



OVERVIEW

Meeting goals:

1. Develop a unified message from the agricultural community on SGMA.
2. Explore how the agricultural community's interests can best be represented in a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA).

Meeting Summary

This meeting built on the SGMA information workshops held earlier this year and had two primary objectives: to develop a unified message from the agricultural community on SGMA, and to explore how the agricultural community's interests can be best represented in a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). Attendees included farmers and ranchers, agency representatives and elected officials, and others. We had almost ninety participants engaged in active dialogue and idea development on the question of what ag representation in the GSA might look like in the Solano Subbasin. A set of suggested principles were drafted, and discussion focused largely on the question of what appropriate and representative GSA governance could look like in the Solano Subbasin. Many ideas were drafted and discussed that will be shared back with the GSA Advisory Group.

Next Steps

1. These meeting notes, the draft [principles](#) statements, and a summary of survey findings will be shared with the GSA Advisory Group in advance of their June 2, 2016 meeting.
2. These notes will be shared back with the ag community via the SGMA listserv.
3. A next step for the Ag Community will be offer input on the GSA governance proposals being developed in the coming months (to be shared via SGMA listserv), and clarify what kind of representation will work best for them, within the confines of the law.
4. [An online survey](#) will be created for those who want to give further input or invite others to do so.
5. Anyone who wants to take home a survey can mail it to:
Brooking Gatewood, Ag Innovations, 101 Morris St, Sebastopol CA, 95472

DETAILED MEETING NOTES

Welcome & Introductions

- ❑ The facilitator, Brookling Gatewood of Ag Innovations, began the evening by thanking the event sponsors and supporters. She discussed the ground-rules for the evening and presented the agenda.
 - ❑ For **8** individuals this is their first SGMA event
 - ❑ **~50%** of participants own farms
 - ❑ **~50%** of participants own private wells
 - ❑ **10** of the individuals get their water from SID or equivalent
 - ❑ The meeting had nearly **90** participants in total
- ❑ Solano County Supervisor John Vasquez
 - ❑ The Supervisor spoke about similar process in 2002, and how SGMA will have lasting impact on land use, crop types, ag economy, etc. He suggested land users will be most impacted.
 - ❑ He invited the audience to stay informed, engaged, and to share their voices and opinions.
 - ❑ He invited a commitment to a long term view, and recognizing that this will be a complex, expensive and controversial plan, no matter where we go. We've spent 267 years trying to figure out water in CA.
 - ❑ SGMA is the most important water issue regarding we go about determining how we use water. Ag uses 80% of the water. What does that mean? What do they do with that water? They feed humanity. This should be a top priority in this state and in any country.
 - ❑ He closed expressing hope that participants continue to work very hard on this issue, and shared that the County Board of Supervisors is concerned about how this process comes about. They will ensure ag has the water it needs to grow the food for all of us.

Basics of SGMA: Requirements and Deadlines

Hong Lin, DWR, provided an overview of SGMA law and what implementation means in Solano County. Details can be found in the [Presentation Slides](#) and the Solano Subbasin [SGMA Factsheet](#).

What's Happening in Solano County?

Peter Miljanich provided an update on what Solano County has already done in the SGMA process and where Solano County is going and how stakeholders can be involved. Two interrelated processes are taking place:

- ❑ Public stakeholder engagement - workshops, meetings, outreach to organizations that represent stakeholders from ag community, website and listserv to maintain communication and send updates
- ❑ Inter-agency coordination - which agencies are eligible; also inclusive of FB and Ag Advisory Committee

Details can be found in the [Presentation Slides](#) and the Solano Subbasin [SGMA Factsheet](#).

Group Discussion: Concerns

The facilitator discussed the trajectory for ag community in this process so far and moving forward. She introduced the ag community concerns that have been voiced so far regarding the GSA and GSP.

GSA Formation Concerns	GSP Development Concerns
As the largest user of groundwater in the Solano Subbasin, the ag community wants fair representation in the GSA.	New fee structures are of concern, and answers are unclear.
The question of who can represent ag on the GSA is part of what we hope to clarify with your input.	Well monitoring/metering: local agencies will need to measure and somehow monitor groundwater sustainability for SGMA.
Ensuring local control (not state) is important.	Deep well drilling that impacts neighbors' groundwater is of concern.
Non-affected local public agencies should not be part of the GSA governing board.	Varying groundwater conditions mean one-size-fits-all management won't work.
	How does this connect with the Irrigated Lands Program?

