

Notes: Core Stakeholder Group Meeting 7

Meeting Held: Sept. 29, 2020

Meeting in Brief

Progress on Ramp-Down Approach

The Core Group agreed to assume 50,600 AFY as the sustainable yield / end point. Many would recommend that the ramp down feature a minimum allocation and consider water use efficiency. The group continues to discuss how to structure burden sharing across OPV's diverse user groups. The group's aim is to recommend a ramp-down strategy that is equitable and keeps agriculture (and agricultural diversity) viable in Ventura County. Going forward, group members will develop concept proposals for an approach to ramp down that they feel would work for them and for others factoring in a 5-year adaptive management milestones.

GMA Board Briefing & Considerations for Managing Basins Collectively

The Core Group's main takeaways from the September Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency briefing and discussion around managing the basins together are: (1) The Core Group needs more information on the flow between West Las Posas and Oxnard – Pleasant Valley Basins to inform potential coordination with West Las Posas (inter-basin management agreement or otherwise) and (2) the Core Group will continue to assume Oxnard and Pleasant Valley Basins are managed together.

Core Group Approves Charter

The Core Group approved its charter and the approach to back-up voting: recommendations will require a 2/3 vote (10 total votes) to be submitted for the GMA's consideration, including 2 out of 3 M&I reps; 4 out of 6 agriculture reps; 2 out of 4 non-municipal water agency reps; and 1 out of 2 environmental reps. If a recommendation goes forward with less than a full consensus, it will be accompanied by a report that captures the dissenting view. Folks for and against the recommendation would have the opportunity to present to the GMA.

Action Items

- **All Core Group:** By 10/12 COB think of potential approaches to ramp down that might work for you and others as well. Consider the 20-year end point and 5-year adaptive-management milestones
- **Martin G and John L:** By 10/12 COB report back to the group on the outcomes of analysis on the flow between OPV and West Las Posas
- **Martin G:** By 10/5 COB adjust project model to account for GSP projects already being factored into sustainable yield
- **Jenny T:** Inquire about status of housing demand compared to projections at 10/14 City Managers briefing
- **CBI:** Confirm Core Group charter and back-up voting procedure with absent members Alden Bloome, John Krist, and Lucie Munoz-McGovern.

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Progress on Ramp-Down Approach

The Core Group will assume 50,600 AFY as the sustainable yield / end point. The Core Group considered this as the mid-point range of the modeled sustainable yield. Many would recommend that the ramp down feature a minimum allocation and consider water-use efficiency. The group continues to discuss how to structure burden-sharing across OPV’s diverse user groups and factor in surface water availability and conjunctive use \. The group’s aim is to recommend a ramp-down strategy that is equitable and keeps agriculture (and agricultural diversity) viable in Ventura County. For the next meeting, group members will develop concept proposals for an approach to ramp down that they feel would work for them and others, making clear what this ramp down might look like in 5 years and at the 20-year end point and considering 5-year adaptive management milestones, anchored to Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) updates.

GMA Sustainable Yield Assumptions

The GMA board’s initial target for pumping in 20 years has been 61,400 AFY—the upper end of the sustainable yield estimate’s uncertainty band modeled for the GSPs. The Allocation Ordinance calls for a minimum allocation, but the GMA has yet to define.

Assumptions Embedded in the Sustainable Yield Figures

The sustainable yield figures factor in the projects that were included in the GSPs (including the timing of when projects would come online) and the estimated surface water availability. The model also factored in California Department of Water Resources (DWR)-provided historical climactic variation and the climate change data. The GMA will be adjusting the 20-year target as more information becomes available.

Sustainable Yield by Basin in Acre Feet by Year

Source: GSPs & FCGMA

| Basin | 2015-2017 Avg. Pumping ¹ | GSP Estimated Sustainable Yield |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Oxnard Basin – Upper Aquifer System | | 32,000 AFY ± 4,100-6,000 AFY |
| Oxnard Basin – Lower Aquifer System | | 7,000 AFY ± 2,300-3,600 AFY |
| Oxnard Basin | ~ 76,600 AFY ² | 39,000 AFY ± 6,400-9,600 AFY |
| Pleasant Valley Basin | ~17,500 AFY ³ | 11,600 AFY ± 1,200 AFY |
| Combined Estimates OPV | ~ 94,100 AFY | 61,400 AFY⁴ (upper end) |

AFY: Acre-Feet per Year

¹Record of extractions reported to FCGMA.

