

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: ROCKY VOGLER, SENIOR WATER RESOURCES PLANNER  
WATER DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT  
PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Board of Public Utilities and the Santa Rosa Water Department that the Council, by resolution, support the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Principles for Developing Governance Options.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local authorities and requires that high and medium priority groundwater basins throughout California form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) by June 30, 2017. Within Sonoma County, the Santa Rosa Plain, Petaluma and Sonoma Valley groundwater basins have been designated as medium priority basins and must comply with SGMA. The SGMA includes language that only entities having either land use, water supply or water management authorities are permitted to form GSAs. In the Santa Rosa Plain, the cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Sebastopol, Town of Windsor, Sonoma County and the Sonoma County Water Agency are eligible to form a GSA. Santa Rosa Water staff have begun meeting with staff of the other GSA-eligible entities to explore possibilities related to establishing a GSA and to develop the SGMA Principles for Developing Governance Options (Principles). These Principles outline a series of precepts that the GSA-eligible entities will use to guide the development of the GSAs. This item is related to Council Goal #3: Provide Leadership for Environmental Initiatives by establishing Santa Rosa as a leader in the formation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency whose primary function is to sustainably manage groundwater supplies in the Santa Rosa Plain.

BACKGROUND

The Santa Rosa Plain covers an area of approximately 80,000 acres and is home to approximately half the population of Sonoma County. The majority of the City of Santa Rosa overlies the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin. Water supply is provided by a combination of ground water and Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) aqueduct system supply from the Russian River.

A voluntary, non-regulatory Assembly Bill 3030 style Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) was prepared for the Santa Rosa Plain watershed. On September 16, 2014, the City Council adopted Resolution 28558 supporting the GMP. On October 7, 2014, the SCWA Board of Directors adopted the GMP.

The GMP includes comprehensive information on the groundwater, surface water and recycled water resources of the Plan Area, including an overview of the physical setting and background studies, population, climate, land use, water demands and uses. It also summarizes details of the hydrogeology, groundwater supplies and surface water system and facilities. Projections of future water supplies and demands, data needs, and key issues in the Plan Area are incorporated. The GMP identifies strategies for increased water supply reliability, minimizing adverse impacts to groundwater, enhancing local management of groundwater resources, and promoting economic opportunities through available state grant funding programs. The GMP also furthers the Basin's ability to meet State Requirements for groundwater monitoring (SBx7-6) and assists with salt and nutrient management planning.

On September 16, 2014, Governor Brown signed into law a three-bill legislative package known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA). The SGMA provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local authorities, with a limited role for state intervention only if necessary to protect groundwater resources. Sustainable groundwater management balances groundwater resources in a manner that ensures basin resiliency and benefits present and future generations.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) prepared a report (Bulletin 118) in 2003 that provides an inventory of 515 groundwater basins throughout the State. In early 2015, DWR conducted an initial prioritization of all 515 basins. SGMA requires that high and medium priority basins form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) by June 30, 2017 and prepare Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) by January 31, 2022 in order to achieve sustainability by 2042. Within Sonoma County, the Santa Rosa Plain has been designated as a medium priority basin, along with the Petaluma and Sonoma Valley groundwater basins. The 2014 Santa Rosa Plain GMP will form the backbone of the forthcoming GSP for the Santa Rosa Plain.

The SGMA includes language that only entities having either land use, water supply or water management authorities are permitted to form GSAs. In the Santa Rosa Plain, the current agencies that are eligible to form a GSA are the cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Sebastopol, Town of Windsor, Sonoma County and the SCWA. Although only the entities listed above may form a GSA (either individually or in

collaboration), the GSA must consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users of groundwater.

Santa Rosa Water staff have begun meeting with staff of the other Santa Rosa Plain municipal water providers, SCWA and the County to explore various possibilities related to establishing a GSA. All of the municipal water providers have demonstrated an interest in collaborating to form a single GSA for the Santa Rosa Plain. Similarly, staff of the eligible entities in the Petaluma and Sonoma Valley basins have expressed a desire to form a single GSA for each of their respective basins. Both the County and the SCWA would be party to each of the three GSAs (1 per basin). A GSA may be formed by establishing a joint powers authority, forming an agreement such as a memorandum of understanding or other legal means.

### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not applicable.

### ANALYSIS

1. Groundwater is an important natural resource and Santa Rosa relies on groundwater to augment surface water supplied by the SCWA.
2. The City has two production well facilities located on Farmers Lane that supply approximately 5-10% of the City's annual water needs. The City also has authority over land use, and through the SGMA is entitled to form or participate in forming a GSA.
3. The City has an Emergency Groundwater Well Program designed to secure sufficient groundwater supplies to meet minimal water demands associated with human health and safety requirements during an emergency.
4. The State has the authority to assume control over a medium or high priority groundwater basin if a local GSA is not established, or if the local GSA cannot sustainably manage its groundwater basin.
5. The staffs of the local municipalities, in conjunction with the SCWA, County and others have developed SGMA Principles for Developing Governance Options (Principles). These Principles outline a series of precepts that the GSA-eligible entities will use to guide the development of the GSAs.
6. The Principles emphasize each participants' willingness to collaborate in a transparent manner, sharing resources and information to promote equitability and provide meaningful outreach to well owners and the general public.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Once formed, the GSAs will be empowered through SGMA to impose fees for a variety of purposes including program administration. However, prior to implementation of the GSP for the Santa Rosa Plain, funding requirements will need to be quantified and allocated appropriately to the GSA participating agencies.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

## BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On October 1, 2015, the Board of Public Utilities adopted a resolution recommending that the City Council, by resolution, support the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Principles for Developing Governance Options.

## NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

## ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution

## CONTACT

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