Ag concerns: Does this reflect your key concerns? What, if anything, would you add, subtract, or change?

- No concerns raised by the group other than to be sure to focus this evening on GSA governance and not GSP concerns, as those will be addressed later in the process.



Table Discussion: Principles for Fair Representation

The facilitator posed the question to the group: **What guiding principles could GSA leaders follow to ensure ag's needs are fairly represented in the GSA process?**

Participants discussed the key guiding principles they felt were necessary for fair representation in small table discussions. Top ideas were written on post-its and collected for synthesis by Ag Innovations staff.

After the summit, the Ag Innovations team organized dozens of principles statements developed by attendees into the following core themes:

- Proportional and fair representation
- GSA should not have financial conflict of interest
- Prioritize local governance and control
- Recognize variance in local conditions
- Keep it transparent and simple
- Ensure fair access to technical knowledge for sound decision-making
- Value ag's role in the local economy
- Consider sustainability and longevity of our local groundwater resource

In addition to principles some ideas and concerns were raised re: funding the GSA. The full list of principles and statements developed during the table discussions are available [here](#).

Before the meeting, the Agricultural Advisory Committee developed its own [list of principles](#) to incorporate in GSA formation and GSP development, and the Farm Bureau recently published a [position paper](#) outlining some key principles to consider as well. These were shared with participants and many of these ideas are reflected in the group's discussions.

Next, the facilitator introduced a survey handout to gather input on different avenues for ag participation in the GSA.

After some discussion, the group paused to clarify a key point of confusion that came up in a number of discussions: ***there is no avoiding having an agency as the GSA. The GSA must be a local public agency having water supply, water management, or land use responsibilities within a basin.*** The GSA could be a collection of agencies formed through a Joint Powers Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. In our Subbasin, there will more than likely be several agencies participating. There is an opportunity to include the ag community directly in governance, and cooperation between local community and local agencies is an essential part of this law. The facilitator then urged the group to consider, since Ag is a majority groundwater user in this area and since the principle of proportionate representation was showing up in many discussions in the room: *what responsibilities would come with proportional representation?* The law has financial and administrative costs and requires resources that agencies are well equipped to manage. The facilitator urged the group to wrestle with this question further, and seek creative and collaborative solutions where possible.

The [survey was transferred to an online format](#) after the event to collect additional data from those who could not attend.

Survey Highlights

The survey results were not ample enough to share any robust statistical trends. Themes and a sampling of ideas expressed at the Summit are summarized here:

- ❑ Dixon RCD and RD 2068 were the most trusted GSA-eligible agencies among the 15 participants who responded to question #1.
- ❑ Many respondents expressed the view that agencies could not represent them as independent groundwater users, and as a result shared the preference that independent ag groundwater users should have direct representation on the GSA.
- ❑ A handful of respondents expressed a concern about conflict of interest for agencies who sell water.
- ❑ Some respondents expressed concern that small farmers and small volume groundwater pumpers also be considered somehow in the GSA governance process.
- ❑ There was some support for the Ag Advisory Committee, the Farm Bureau, County Supervisors, a direct ag representative, and/or a new GSA-focused Ag Advisory Committee offering direct input and representation. Some respondents noted that one vote may not be enough, and opinion differed as to which groups would offer the best representation. A next step for the Ag Community will be to further clarify what kind of representation would work best for them, within the confines of the law.
- ❑ Additional ideas for how agencies could demonstrate that the ag perspective is being included in the governance process included:
 - ❑ Maintaining ag acreage and farm gate value.
 - ❑ Give updates regarding votes and decisions to ag and give ag some ability to affect the representation if they are not reflecting ag.
 - ❑ Issue a statement outlining their priorities relative to agriculture in the SGMA process.
 - ❑ Oversee development and sustainability of the groundwater management plan.
 - ❑ Focus on ag - not on cities' - perspective.
 - ❑ Try to be fair with allowed vote; keep costs down for farmers (easy for cities' interest to overwhelm votes for ag representatives).
 - ❑ Prepare some basic data on irrigation usage, requirements, and land use issues.
- ❑ Occasional public meetings were a popular way among respondents to share input and stay informed of SGMA developments. Evidence that input is being considered was important to respondents.
- ❑ Email communications via the SGMA listserv were also a popular form of communication with the public, with attention to keeping the farmers who do not use email informed as well.

