



MEMORANDUM
PUBLIC WORKS AND FACILITIES
ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING DIVISION
County of Placer

TO: Board of Supervisors

DATE: August 9, 2016

FROM: Ken Grehm, Director of Public Works and Facilities
By: Brett Storey, Principal Management Analyst

SUBJECT: Environmental Engineering / Sustainable Groundwater Management Act / Martis Valley Basin Update

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive an update on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act activities for the Martis Valley Groundwater Basin and proposed timeline to meet regulation milestones.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) requires agencies to achieve “sustainable groundwater management” by implementing various elements of the Act. SGMA contains the following pending dates certain for compliance with the Act:

- January 1, 2017: Deadline for submitting an Alternative Plan
- June 30, 2017: Deadline for formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for each high- and medium-priority basin.
- January 31, 2022: Deadline for adoption of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for each basin (Critical overdraft basins must adopt a plan by 2020. The Martis Valley Groundwater Basin (MVGB) is not in critical overdraft.)

The GSP requirements are written for worst case basin situations and are not appropriate for the many healthy basins statewide which have demonstrated historically stable conditions, such as the MVGB. The current requirements for a GSP are very complex and expensive to address and should be limited to groundwater basins that are not operating sustainably. Staff believes that this was the core intent of the SGMA legislation. The regulations do include an option to submit an Alternative Plan for basins that have a plan that is functionally equivalent to a GSP or that can show they have been sustainable historically.

The State Department of Water Resources (DWR), when adopting the regulations for GSP’s and Alternative Plans, introduced the concept of “Substantial Compliance” which was approved by the Water Commission. DWR’s Project Manager Trevor Joseph, during testimony at the Water Commission, described “Substantial Compliance” as the ability for staff to approve a GSP or Alternative Plan submittal that does not necessarily meet all of the regulatory requirements of SGMA but which has demonstrated that the basin is being well managed and is being operated within its sustainable yield.

Based on this information the MVGB seems to be a good candidate for an Alternative Plan given the extensive governance/regulatory framework already in place as well as the fact that the basin has been, and is projected to be, well within its sustainable yield through build-out. In addition, the MVGB did not experience any water supply shortages or any long-term adverse effects during the recent historic drought in California.

Therefore, the MVGB group (Placer County, Nevada County, the Town of Truckee, Placer County Water Agency, Northstar Community Services District and Truckee Donner Public Utility District) is

proposing to alter the earlier approach of preparing a full GSP and now believe that it would be technically possible and fiscally prudent to create and submit an Alternative Plan for the basin by the January 1, 2017 deadline.

Several actions are required to be ready for this submittal including: 1) a Resolution from each agency in support of an Alternative Plan (A draft resolution is being developed and will be brought back to your Board for adoption by the end of 2016), 2) Hiring a technical/hydro-geologist consultant to support the effort of our combined staff to prepare the Alternative Plan, 3) paying a one sixth share of the costs for the consultant (presently estimated to be \$10,000 maximum for Placer County share), and 4) drafting a Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) between all parties to implement the Alternative Plan (a draft is under development).

If the Alternative Plan is approved staff anticipates that it could save a combined estimated \$1,000,000 for the MVGB group, as a GSP would not be necessary.

Should the Alternative Plan be denied then the MVGB group would have an additional six months to form a GSA. Then a plan to fund and develop a GSP would be created and implemented to complete and submit a GSP to DWR by January 31, 2022. The effort and funding put into the Alternative Plan approach would be complementary towards the development of a GSP.

ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT

There is no environmental impact as this is an informational item to the BOS.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this informational item. Individual contracts will be brought back to your Board as appropriate.