



Special Board of Directors Meeting

April 1, 2021

Via Zoom

MINUTES

Directors Present

Director Kelly Long, Chair
Director Ed McFadden, Vice Chair/Secretary
Director Gordon Kimball
Director Candice Meneghin
Director Glen Pace
Director Christina Villaseñor

Staff Present

Anthony Emmert, Executive Director
Steve O'Neill, Legal Counsel
Eva Ibarra, Clerk of the Board

Public Present

Gary Ball
Lisa Ballin, CSUS/DBS&A
Bryan Bondy, Fillmore and Piru Pumpers Associations
Christian Brodrick, Stillwater Science
Katie Brokaw
Guy Cole
Dayanna Costa
Dan Detmer, UWCD
Michael Fetchner
Carole Fornoff
Matt Freeman
David Grant
Burt Handy
Logan Hardison
Gosta Iwasiuk
Debbie Jackson
Rachel Laenen
Bill Lindsay
Helen McGrath
Tony Morgan, DBS&A

Patrick O'Connell, DBS&A
EJ Remson, The Nature Conservancy
Bruce Orr, Stillwater Science
Eddie Pech, DWR
Zachary Plummer, UWCD
Brisa Romero
Kat Selm, The Nature Conservancy
Lara Shellenbanger, SCRWC
Stacie Ann Silva
Steve Slack, CDFW
Lita Spencer
Jeffrey Steinberg
Dr. Jason Sun, UWCD
Richard Tate
Jean Thirkettle
Roy Thun
James Thurber
Ambry Tibay, UWCD
Jim Van de Water
Gilead Wurman
Steven Zimmer

1. Call to Order – First Open Session 5:01 pm

Chair Long called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

1A. Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chair McFadden led the meeting participants in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

1B. Directors Roll Call

Roll call: (Kimball, Chair Long, Vice Chair McFadden, Meneghin, Pace, Villaseñor); six present.

1C. Public Comments

Chair Long asked if there were any public comments; none were offered.

1D. Approval of Agenda

Motion

Motion to approve the agenda, Vice Chair McFadden; Second, Director Villaseñor. Roll call vote: six ayes (Kimball, Chair Long, Vice Chair McFadden, Meneghin, Pace, Villaseñor); none opposed. Motion carries 6/0.

2. STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

2A Board of Directors Opening Statements (this was moved to the end of the meeting)

2B Stakeholder Input on Draft Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems

Technical Memorandum

Informational

The Board received stakeholder input on the draft Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Technical Memorandum.

Vice Chair McFadden commented by saying only two letters had been received and asked if any additional letters had been submitted.

Executive Director Anthony Emmert summarized the letters received and asked participants to share comments from the letters they may have submitted.

Ms. Lisa Ballin mentioned the GDE Technical Memo will be part of the actual draft GSP that will undergo public review once the document is completed.

Chair Long requested clarification on the deadline for receiving comments and letters.

Mr. Tony Morgan stated there is no deadline but mentioned comments should be received by the end of the month of April.

EJ Remson said he has, “two concerns, one regarding the GDE’s for the Cienega area and the objectives that bring the water levels to pre-drought baseline and rooting depth versus water level.

Participant chat commented, “I would like to hear a summary of environmental concerns from the former GDE Memo.”

Director Meneghin stated she had read all letters, except for the United Water letter, and mentioned the concern from Mr. Remsons previous conversation, adding pre-drought baseline had also been mentioned in the letter from California Fish and Wildlife. She summarized the comment letters that had been received to this point.

Participant chat, “All the work on GDEs seems to suggest that there is significant interconnection between the surface and groundwater systems. This being the case, Department of Water Resources (DWR) will likely expect them to be monitoring and measuring integrated Surface Water (ISW) using SMC. In the preparation of the Critically Overdraft GSPs, DWR placed heavy emphasis on this monitoring component – from their perspective, if the condition changes, even if the does so due to natural conditions, the GSA has to keep an eye on it. There is a significant risk that failing to address one of the sustainability indicators, that they have identified as existing in the Subbasin, could cause their plan to be deemed inadequate or incomplete.

Director Meneghin said, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has identified that as a data gap, the Agency needs to address the monitoring requirements that are needed or study development.

Director Kimball asked if there are technical studies that quantify the groundwater use of Arundo donax.

Director Meneghin mentioned UCSB did a study on Arundo and provided background on what has been done and is being done on the study of eradicating arundo.

