UPPER VENTURA RIVER GROUNDWATER AGENCY

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Upper Ventura River Groundwater Agency ("Agency") Board of Directors ("Board") will hold a Special Board Meeting at 1 P.M. on Thursday, July 22, 2021 via

ON-LINE OR TELECONFERENCE:

DIAL-IN (US TOLL FREE) 1-669-900-6833 Find your local number: <u>https://zoom.us/u/af4RxtPgA</u> JOIN BY COMPUTER, TABLET OR SMARTPHONE: <u>https://zoom.us/j/93889493825?pwd=ZU8rWFVnZIRmWXZ3dDRIOGJ3WVFIUT09</u> Meeting ID: 938 8949 3825 Passcode: 584271 New to Zoom, go to: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206175806

PER CALIFORNIA EXECUTIVE ORDER N-29-20, SECTION 3: A local legislative body is authorized to hold public meetings via teleconferencing and to make public meetings accessible telephonically or otherwise electronically to all members of the public seeking to observe and to address the local legislative body. A physical location accessible for the public to participate in the teleconference is not required.

UPPER VENTURA RIVER GROUNDWATER AGENCY BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

July 22, 2021

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

5. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT APPEARING ON THE AGENDA

The Board will receive public comments on items <u>not</u> appearing on the agenda and within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Agency. The Board will not enter into a detailed discussion or take any action on any items presented during public comments. Such items may only be referred to the Executive Director or other staff for administrative action or scheduled on a subsequent agenda for discussion. Persons wishing to speak on specific agenda items should do so at the time specified for those items. In accordance with Government Code § 54954.3(b)(1), public comment will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.

6. GSP ITEMS

a. Preliminary Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan Review (Grant Category (d); Task 11: GSP Development and Preparation)

The Board will discuss the preliminary draft groundwater sustainability plan with a focus on Sections 4 through 7 and consider providing feedback.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

This is an opportunity for the Directors to request items for future agendas.

8. ADJOURNMENT

A special board meeting is scheduled for July 29, 2021. The next regular board meeting is August 12, 2021.

UPPER VENTURA RIVER GROUNDWATER AGENCY Item No. 6(a)

DATE: July 22, 2021

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Executive Director

SUBJECT: Preliminary Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan Review (Grant Category (d); Task 11: GSP Development and Preparation)

SUMMARY

As discussed during the June 10, 2021 meeting, the Board agreed to a two-step process for reviewing the preliminary draft GSP prior to opening a 60-day public comment period in early August. GSP Sections 1 through 3 will be reviewed by the Board ton July 8 and GSP Sections 4 through 7 will be reviewed by the Board during its July 22 Special Board Meeting. A second Special Board meeting is scheduled on July 29, as needed.

Preliminary draft GSP Sections 1 through 3 were posted to the Agency website on June 25, 2021 and were reviewed by the Board during its July 8, 2021 meeting. Sections 4 through 7 were posted on July 6, 2021 and are scheduled for Board review during its July 22, 2021 meeting.

The primary goal for today is to answer questions and identify potential changes to draft Sections 4 through 7. In order to stay on schedule, the Board is encouraged to focus on material issues that fundamentally affect the understanding of the Basin, sustainable management, and GSP implementation. Requests for minor edits or minor clarifications are best handled by forwarding to the Executive Director outside of the meeting.

Stakeholder comments received to date and draft responses are included in Attachment A for consideration during the Board's review and discussion.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Discuss the preliminary draft groundwater sustainability plan with a focus on Sections 4 through 7 and provide feedback.

BACKGROUND Not applicable.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Stakeholder Comments Received to Date and Draft Responses

Action:							_
Motion:			Seco	ond:			-
B. Kuebler	_ D. Engle	_ P. Kaiser	_ S. Rungren_	G. Shephard	_ E. Ayala_	L. Rose	