²The GSP reports that pumping by aquifer system in the Oxnard Basin in 2015 was approximately 52% from the Upper Aquifer System and 48% in the Lower Aquifer System.

³The GSP reports that pumping by aquifer system in the Pleasant Valley Basin in 2015 was approximately 47% in the Upper Aquifer System and 53% from the Lower Aquifer System.

⁴The FCGMA Board has directed starting at the high end of the sustainable yield estimate and refining the estimate over time (Dec. 13, 2019).

Additional Considerations for Management of the Sustainable Yield

Core Group members shared the following observations and perspectives to inform the approach to managing the sustainable yield estimates:

- The sustainable yield forecasts relied upon data from a dry period. The GMA will update in 5 years when new weather and rainfall data available.
- It could be helpful to consider the amount of PVWCD and PTP water that factored into the forecasts (See [Dudek Modeling Assumptions Memo](#) and [Dudek Sustainable Yield Modeling Scenarios Memo](#)).
- United may be able to expand diversion capacity by taking in highly turbid waters, but diversion capacity will be subject to fish passage requirements.
- The groundwater model reported two uncertainty bands: the wider band corresponds to greater uncertainty for the full 50-year timeframe (yrs. 0 - 50) and a narrower range of uncertainty for the 30-year time frame after the basins achieve sustainability (yrs. 20-50).
- The Dudek report’s “base case” of average pumping in 2015-2017 factors in the estimated surface water availability as projected by the model; this figure is different than the actual average pumping for 2015-2017 (actual averages are reported in the table below).

- United can run additional scenarios to update sustainable yield estimates as needed (e.g. as more weather data is generated in the coming years). There is less flexibility for incorporating new climate change forecast data because those forecasts are produced every 6-8 years. United's model validation efforts will be progressed in a few months, which will help the group better understand the model's accuracy.

Multiple group members felt that it is more prudent to work with the mid-range of the sustainable yield estimate (50,600 AFY) given the many variables at play and unknowns. CBI confirmed that members agreed that the Core Stakeholder Group and Projects Committee would assume 50,600 AFR as the sustainable yield / end point going forward. CBI said it would follow up with absent members (Alden Broome and Lucie Munz-McGovern) that they were comfortable with this approach.

Minimum Allocation and Ramp-Down Concepts

Meeting participants shared the following concepts and perspectives on the approach to minimum allocation and ramp down more broadly:

- A starting point for the minimum allocation would be to simply divide the sustainable yield by the irrigated acres.
- Dividing the water by the irrigated acres places the reduction burden on those who use more water, and legally this approach doesn't hold up because it doesn't align with the principle of beneficial use of water (so long as using water beneficially the quantity used doesn't matter). This approach also gives some more water than they need and others not enough. Instead this meeting participant suggests that the minimum allocation needs to focus on sharing the burden without stranding land.
- Another approach to the minimum allocation would be to take the M & I portion of water out prior to dividing the sustainable yield by irrigated agriculture.
- There may need to be a higher burden on folks who are higher water users, mindful that folks with lower allocation have less flexibility.
- The group should consider the impacts on land values and factor in the historical knowledge that many farmers have (in addition to the models).
- It may be more productive to focus the group's efforts on a 5-year milestone vs. the 20-year end point given the wide range of uncertainty around the sustainable yield estimates.

Multiple group members expressed that all water users will struggle if the OPV community has to cut to the current sustainable yield estimates, regardless of the minimum allocation and ramp-down details. Instead, meeting participants suggested that the group focus efforts on the supply side of the equation.

Going forward, meeting participants generally agreed that a principle goal of ramp down is to keep agriculture viable in Ventura County. Key to this aim is maintaining Ventura’s agricultural diversity.

One meeting participant pointed out that future conditions of agriculture in Ventura may lead some farmers to consider changing crop types. This meeting participant asked the group to take a holistic view of the possible routes to achieving groundwater sustainability, including policy options that make can make the choice to change crop type more manageable or even attractive.

Multiple meeting participants highlighted that changing crop types is a complex business decision that needs to factor in the competitive landscape. These participants suggested that agricultural diversity is essential in Ventura County’s competitiveness and that switching away from traditional agriculture can be expensive (and may not necessarily be a desirable outcome).

In preparation for the next Core Group meeting: all Core Group members are requested to come up with an approach to ramp down that they feel would work for them and for others, factoring in a 5-year milestone for adaptive management and considering the 20-year end point.