Chair Long, Mr. Morgan and Dr. Bruce Orr had a brief conversation on Arundo.

Participant chat commented, "In addition to Steelhead, these GDE's act as critical areas for breeding of many migratory songbird species. TNC has been conducting bird point counts on the river since 2011 and the results of last year are evidence of the importance of these GDEs. Despite the recovery from the 5 year drought in the last two wet years (2018-2019), species richness continued to decline on most properties from 2011 levels. It is likely that the loss of mature tree cover on the wettest properties, which was substantial by 2016/2017, coupled with increased cover of Arundo on most properties since the last large scouring event in 2011, are keeping bird species richness and abundances depressed. Densities of three special status species remained high on one of our properties and that is one where Arundo has been removed and the riparian forest did not experience any die off from the last major drought."

Participant chat: Here is a source of information on Arundo water consumption:
[https://groundwaterresourcehub.org/public/uploads/pdfs/TNC Arundo ET Literature Review Feb2019.pdf](https://groundwaterresourcehub.org/public/uploads/pdfs/TNC_Arundo_ET_Literature_Review_Feb2019.pdf)

Chair Long asked Dr. Orr, based on the studies he has done, with the burnt trees from recent wildfires, how does this play on the pressure from everything moving down into the river.

Dr. Orr replied how the process works and how it affects the river.

Participant chat commented, "The Stillwater report dropped a basket of information on us just a week ago. It seems the board is being asked to make decisions regarding GDEs today considering a raft of "could be", "might be" conditions; further, one flood can wipe out a substantial number of ecosystems we devote substantial effort and water to conserve beforehand. At this time, it seems appropriate to monitor and further study "potential" conditions, rather than locking in requirements that may not be needed in the actual future."

Director Meneghin said, Department of Water Resources (DWR) has taught us to identify the existing GDEs and as much as that can change, the Board needs to develop the Sustainable Management Criteria for what is existing, in case of fire or flood etc. She then provided more details of the process.

Chair Long also expressed what the Board's role is regarding the GDE's. Chair Long requested Mr. Morgan's input on the subject.

Mr. Morgan provided his input on the process.

Director Meneghin mentioned the Friends of the Santa Clara River letter calls for steelhead limiting factors to be considered. She stated that Mr. Emmert noted earlier that the Agency has already determined that data gaps exist regarding shallow groundwater near the GDEs, and that the Agency's monitoring wells project is intended to close that data gap.

Participant chat commented, "I agree with Logan. I have attended many of these meetings and there is more speculation than actual concrete metrics. It is not appropriate to adopt stringent guidelines but proceed as Logan suggests, there are enough overlapping goals amongst agriculture, municipal, and environmental stakeholders to focus on now."

Vice Chair McFadden asked Mr. Morgan to review the DWR requirements for baseline year, as the Board has to be aware of conditions.

Mr. Morgan explained the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requirements.

2C Stakeholder Input on Draft Sustainable Management Criteria Matrix

Informational

The Board received a brief presentation on the draft Sustainable Management Criteria Matrix from Daniel B. Stephens & Associates team (see attached slides).

Director Villaseñor asked Mr. Morgan if he has looked at a longer drought period model.

Mr. Morgan shared a slide to show how the drought scale is measuring the drought.

Director Meneghin asked if a ten year drought was modeled?

Mr. Morgan stated that a future drought graph might be steeper, might be deeper.

Mr. Emmert asked Mr. Morgan if the graph he was using included the DWR climate factors.

Mr. Morgan said yes, the DWR climate factors are included, and this affects the potential future precipitation, and pointed it out on graph.

Dan Detmer stated that the Agency is required to update its GSPs every 5-years and submit to the Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Mr. Morgan replied that this is to remind the people that, there is a mandatory five-year update, and the GSA will also be required to do an annual report. Mr. Morgan shared other scenarios.

Director Meneghin opened a discussion on surface water criteria, summarizing the Environmental groups' thoughts and recommendations for the matrix.

Chair Long asked Director Meneghin for clarification of the information she had just shared.

Mr. Emmert commented on the discussion Director Meneghin and Chair Long had, and asked Mr. Morgan to show previous slides.

Chair Long asked Mr. Morgan if the surface water flows in the Willard Road (East Grove) area will always be five cubic feet per second (cfs) of water, despite drought conditions.

Mr. Morgan showed the graph and pointed out the conditions produced by the model.

Chair Long stated DWR did not put the basins in the high classification because of the drought, it is in case there is more development.

