



File: zn/0-0-1 Grand Jury

August 27, 2004

The Honorable Allan D. Hardcastle
Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury
P.O. Box 5109
Santa Rosa, California 95402

RE: Final Report 2003-2004

The Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury's (Grand Jury) *Final Report 2003-2004* included investigations of (1) the availability and sustainability of groundwater in Sonoma County, and (2) the Sonoma County Water Agency's (Agency) maintenance of vegetation along Adobe Creek in Petaluma. These investigations included several recommendations in which a response was required from the Agency. These responses are attached.

The Agency appreciates the opportunity to respond to these recommendations. Please call me or Michael Thompson if there is any other information we can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy D. Poole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy D. Poole
General Manager/Chief Engineer

Enc

c: Board of Directors
Jill Golis – County Counsel
Chris Arnold - CAO
Michael Thompson - SCWA

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**RESPONSES TO 2004 SONOMA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT
SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY**

SONOMA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT: "GOT WATER?"

Recommendation R2:

The county and each of its cities should adopt and develop a comprehensive groundwater management plan such as that set forth in AB 3030. The information from the existing groundwater studies should be used to provide a bank of information upon which to initiate a groundwater management plan.

Response to Recommendation R2:

The recommendation is not warranted at this time and will not be implemented.

While the Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) believes this recommendation is not warranted at this time, the Agency has assumed a lead role in developing regional basin-wide groundwater study programs, working cooperatively with federal and local agencies. These programs are intended to increase the understanding of the quantity and quality of groundwater resources within the County's major groundwater basins.

Before specific groundwater management strategies may be adopted, including groundwater management plans under AB 3030, the scientific basis for contemplated decisions must be valid and represent actual conditions. To accomplish this, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive basin-wide hydrogeologic study. The last comprehensive studies of the major groundwater basins in Sonoma County were conducted in the late 1970's and the early 1980's. These studies are outdated and do not represent current conditions. To address this issue, the Agency has led efforts to conduct the necessary scientific studies to provide a fundamental understanding of groundwater conditions in the County's major groundwater basins. The Agency has provided technical services and funding for studies, obtained federal funding, and formed a coalition of municipalities and water purveyors to participate in studies.

In 2001, the Agency entered into a joint funding agreement with the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) to perform studies of the Sonoma Valley and Alexander Valley groundwater basins. These studies should be completed in just over a year. The \$1,161,500 study is being funded by the Agency (\$686,500) and the USGS (\$475,000). The City of Sonoma and the Valley of the Moon Water District also participate in the study by providing data collected from their facilities and coordinate the collection of water-level measurements by a local ad-hoc group of well owners. The study qualified for federal co-funding because of its innovative and regional approach towards investigating groundwater resource issues.

In addition, the Agency is leading a collaborative effort with the USGS to perform a similar basin study of the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin. The Agency has been working with staff from the Cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, and Sebastopol, the Town of Windsor, the

County of Sonoma, and the Cal American Water Company. The total estimated cost of the proposed Santa Rosa Plain study is about \$2,000,000. A draft agreement is being circulated and the Agency and the potential participating parties intend to seek approval from their respective governing boards and councils this fall. If approved, the study would also be eligible for significant federal co-funding (estimated at \$500,000).

The Agency is also involved with the statewide Ground-Water Monitoring and Assessment Program for California per AB 599. This program is being administered by the State Water Resources Control Board and implemented by the USGS. This extensive program involves sampling and analysis of groundwater from throughout the state to improve statewide comprehensive groundwater monitoring and increase availability of information about groundwater quality to the public. Sonoma County is one the first areas of the state for this program to be implemented. The prioritization of Sonoma County is due, in part, to the extensive amount of groundwater studies that are being conducted or planned within the county. The results of this program will supplement the basin studies described above. A fact sheet regarding the Ground-Water Monitoring and Assessment Program for California is attached.

SONOMA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT: ADOBE CREEK DEBACLE AND RESTORATION

Recommendation R1:

The Agency must audit and update its agreements with the City of Petaluma, DFG, and Casa Grande High School on Adobe Creek immediately.

Response to Recommendation R1:

This recommendation is being implemented in part and is not warranted in part.

With respect to the City of Petaluma agreement, the Agency holds an easement for the portion of Adobe Creek upstream of Satori Drive. This easement grants to the Agency the right to maintain, repair, or reconstruct this portion of Adobe Creek in order to continue to provide flood protection to the neighboring properties. This easement covers all portions of the stream, including both stream bed and stream banks. Updating this easement is not warranted because it is adequate for Agency flood control activities.

With respect to the Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the Agency conducts stream maintenance under an "*Agreement Regarding Proposed Stream or Lake Alteration (Stream Alteration Agreement)*" issued by CDFG. This agreement was issued in 1992 and needs to be updated. The Agency is involved in a Section 7 consultation process with the US Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA Fisheries to evaluate the effects of the Agency's activities on listed salmonid species. Following the conclusion of this process, which is expected to take several years, the Agency will be applying for an updated agreement from the CDFG.