. She provided a snapshot of the California Department of Water Resources *My Dry Well Reporting System*, noting that no new reports have been filed for Lake County in the last 30 days. Wetherbee confirmed that the Environmental Health Department has received no new reports of dry wells. Ryan expressed appreciation for the County developing an internal dry well tracking system.

David Weiss asked whether investigations have been made into why the wells are dry, given the recent rain. Deligiannis shared that DWR does not conduct investigations, beyond what is submitted in the reports. She expressed interest in conducting an analysis at the County level, if staff and funding were available.

Nixon asked for clarification about whether individuals that submit dry well reports have the ability to modify or revise their reports, should the wells no longer be dry. Ryan highlighted that there is a “resolved” metric in the reporting tool.

William Fox noted that they have seen a return in water levels since the levels that were observed last summer and fall. Groundwater levels are characteristic of a typical year. Christy Clark, Stantec Facilitator, added that the dry well reports may have predated the December rains.

Deligiannis plans to go before the Board of Directors next week to provide a report on the drought. She will reach out to DWR in the meantime to better understand their tracking, so the information can be more easily relayed to the community at large.

**3.2. Technical Support Services (TSS) update**

Fox provided an update on the TSS General Application process. Next steps include coordinating with their DWR regional point of contact, and they hope to make progress by early summer.

Ryan inquired about the opportunity to review the potential monitoring locations that would be identified. Fox conveyed that nothing has been decided and DWR would like to conduct site visits. He offered to provide supplementary information to Ryan, and he expressed willingness to include anyone that would like to receive more specific information and to be part of that decision-making process.

**4. Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Submission and Next Steps**

**4.1. GSP submission completed by January 31, 2022 deadline**

Deligiannis reported that the GSP was successfully submitted by the January 31, 2022 deadline, and she expressed gratitude to all participants who supported the process.

**4.2. California Department of Water Resources 75-day public review of Big Valley GSP**

The GSP is now located on the DWR SGMA Portal. Members of the public may submit comments on the GSP directly to the SGMA Portal. Deligiannis noted that there have been social media posts and notifications to announce DWR’s 75-day public review process.

Deligiannis will be coordinating with DWR to address any comments that result from this period. Clark elaborated that DWR takes the public comments into account as part of its GSP review process and overall evaluation, which may take up to two years. Those who submit comments to

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DWR should receive a response, but the responses likely won't be on a direct one-to-one level, as was seen in the Draft GSP comment response matrix.

**4.3. Overview of GSP implementation activities and SGMA timeline**

Deligiannis shared a graphic demonstrating the SGMA implementation timeline. Next steps include annual reporting (the first of which is due April 1). The question of how GSP implementation will look in practice is something the GSPAC will work through together. She expressed hope that this plan would help the County in their larger sustainability efforts.

Peter Windrem asked for clarification about why the first annual report is due just months after the plan is submitted. Deligiannis shared that the requirement is a regular part of reporting under SGMA legislation. Clark added that the first annual report also sets a starting point for future reporting that's required under SGMA.

**5. Evaluation of GSPAC During GSP Development**

**5.1. Review activities undertaken by GSPAC under original charter**

Deligiannis provided a brief presentation highlighting the accomplishments of the GSPAC, which included 10 monthly GSPAC meetings, 9 technical subcommittee meetings, 2 field-visit days, reviews of content and draft edits to the entire GSP, and frequent consultation with the technical team.

**5.2. Discussion of GSPAC successes, challenges, and efficiency of process for providing input, feedback, and guidance**

Deligiannis solicited feedback from the group. She shared that she views the timely submission of the GSP as a big, successful outcome of the GSPAC. Another big challenge was the ambitious timeline combined with the hefty workload.