Item 6a

Attachment A

Stakeholder Comments Received to Date and Draft Responses



Groundwater Sustainability Plan Stakeholder Comments/Questions

Updated: 7/2/21

Entry Date	First Name	Last Name	Comment/Question	R
3-Feb-21	Benjamin	Pitterle	Significant and unreasonable effects impacting surface water quality are caused by groundwater conditions throughout portions of the basin. Lowering of groundwater levels reduces surface flows. Reduced surface flows may cause water quality conditions that do not support beneficial uses. Such water quality conditions include lowered dissolved oxygen and increased temperatures. These flow-related impacts are highlighted in various watershed studies including the TMDL for Algae, Eutrophic Conditions, and Nutrients in the Ventura River. Water quality impacts to interconnected surface waters due to groundwater pumping should be addressed within the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. The Draft Sustainable Management Criteria for Degraded Water Quality acknowledges this surface-groundwater interdependence related to nitrate. The GSF should similarly address interdependences related to dissolved oxygen and temperature Thank you for your consideration.	F F E Effects on aquatic beneficial users related to flow are addres managment criteria for the depletions of intereconnected s monitoring programs for both the Confluence Aquatic GDE s monitoring, field observations of instream habitat and aqua The details of the monitoring programs will be decided whe UVRGA Board.
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	1)This memo is a follow up from our conversation regarding development of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The primary concern we discussed is the elimination of large portions of the basin from SGMA oversight through the assumption that surface water is somehow "disconnected" from groundwater. Apart from the fact that there are fundamental flaws in the methodology used to make this determination, the resulting conclusions and management criteria are not consistent with avoiding undesirable results.	As discussed in the responses to several comments below, it that the Ventura River is disconnected from the underlying the time. However, this is not the reason for concluding the Ana Areas are not significantly and unreasonably impacted material groundwater dependency (in the case of riparian w compared to typical flows (in the case of the critical riffles). requirements.
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	2) The primary Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) for the UVRGB is the Depletion of Interconnected Surface Water. The analyses presented to date do not adequately assess the groundwater/surface water interactions within and between the different reaches of the basin, or even acknowledge the impact of groundwater pumping on surface flows.	The analysis presented to date, which are presented again i understand the analyses that have been presented to the p
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	3) The Upper Ventura River Groundwater Basin is a shallow alluvial aquifer integral to the riparian floodplain ecosystem of the main stem Ventura River. Throughout these reaches of the river, groundwater and surface water are connected, and to suggest they are not is to undermine the intent of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.	The term interconnected means that the water table is in consedure table even the river and the water table). Ave the water table elevation is typically below the Ventura River by definition, means interconnection does not exist at that I interconnection is a SGMA requirement and does not under
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	4) The Riparian Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Assessment Report characterizes the Robles reach as a "Losing reach with generally disconnected groundwater- surface water." This categorization eliminates the majority of this Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem from consideration under SGMA by assuming that it is "disconnected" and thus has too great a depth to groundwater to support riparian habitat. Other reaches are similarly dismissed.	The categorization of the groundwater-surface interaction of vegetation is or is not classified as a GDE in the GSP. The de dependent or not is based on vegetation biology (including the riparian communities) and groundwater levels, not the reach.

essed in the GSP through the development of sustainable surface water. It is also noted that the GSP recomends and Foster Park Aquatic GDE that include water quality atic species, and in-situ water quality and flow measurements. en the monitoring workplans are developed and approved by the

there is clear evidence from both measured data and modeling g water table in much of the Robles and Santa Ana Areas most of nat riparian vegetation and critical riffles in the Robles and Santa l by pumping. That conclusion was made based on the lack of vegetation) and the small modeled stream flow depletion rates . The methodologies used are sound and consistent with SGMA

in the GSP meet or exceed SGMA requirements. To better public, it is recommeded that the commenter read the draft GSP.

contact with water in the Ventura River (i.e. no unsaturated vailable data and modeling included in the draft GSP show that ver channel elevation in the Robles and Santa Ana Areas, which, location. Identifying areas of interconnection and lacking ermine the intent of SGMA.

of the Robles reach has no bearing on whether riparian ecision whether to classify riparian vegetation as groundwater documented maximum rooting depths for plant species within a nature of the groundwater-surface water interaction in that