Reflections on State Board Conservation Example

During the drought, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted an emergency regulation to address the Governor’s mandatory 25 percent statewide reduction of potable urban water use between June 2015 and February 2016. The Core Group discussed the State Board’s approach and highlighted the following pros and cons with an eye toward potential application to ramp down in OPV.

| + (Pros) |  Cons |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floor recognizes efficient use—limits the degree of cuts to water use • Graduated cuts depending on existing water use / demand (i.e. high-water users may need to cut more as compared to low water users to get to the min allocation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variability in cuts between water users • Need to recognize that high water use crops can still be efficient (different than inefficiency) • High water use for urban context |
| Other Considerations for OPV | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well would this approach work in industrial urban areas / applicability to business? • There is a meaningful difference between personal (potable) and business water use | |

- In agriculture a minimum allocation / floor is absolutely necessary
- Floor needs to be high enough to keep agriculture viable—one approach could be to divide the safe yield by OPV acreage
- Efficiency does not always equal low water use. If irrigating the minimal amount required for the crop you grow, that is efficiency (regardless of high or low water use crop)
- The State Board framework potentially applies more cleanly to ag than it would to M&I due to more homogenous water application to land in agriculture (vs. difference in water use between condos and large parcels in cities)

At the close of the discussion around the State Board example, group members offered the following observations around the example's applicability to OPV:

- The OPV community worked with a similar approach to the State Board example for 5 years under Emergency Ordinance E. Low water folks felt that they were already efficient and high-water folks did not want to shoulder additional cuts. In the end, a hybrid approach is likely what makes sense (balancing a proportional and flat cut) and we need to continue to view the allocation, ramp down, and end point as a continuum to be grappled with together.
- The State of California developed an approach for calculating urban water budgets. Once the requisite data is collected (approx. end of 2021) this information will provide a much improved approximation for efficiency for the group's consideration going forward.

Takeaways from GMA Board Briefing & Considerations for Managing Basins Collectively

The Core Group's central takeaways from the September GMA briefing and discussion around managing the basins together are: (1) The Core Group needs more information on the flow between West Las Posas and OPV to inform the group's recommended approach for coordination with West Las Posas (inter-basin management agreement or otherwise) and (2) the Core Group will continue to assume Oxnard and Pleasant Valley basins are managed together.

During the GMA Board briefing, group members observed the following:

- The Board is amenable to OPV managing collectively as long as each basin achieves sustainability.
- Folks from West Las Posas pushed back on some of the Core Group's message because they had not been consulted.

- The group needs to consider if distinguishing between *west* West Las Posas and *east* West Las Posas. The group also needs to consider the flow between the basins and the best options for basin coordination (inter-basin management agreements or otherwise).
- The GMA Board is not interested in making a resolution at this time.

After the debrief of the GMA Board briefing, a Core Group member suggested that the group should continue to plan for OPV being managed together, regardless of the GMA's choice not to make a resolution at this time. This group member cited the benefits of joint Oxnard-Pleasant Valley basin management, such as possible energy savings and efficiency gains for folks with operations in both basins.

Another meeting participant suggested an average flow of 3,400 AFY between OPV and West Las Posas. Some of that flow is due to Del Norte's operation: the majority of Del Norte's wells in are in the Oxnard Plain. In wet years, the basin recharge flowing from OPV to West Las Posas is significant.

Part of the inter-basin flow is related to United's operation in the area: United's boundaries extend into the western portion of West Las Posas basin. West Las Posas receives some benefit from spreading activities in the forebay (but only a limited geography in West Las Posas benefits).

Before moving to an inter-basin management agreement, a meeting participant suggests the Core Group get more data on the inter-basin flow. Going forward, Martin Gramckow is going to continue working with John Lindquist from United to analyze the inter-basin flow. They will report back to the group.

Core Group Approves Charter

The Core Group approved its charter. The final element was the approach to back-up voting: recommendations will require a 2/3 vote (10 total votes) to be submitted for the GMA's consideration, including 2 out of 3 M&I reps; 4 out of 6 agriculture reps; 2 out of 4 non-municipal water agency reps; and 1 out of 2 environmental reps. If a recommendation goes forward it will be accompanied by a report that captures the dissenting view. Folks for and against the recommendation would have the opportunity to present their perspective directly to the GMA.

Core Stakeholder Group Members Present Arne Anselm, Jared Bouchard, Dan Detmer, James Dubois, Terri L. Ferro, Rosemarie Gaglione, Jurgen Gramckow, Martin Gramckow, Greg Lewis, John Mathews, Candice Meneghin, Ian Prichard, E.J. Remson, Jennifer Tribo