Successes

Sullivan called attention to how rushed the GSP development process was, especially with regards to the development of the hydrogeological model. The group didn't truly have a year—only 9 months. She noted that the group's ability to digest the technical information was limited. She expressed appreciation and gratitude that the group was able to put the GSP together under the timeline and shared that she wants to move forward and refine it. Deligiannis acknowledged that the compressed timeline was not ideal and reiterated that the group does have the opportunity to now make improvements, address the data gaps, and fill the vacant GSPAC seats reserved for a disadvantaged community representative and domestic well-owner representative.

Ryan identified the conversations around groundwater use as a great success, noting that it represents the start of building a successful program. The region is in a better place than they were before the SGMA and GSP process was started.

Windrem expressed appreciation for the consultants who were able to grasp the technical complexity of the Big Valley hydrologic system. Clark noted that she would convey that appreciation to the technical team.

Clark highlighted the relationships that have resulted from the GSPAC process—among GSPAC members, with key stakeholders, and between internal County departments—as an additional successful outcome of the process.

Challenges

Deligiannis asked whether the group wanted to share additional challenges, aside from the compressed timeline.

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Scott Hornung shared that identifying funding is now a big challenge.

Nixon asked whether the GSPAC would continue to be subject to the Brown Act. Clark clarified that while the Brown Act prohibits GSPAC members from convening with one another to discuss GSPAC business outside public meetings, there is no prohibition on communication between a GSPAC member and the community they serve as a representative. Clark suggested adding an agenda item to the May GSPAC meeting to provide a refresher on Brown Act requirements, especially since there are new members.

Ryan referenced her group's rejection of the plan and expressed disappointment that GSPAC didn't include a more diverse group of users, noting that the GSP may have reached different conclusions about groundwater management otherwise. Ryan doesn't place blame on the GSA or the facilitation and technical teams. She attributed the challenge to the short timeline and the complexity of engaging disadvantaged community members who aren't compensated for their time. The make-up of the group should have been different. She would like the GSPAC to overcome this challenge as they move forward into implementation. The public and domestic well users whose shallow wells may go dry should really be part of GSP implementation. Ryan expressed concern that the GSP largely missed out on hearing those perspectives. Deligiannis reiterated her commitment to prioritizing filling the disadvantaged community seat and engaging domestic well users. She affirmed that this is a heavy load and they're asking a lot of the community, but the GSPAC needs to do what they can to ensure that every beneficial user group is considered.

Weiss affirmed the importance of ensuring representation from every beneficial user group, but he noted that he disagrees with Ryan's assertion that the conclusions in the GSP would have been different should the Committee have included additional voices. He noted that the GSP developed by the technical team, with the GSPAC's guidance, indicates that the Big Valley Basin is sustainable.

Ryan left a note in the chat, indicating that Weiss should review her group's comments related to the shallow wells.

How was the process?

Deligiannis solicited feedback on the structure of the GSPAC group.

Nixon felt that the meetings were rushed, and the members were asked to make decisions based on new information with very little lead time or were asked live during the meeting in some instances.

## **6. GSPAC Rechartering Process for GSP Implementation**

### **6.1. GSPAC rechartering process and Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) guidance**

Deligiannis introduced the items that would be reviewed today:

- Evaluate previous Charter and process to identify effectiveness
- Revisit GSPAC purpose and goals
- Revise key tasks and deliverables
- Review and discuss organizational structure and membership
- Consider beneficial user and uses categories
- Establish process for filling open seats
- Determine methods for providing guidance

By the May GSPAC meeting, the following actions will be taken:

- Draft new GSPAC Charter document, to review during the May GSPAC meeting

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- Put forward a slate identifying the GSPAC's current members and any open seats
- Have a schedule for the Board of Directors' approval of the new GSPAC Charter

Purpose and Goals

Deligiannis shared her screen displaying the original GSPAC Charter (established in April 2021) and she solicited feedback on the purpose and goals of the GSPAC.

Clark would like the Purpose and Goals to clarify the relationship between the GSA Board of Directors and the Lake County Board of Supervisors.