Entry Date	First Name	Last Name	Comment/Question	Re
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	5) The analysis presented relies heavily on the Nature Conservancy "Natural Communities (NC) Dataset," using vegetation communities to eliminate GDE polygons from the Upper Ventura River Groundwater Basin. The NC dataset is a statewide geographic computer database that maps vegetation types in all potential GDEs throughout the State of California. The large geographic scope of this map does not accurately represent current on-the ground conditions, and more robust ground truthing should be undertaken. Even the aerial photos presented tell a different story than is acknowledged in the narrative (i.e. Figure 6 North Robles Habitat Area Photographs, Aquatic GDE Characterization report).	The analysis of groundwater dependency was based on the Biologists on the UVRGA GSP Development Team confirmed dominant species throughout the Basin. UVRGA recognizes the different areas, but concluded that screening based on requirements. As documented through the GDE analysis, it certain areas, such as the Robles reach, these communities and not on material groundwater connection. The aerial ph vegetation in the North Robles Reach. However, the assess rooting depths indicate that this reach is not groundwater of groundwater pumping has a minimal effect on groundwater
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	6) Unfortunately, the UVRGSA analysis does not fully implement the Best Practices for using the NC Dataset guidance provided by the Nature Conservancy, which presents six best practices for using local groundwater data to confirm whether mapped features in the NC dataset are supported by groundwater. (Best Practices for using the NC Dataset, TNC July 2019). According to this guidance: -While depth-to- groundwater levels within 30 feet of the land surface are generally accepted as being a proxy for confirming that polygons in the NC dataset are supported by groundwater, it is highly advised that fluctuations in the groundwater regime be characterized to understand the seasonal and interannual groundwater variability in GDEs. (see Best Practice #2.) -One of the key factors to consider when mapping GDEs is to contour depth- togroundwater in the aquifer that is supporting the ecosystem (see Best Practice #5).	SGMA requires GSAs to identify groundwater dependent ed or the best available information. The TNC best practices ar practice. Having said that, UVRGA endeavored to follow th GSP. Regarding TNC Best Practice #2, UVRGA did consider g process by considering high and low groundwater levels du analysis considered the full range of expected groundwater Regarding TNC Best Practice #5, contoured groundwater levels groundwater levels were used, which provide gridded groun coverage compared to contours. This is described on page
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	7) The GIS Spatial Analysis of Maximum Rooting Depth and Groundwater Level presented in the Riparian GDE document does not present such contour depth-to-groundwater mapping or account for temporal variability	The groundwater level grids (superior to contours) are not of analysis performed using the grids are described in the mer
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	8) In many situations, the hydrologic connection of NC dataset polygons will not initially be clearly understood if site-specific groundwater monitoring data are not available. If sufficient data are not available in time for the 2020/2022 plan, The Nature Conservancy strongly advises that questionable polygons from the NC dataset be included in the GSP until data gaps are reconciled in the monitoring network. Erring on the side of caution will help minimize inadvertent impacts to GDEs as a result of groundwater use and management actions during SGMA implementation.	UVRGA concluded that the plant biology and modeled grou dependency of the various dominant vegetation types thro evidence to conclude the lack of groundwater dependency
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	9 Furthermore, TNC guidance acknowledges that; Many of California's GDEs have adapted to dealing with intermittent periods of water stress, however if these groundwater conditions are prolonged, adverse impacts to GDEs can result. Therefore, it is likely that the NC vegetation mapping is representative of conditions in which groundwater levels have been frequently and repeatedly pumped beyond the reach of riparian tree roots. Meanwhile, field observations over the past few wetter years show that the riparian vegetation has rebounded, illustrating how the ecosystem responds with the variation in water years. Receding groundwater levels and corresponding loss of surface flows in the current drought will likely reverse this recent trend, with the potential loss of the many young sycamores.	Modeling results indicate that groundwater levels in the Ro the rooting depth of the dominant species classified in thos streamflow absent groundwater pumping and determined streamflow that would occur absent pumping is small and i and Santa Ana areas. Even absent all pumping in the Basin sycamores in the Robles and Santa Ana Areas, as the different meaningful in terms of the water requirements of hardwoor

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e dominant species indicated for each NCAAG dataset polygon. ed the NCAAG dataset classifications are representative of the is that species other than the dominant species are present within in the dominant species is appropriate for addressing SGMA it is understood that while riparian communities may exist in is appear to be dependent on non-groundwater sources of water, whotographs in the Aquatic GDE Assessment do show riparian sment of groundwater data, modeling results, and maximum dependent. Modeling results further demonstrate that er elevations in this reach.

cosystems within the basin, utilizing data available from the DWR re not adopted by DWR as a regulation or as a best management the TNC guidance while identifying and considering GDEs in the groundwater level fluctuations in the riparian GDE screening uring representative wet, normal, and dry years. Thus, the r levels. This is explained on page 7 of the Riparian GDE memo. vels were used in the riparian GDE screening. Modeled indwater levels throughout the basin, which provides superior 7 of the memo.

depicted in the memo. However the results of the spatial mo. The grids can be provided to stakeholders upon request.

Indwater levels are sufficient to screen the groundwater ughout the Basin. UVRGA concluded that there is compelling in the areas that were not included as GDEs in the GSP.

obles and Santa Ana area naturally fluctuate significantly below se areas. UVRGA has modeled the water table elevations and that the incremental increase in groundwater levels and is not the reason sycamores are generally sparse in the Robles n, UVRGA's biologist do not anticipate widespread recruitment of ence in groundwater levels does not appear to be particularly od species, given the seasonal fluctuation of water availability.