Group Reflection and Debrief

Six Solutions were posed at the end of the meeting, each with a brief discussion. These solutions, principles themes and other insights from the Ag Summit were shared directly with the GSA Advisory Committee. A number of these ideas have been incorporated into the governance proposals that group is working on, as of June 2016.

1. Ag Advisory Board

That ag board would be comprised of representatives of ag interests, and would have a right to nominate an at large member to GSA board. The expectation is that individual be an ag user in unrepresented area. The ag reps could come from trusted ag groups, Farm Bureau, Ag Advisory, RCDs. Eligible agencies could be represented by collective representatives (ex: one representative represents 2-3 eligible agencies).

2. Representative Ag Advisor

Each agency have an ag representative advising them throughout the SGMA process.

3. Develop a Joint Powers Authority

This would exist between an Ag Board and Agency Board, which together would make up the GSA.

4. Groundwater Management Areas (GMAs)*

GMAs (ex: Dixon, Putah Creek, etc) would determine and enforce local rules and plans. Each GMA would report to the formal GSA, which would make sure each GMA abided by the law. The GMAs could be determined by geography, hydrological differences, groundwater pumping, watershed, etc. A model based on the [2008 County General Plan](#) Ag Areas was suggested. One version of this idea includes that the GSA board would be made up of one representative from each GMA, which gives regionally specific representation on the GSA. Another alternative is that GSA board members are selected through a different process. Fee assessment could be given to local entities, or could be maintained by the GSA. Financial responsibility for support of the GSA could be proportional to voting strength and to percent of groundwater used. *See two images below for visuals.*

**For more on the Management Area concept, see Department of Water Resources' [Groundwater Sustainability Plan Regulations](#).*

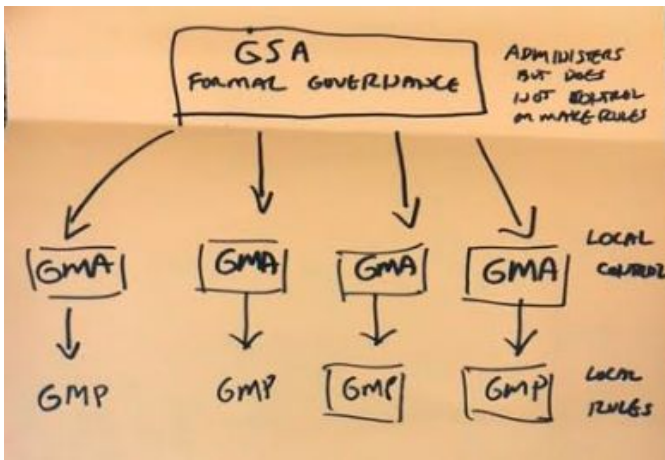
5. Majority Ag Governing Board

Eligible agencies would comprise the GSA and ag would control the GSA by having a majority ag governing board, with at least 80% representation from the ag community. This model provides an oversight committee to provide checks against excessive GSA power. Eligible agencies could be represented by collective representatives (e.g. one representative covers 2-3 eligible agencies).

6. Solano County

The County represents a broader base of water users and may be a more neutral option considering they don't sell water. However, the County may not wish to take on the financial and administrative responsibilities of the GSA.

Two groups came up with sketches of solution #4 above (see following page):



Questions

- Can management areas be set up with different thresholds?
 - Answer: Yes.
- Can the GSA delegate the fee management responsibility to GMA (Groundwater Management Areas)?
 - Answer: Yes; it is up to the GSA.
 - Adds a layer of complexity.
- How do you stop non-residents from buying Solano County water?
 - Answer: That issue is one of many facing the County right now that are part of this conversation.
- Real challenge: How do you get locals to agree on enforceable plan with a resource that is decreasing?

Final Thoughts

Closing note from Ag Commissioner Jim Allan: There is a huge amount of mistrust in these agencies. If it's going to work, the ag community that uses 80% of the water and owns 80% of the resource, has to be participatory. They have to be recognized and they have to have a proportional vote. Agencies need to make themselves more trustworthy or there needs to be another solution.