Ryan pointed out that the language which says "development of GSP" is out of date. Deligiannis confirmed that in every instance where the Charter says "development" she will update it to "implementation," given that is now the current stage of SGMA the basin is now in.

Mission, Key Tasks, and Deliverables

Deligiannis noted that meetings will occur on a quarterly, rather than monthly basis. She further noted that she would revise the section to more appropriately align with the group's mission and activities during GSP implementation.

Ryan would like the data gap issue to be further highlighted; acknowledging that there's a need to resolve some of the known data gaps as implementation moves forward.

Windrem would like there to be language in the Charter that addresses the group's role in mediating different interpretations of data. He also contested the prevalence of dry domestic wells. Deligiannis recognized the role of the group is to utilize the best available data. Windrem emphasized his view that the group should endeavor to build consensus on the interpretation of the data. Fox shared that one of the actions in the GSP is to conduct a well inventory and analysis. He conveyed that the inventory would help to fill some of those gaps and resolve some of the issues related to data interpretation.

Outcomes

Deligiannis noted that the outcomes would be updated to reflect the shift from GSP development to implementation.

Ryan highlighted the "range of group perspectives and areas of agreement" language and underscored the importance of recording and reporting the range of perspectives shared. Deligiannis provided detail about how that information was captured via the levels of agreement decision-making model used by the GSPAC, and that all commentary was noted along with the numbered levels of agreement. This method was helpful for the GSA Board as they reviewed all of the proceedings and materials.

**6.2. Review beneficial users and uses of groundwater in Big Valley Basin**

Deligiannis shared a table showing the composition of the GSPAC member with their associated beneficial user designation. She called attention to the empty seats: Disadvantaged Community, Domestic Well Owner (previously filled by Sky Hoyt), and Private User (previously filled by Kyle Reams of the Kelseyville School District) seats. She also asked the committee members to consider whether the GSPAC should add seats or advisory roles. In particular, she expressed interest in adding an advisory role for land use and planning, cannabis, or environmental health interests.

Windrem asked for clarification about what "disadvantaged community" means for this group. He pointed out that by economic standards, the entire town of Kelseyville and its surrounding area is classified as a disadvantaged community. Deligiannis expressed a desire to fill the seat by someone who lives in Big Valley, but the only groups that have capacity are non-governmental organizations that are situated outside the basin. Clark pointed to the language in the GSP, where

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the plan speaks to what the term means in the Big Valley context. Perez-Reyes provided information about the definition of “disadvantaged community” from the statewide context. Clark underscored disadvantage in the context of impacts and recommended against categorizing the term simply—there may be many facets to underrepresented users of groundwater.

Ryan suggested that agricultural users may be overrepresented on the committee. She asked the GSA if they have data that would support that level of representation. Deligiannis provided historical context, sharing that when the GSPAC was developed, they followed Water Code guidelines and also acknowledged the significance of the agricultural industry in Big Valley Basin.

Laura Hall, with the County Planning Department, shared that she grew up in Kelseyville and now lives in Lucerne (another disadvantaged community) but is hesitant to commit to filling the seat, given the unknown time commitments. She wants to connect with Deligiannis after the meeting to discuss that representation on GSPAC.

Sullivan suggested that the group may be constraining themselves by having a predetermined “type of person” in mind as they seek to fill the disadvantaged community seat. She suggested there may be a fair amount of overlap between domestic well owners and disadvantaged communities. She added that many of the individuals that sit on the GSPAC represent the interests of more than one beneficial user group.

Fox pointed out that time is a valuable resource. For disadvantaged community representatives who are not compensated for their participation, attending GSPAC meetings represents loss of income. He hopes that with the less frequent meetings, it will be easier for disadvantaged or underrepresented community members to participate in the process.

Weiss shared that as an agricultural representative, he represents farmers. His water comes from a domestic well that he doesn’t own, so he is as concerned as anyone else about the performance of the domestic wells. He’s concerned for himself and others in the industry.