Mr. Morgan stated the reason the GSA is in the high category is because it is groundwater dependent; the area does not have other resources of water.

Vice Chair McFadden asked if the East Grove area is a potential steelhead habitat.

Director Meneghin answered Vice Chair McFadden's question that it is a potential steelhead over-summering habitat, but no studies have been done to confirm this.

Participant chat commented, "I respectfully disagree, specific objectives of SGMA not does not include steelhead recovery. Please do not confuse natural seasonal streamflow for migration with minor flows associated with rising groundwater."

Director Villaseñor asked Director Meneghin if there is something that can be done to close the data gap that she mentioned and have it as part of the SMC looking at data if the GSA cannot come up with the measurable threshold (MT) at this time.

Director Meneghin replied no, in some instances there is not enough information and in others it is a matter of having the conversation and coming to agreement on that SMC matrix.

Participant chat commented, "Please refresh my memory but didn't DWR place our basins as impaired primarily because we don't have any other additional sources of water than rain. Therefore, building on what Tony just spoke about I believe our basins are not impaired but follow California's wet and dry cycles and trying to assume that dry periods will be more prolonged is not an acceptable assumption. We could just as easily enter a prolonged wet cycle beginning next year. The reality is no one knows the future until it happens and then it becomes history. We cannot risk everything on hypothetical potentials but use the current modeling as proposed and then make adjustments every 5 years if needed. The GDE's are larger than ever because of additional water from L A County and continuous releases from the Santa Felicia Dam.

Mr. Detmer added that 2005 was a record wet year.

Vice Chair McFadden interjected that 2005 was also a destruction of habitat on the riverbed or radical adjustment of habitat unlike he had seen for decades. Much riparian habitat was displaced and swept out to sea.

Participant chat commented, "If we have to do studies to figure out if steelhead are habitating the rising groundwater areas then it probably isn't significant."

Participant chat commented, “The Temperature of water being released from the Santa Felicia Dam into Piru Creek is generally much cooler because it is discharged from deeper depths of Lake Piru, so this released water may be more beneficial to aquatic species than currently realized.”

Participant chat commented, “GDE communities comprised of willows and cottonwoods require scouring and flood events to disperse as they need the mineral soil to germinate. One concern I have in dead and dying GDE's along the river is that there will not be that seed source to repopulate after a dramatic event like the 2005 floods. Not sure about the longevity of the seed banks for these species, maybe Bruce can speak to this?”

Dr. Orr replied that the seeds are not viable for a long period.

Vice Chair McFadden requested Dr. Orr provide clarification on his answer.

2D Stakeholder Input on Draft Sustainable Management Criteria Matrix

Informational

The Board received stakeholder input on the Draft Sustainable Management Criteria Matrix.

3. MOTION ITEMS

3A Sustainable Management Criteria Development

Motion

The Board agreed on four of the six criteria included in the Sustainable Management Criteria matrix for use in developing the draft Groundwater Sustainability Plans:

1. Groundwater Elevation
2. Groundwater Storage Reduction
3. Degraded Water Quality
4. Seawater Intrusion

Executive Director Emmert shared his thoughts and information on the process of approving the SMCs.

Chair Long asked each Director and Vice Chair McFadden to share their feelings and thoughts on the process of approving the SMCs. They all summarized their thoughts and agreed to approve four out of the six criteria from the Matrix.

Motion to approve four of the six SMC's (GW Elevation, GW Storage Reduction, Degraded WQ and Seawater Intrusion), Vice Chair McFadden; Second, Director Kimball. Roll call vote: six ayes (Kimball, Chair Long, Vice Chair McFadden, Meneghin, Pace, Villaseñor); none opposed. Motion carries 6/0.

FUTURE TOPICS FOR BOARD DISCUSSION

Land Subsidence

Surface Water Depletion

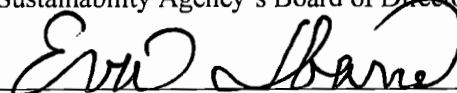
Consider a date for a Special Board Meeting

ADJOURNMENT: 7:30 pm

Chair Long adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m. to the next **Regular Board Meeting** on Thursday, April 15, 2021 or call of the Chair.

ATTEST: 
Kelly Long, Chair, FFB GSA Board of Directors

I certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Fillmore and Piru Basins Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Board of Directors meeting of April 1, 2021.

ATTEST: 
Eva Ibarra, Clerk of the Board