

Approved: [Signature]
Superior Court Judge

Attachment 2

Date: 9/9/15

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Response to Sustainable Water for Sonoma County Grand Jury Report

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SONOMA

SEP 10 2015

FINDINGS

We agree with these findings:

BY [Signature]
Deputy Clerk

F1: Recent changes in California water law establish requirements for managing groundwater as a long-term sustainable resource, administered by local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies.

F2: Sonoma County is better served if Groundwater Sustainability Agencies are established in advance of state-mandated deadlines, using criteria that assure broad participation.

F5: The Sonoma County Water Agency and Sonoma County have participated significantly in preparations for sustainable water management, and can continue to contribute in the transition to management through groundwater sustainability agencies.

F6: Economic and environmental sustainability are interdependent; economic sustainability can be achieved only when critical resources such as water are also managed for sustainability.

F7: There has been no cross-discipline study of carrying capacity in Sonoma County that projects what population the water and other resources in Sonoma County are capable of supporting.

We disagree wholly or partially with these finding(s):

F3: Water agencies within Sonoma County have yet to sufficiently educate groundwater users about their responsibilities for sharing water resources, potential limitations on water use, and the advantages of making sure, through sustainability, that water will be available in the future for their own use.

We partially disagree with this finding. Both Sonoma Valley and Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basins have groundwater management plans developed under the pre-Sustainable Groundwater Management Act groundwater management planning statutory scheme (AB 3030 and SB 1938). The Water Agency is the lead agency in these efforts, working with basin advisory panels to develop and implement groundwater management plans in each basin. The basin advisory panels include representatives from agriculture, environmental groups, residential well owners, the County, cities, tribes, and community water districts. These voluntary, non-regulatory plans are an excellent first step toward groundwater sustainability, and will significantly advance the region's ability to comply with the SGMA by establishing a robust data collection and monitoring program and by

promoting, studying and implementing programs and projects aimed at sustaining the basins' groundwater resources. These existing plans also foster stakeholder coordination and public outreach, both of which are essential elements of the Act. Numerous public meetings, workshop and briefings regarding groundwater conditions and management activities have been conducted through these existing groundwater management programs. In the Petaluma Valley basin, the Water Agency and the City of Petaluma are currently engaged in a 3-year United States Geological Survey study, initiated in September 2014, to analyze groundwater use and conditions.

Using funds from a water conservation grant, the Sonoma County Water Agency is sending a flyer to all groundwater well owners in the Santa Rosa Plain notifying them of the new act and of a program that provides free water-efficient toilets and other products to well owners. Finally, a communications and outreach plan is currently being drafted to meet the notification and outreach requirements of the act.

F4: Most governmental entities in Sonoma County — departments, cities, and other agencies — have yet to adopt sustainability provisions in their mission statements, goals, and programs, or to coordinate those efforts with other government entities.

We partially disagree with these findings..

In its most recent General Plan updated (2008), General Plan 2020, Sonoma County adopted the following policy:

GOAL WR-2:	Manage groundwater as a valuable and limited shared resource.
Objective WR-2.1:	Conserve, enhance and manage groundwater resources on a sustainable basis that assures sufficient amounts of clean water required for future generations, the uses allowed by the General Plan, and the natural environment.
Objective WR-2.2:	Develop a scientifically based program to collect the data needed to assess and understand groundwater conditions.
Objective WR-2.3:	Encourage new groundwater recharge opportunities and protect existing groundwater recharge areas.
Objective WR-2.4:	Increase institutional capacity and expertise within the County to competently review hydrogeologic reports and data for critical indicators and criteria.
Objective WR-2.5:	Avoid additional land subsidence caused by groundwater extraction.

The Water Agency has multi-jurisdictional funding agreements for groundwater studies and management in both Santa Rosa Plain (County, Water Agency, Cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati and Sebastopol, Town of Windsor and Cal-Am Water) and Sonoma Valley (County, Water Agency, Valley of the Moon Water District and Sonoma) and for groundwater studies and management and in Petaluma Valley (County, Water Agency and City of Petaluma) for groundwater studies. The purpose of these agreements is to coordinate groundwater management with the ultimate goal of sustainability.

The Water Agency's Water Supply Strategies and Strategic Plan include goals on integrated water management use; conjunctive water management (balancing the use of groundwater, surface water, recycled water and water conservation to ensure sustainability); and preparing for climate uncertainty through research that will lead to more effective management of all water resources.

In addition, the cities and water districts whose water is supplied by the Water Agency meet monthly to coordinate water supply and demand issues, with the goal of sustainably and cost-effective management of the resource.

In 2013, the City of Santa Rosa adopted a Groundwater Master Plan, which includes sustainability as a key objective.

This broad array of activities provides a solid foundation in the three basins for the creation and adoption of Groundwater Sustainability Plans, as required by the new law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: Establish goals that include sustainability and recognize water sustainability as a specific goal.

R1 is being implemented. The Water Agency recognizes water sustainability in its Strategic Plan, and existing groundwater management plans in Sonoma Valley and Santa Rosa Plain have the ultimate goal of sustainability. Sonoma County has incorporated sustainable management of groundwater as a goal in its General Plan, and the Board of Supervisors has made sustainability, including water sustainability, a key priority. The development, progress toward and achievement of sustainability is a key part of the new law. Failure to achieve sustainability will result in the State Water Resources Control Board stepping in. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) creates a multi-step process for protecting local groundwater supplies.

The first step is to create Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs). The new law states that the GSA **must** be a public agency (or combination of agencies) that either manages or supplies water or that has land-use authority within the groundwater basin (primarily cities, counties and water districts). Once the GSAs are formed, they will develop detailed sustainability goals as part of the Groundwater Management Plans (GSPs). In Sonoma County, several public agencies are eligible to be part of the GSA in each basin, as follows:

- Santa Rosa Plain – County, Water Agency, cities of Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Cotati, Rohnert Park, and town of Windsor
- Sonoma Valley – County, Water Agency, city of Sonoma, Valley of the Moon Water District, North Bay Water District
- Petaluma – County, Water Agency, city of Petaluma, North Bay Water District

Additionally, the existing groundwater management plans in the Santa Rosa Plain and Sonoma Valley both contain goals, objectives and recommended actions to sustainably manage groundwater resources. These existing plans will remain in effect until new GSPs are developed for those basins.

R3: Conduct a county-wide study of carrying capacity.

R3 has been partially implemented. The new law requires that GSAs develop and achieve a “sustainable yield,” which is similar to carrying capacity for the affected basins. In the Santa Rosa Plain, Petaluma Valley and Sonoma Valley sophisticated computer models have been developed or are in the process of being developed of the groundwater and surface water systems. These models represent an essential step in estimating the sustainable yield of groundwater basins. To comply with the law, resources will first be focused on Santa Rosa Plain, Sonoma Valley and Petaluma River basins. If resources should become available, the sustainable yield (or carrying capacity) of other areas of the county could be determined.

R5: Continue funding as appropriate for the Sonoma County Water Agency to support the formation of suitable groundwater sustainability agencies and their early operations.

R5 is being implemented. The Water Agency Board of Directors approved a 2015-16 budget that includes funds for implementation of SGMA. In addition, the Water Agency, Sonoma County and other GSA-eligible agencies are seeking grant funding to assist with efforts to create the new GSA(s) and will continue to seek grant funds to assist in implementing the new act.