Santa Maria Basin Assessment

Findings and Recommendations

Prepared by Center for Collaborative Policy
California State University, Sacramento
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Purpose of Assessment

- To clarify and affirm key issues and concerns of local agencies and other stakeholders for the formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) in the non-adjudicated portion of the Santa Maria River Basin.
- Recommendations for GSA formation is informed by stakeholder feedback
Methodology

Methods

- Interviewed 17 individuals/agencies during August-October 2016 and February 2017
  - Covering all five fringe areas in the County of San Luis Obispo
  - Representing agricultural, conservation, oil and gas, non-agricultural GW users, and local agency perspectives
Key Findings: Water Use

- Local agencies limited water use
- Limited studies in fringe area
- Need to resolve basin boundaries
Key Findings: Local Agencies

- Interest in complying with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
- Feasibility of creating and administering GSA
  - Economy of scale
  - Costs to participate, and what are the benefits?
Key Findings:
Stakeholder Water Use

- Pumpers in Fringe Areas are for the most part completely dependent on groundwater
  - A few exceptions, e.g., some pumpers in Fringe Area 2 (Arroyo Grande Creek Valley) benefit from releases from Lopez Lake.
Key Findings:
Stakeholder Voice

- Strong consistent agreement on the need for substantial Agricultural representation
- Mutual Water Companies
- Conservation representation could help the GSA proactively find solutions that would benefit groundwater management and the ecosystem
Key Finding: Interest in Transparency

- Transparency translates to:
  - Meetings with agendas that are publically posted
  - List-serv that sends out meeting notices,
  - Testimony and deliberation is public: and
  - Decision makers connected to the GSA are appointed through public process
Key Findings: Trusted Agency

- County
  - The majority of respondents stated the County was a trusted agency
Recommendations

- **County of Santa Barbara as GSA (Resolution)**
  - City of Arroyo Grande?
  - Nipomo CSD?
  - City of Pismo Beach?

- **MOA**
  - Stakeholder Advisory Committee(s)

- **County of SLO as GSA (Resolution)**
  - Santa Maria Management Areas (per court order)
    - NCMA
    - NMMA
    - SMVMA
Thank You

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Advisory Committee Purpose

- To Advise the County GSA on:
  - Development of the GSP
  - Funding mechanisms
  - Other aspects as appropriate in regulating groundwater use
Advisory Committee Membership

- Agriculture
- Local Agencies
- Mutual Water Company Representative
- Conservation Representation
- Local Business Representation (non-ag)
- Other Private Pumper Representative
Feedback

- Advisory Committee Make-Up?
- Advisory Committee Appointment Process?
- Other Feedback?