Hornung asked in the chat whether there might be a farm labor organization that could fill the seat. Ryan and Deligiannis expressed enthusiasm for the idea.

Clark reflected that there is broad support and enthusiasm amongst GSPAC members for filling the disadvantaged community seat. She noted that rechartering doesn’t mean it’s set in stone and the group can always revisit and revise the Charter further down the road to reflect the user groups that are reflective of the Big Valley community.

Ryan asked in the chat whether the group could define “private user” as a beneficial user category. Clark replied that the reason the School District was involved is because Kyle Reams is the facilities manager and oversees a number of playgrounds and fields. She suggested that engaging the School District moving forward may prove difficult since they are handling many other challenges right now with the pandemic. Windrem shared information about the Lake County Office of Education as a potential GSPAC representative.

Deligiannis encouraged committee members to invite potential future candidates for open seats to upcoming GSPAC meetings.

**6.3. Discuss effectiveness of using levels-of-agreement method for providing guidance**

Deligiannis requested committee members to comment on their level of agreement with the GSPAC’s use of the level-of-agreement scale by typing a response into the chat. Weiss, Pat Scully, Hornung, and Sullivan all conveyed their level of agreement of 2.

Sullivan suggested that the verbiage about conditional agreement should be modified. Deligiannis agreed with Sullivan’s suggested change.

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#### **6.4. Outline initial key action areas for GSPAC**

Marina shared key focus areas for GSPAC in 2022, which include:

- Rechartering GSPAC for implementation
- Submitting the Annual Report that is due April 1, 2022
- Offering frequent Board of Directors' updates
- Providing ongoing review of incoming data
- Identifying new areas for analyses, data, or collaboration
- Initiating focused subcommittee work for financing and potential projects
- Providing general public education on groundwater and GSP implementation
- Facilitating outreach and engagement with specific audiences

She also identified three specific activities for GSPAC to undertake:

**6.4.1. Outreach and engagement with domestic well owners in Big Valley Basin**

**6.4.2. Gaining representation for and engagement with disadvantaged community**

**6.4.3. Tribal engagement workshop to discuss GSP and areas for collaboration**

#### **7. Public Comments**

At Clark's request, Deligiannis provided information about the timing and process for preparing revised Charter language. Deligiannis will have an updated Draft Charter available for the group's review at the May meeting, and the GSPAC can discuss the open seats and the potential advisory roles. Clark requested clarification about how new members of the GSPAC would be added. Deligiannis shared those individuals interested in filling the seats should send her an email with a statement indicating which seat they want to fill and why they feel they are suited to fill it. Once she has that list of individuals, in addition to any of the members' nominations, she will bring the list to the GSPAC for their discussion and selection at a future meeting.

Weiss asked who is preparing the upcoming Annual Report and requested clarification about whether the GSPAC approves it before it's submitted. Clark conveyed that the Annual Report is being prepared by the technical team at no additional cost, because it is covered under the existing GSP-related activities. Eddy Teasdale, who leads the technical team, anticipates they will have all components prepared by March 7 for the GSA's review, before submitting by the April 1 deadline.

Scully noted that stream flows are healthy and asked for the County to provide an explanation for how they decide to hold water back. Deligiannis offered to open a dialogue on the topic by providing a brief overview of the procedures related to holding water back at a future GSPAC meeting. Ryan added in the chat that she thinks it's a great idea to report on stream flows and she'd also like to see a report on the velocity and other data they're seeing at each of the creeks.

#### **8. Future GSPAC Meeting Dates**

**8.1. Next quarterly meeting of GSPAC is on May 20, 2022 from 11 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**

Further meetings include August 19 and November 18. Deligiannis noted that the current plan is to continue convening virtually, but they hope to offer a hybrid format or to return to in-person meetings when it is safe to gather.

Deligiannis also offered her contact information: [Marina.Deligiannis@lakecountycalifornia.gov](mailto:Marina.Deligiannis@lakecountycalifornia.gov).

#### **9. Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:22 p.m.