Entry Date	First Name	Last Name	Comment/Question	R
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	10) TNC guidance for determining GDEs recognizes the importance of surface flows; In addition, SGMA requires that significant and undesirable adverse impacts to beneficial users of surface water be avoided. Beneficial users of surface water include environmental users such as plants or animals, which therefore must be considered when developing minimum thresholds for depletions of interconnected surface water.	UVRGA has clearly and explicitly considered effects on GDE the depletions of interconnected surface water and chronic
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	 11) The Model Results and SMC Implications Presentation (March 25, 2021) reaches the conclusion that: • Basin water budget is dominated by streamflow percolation into the Basin and groundwater discharge to Ventura River • GW pumping averages only ~10% of the GW Budget As low as 4% in wet years Up to 31% in dry years • Basin GW levels will be lower in dry seasons, but Basin will still re-fill in normal to wet years The conclusion that there is no impact from pumping based on the fact that the basin rapidly refills in the wet season points to the likelihood that the surface water is in fact "connected" to groundwater during these periods. Moreover, the fact that pumping represents up to 31% of the budget in the critical dry years raises many questions. 	UVRGA has not concluded that there is no impact from pure evaluated the effects of pumping on riparian and aquatic G significant and unreasonable effects on those beneficial use are included in the GSP.
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	12) The Model Results identify four areas of concentrated pumping, three of which directly impact groundwater levels in the "Robles Reach." This reach is the area with the most storage in the basin, and should be considered as the "primary sub-basin" for water supply. Pumping in this reach directly affects conditions throughout the basin.	UVRGA does not agree with the conclusion that pumping in Pumping in the "Robles Reach" does not have a significant "Robles Reach." UVRGA agrees that pumping in the "Robles has calculated and presented the indirect depletion of surfa- upstream pumping.
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	 13) The analyses and graphs presented in the Model Results do not provide information on the spacial and temporal surface flow conditions as they relate to groundwater levels. Because the downstream reaches are largely dependent on surface and groundwater flows out of this sub-basin, further analysis is needed to more clearly define the relationship between groundwater levels and surface flows. The analyses should, at a minimum, determine threshold groundwater levels at which surface flows are diminished or eliminated, both in the reach being monitored and downstream. This relationship was established decades ago in the Ventura River Conjunctive Use Report (1978) which states that; Flows in the live stretch are affected by both the rate of recharge of the upper part of the Ventura River groundwater basin and by the rate of groundwater extraction from wells in the river. Investigations published in the Conjunctive Use Report identified groundwater elevation thresholds in the upper basin at which flows in the live reach will cease; when the water level in well 4N23Wl6C4 falls below Elevation 495, surface flow in much of the live stretch stops although some pools remain. A flow of 1 cfs or more in the live stretch corresponds with a water level in this well of greater than about Elevation 507. 	UVRGA is aware of the historically developed correlations be information during GSP development. However, the relation SGMA requirement and is not particularly useful for manage is not charged with managing the total flow in the river. UP The correlations do not differentiate between total flow an UVRGA, are needed to calculate depletion rate. UVRGA has significant and unreasonable depletions, in accordance with

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is in the formulation of the sustainable management criteria for clowering of groundwater levels.

mping based on the fact that the basin rapidly refills. UVRGA has GDEs and developed sustainable management criteria to prevent sers of groundwater. In addition, biological monitoring programs

n the "Robles Reach" affects conditions throughout the Basin. effect on groundwater/surface water conditions upstream of the s Reach" affects conditions in downstream areas. In fact, UVRGA face water in the Foster Park and Confluence areas caused by

between groundwater levels and streamflow and reviewed that onship between groundwater levels and surface flows is not a ging depletions of interconnected surface water because UVRGA JVRGA is only responsible for managing depletion, not total flow. nd depletion. Models, such as the numerical model developed by as calculated depletion rates and has developed SMC to avoid th SGMA requirements.

Entry Date	First Name	Last Name	Comment/Question	Re
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	14) Groundwater levels also affect surface flows in the Robles Reach, which frequently dries up despite constant inflows. Unfortunately, the Aquatic GDE Impact Analysis is quick to dismiss the effect of groundwater elevation on surface flows; No monitoring is recommended at either of the critical riffle aquatic GDEs or the Robles Habitat Area, as impacts from pumping in these areas were determined to be minimal or non-existent. This conclusion is inconsistent with the guidance provided in Monitoring Networks and Identification of Data Gaps BMP (DWR 2016) which states: 23 CCR §354.34(c))(6): Depletions of Interconnected Surface Water. Monitor surface water and groundwater, where interconnected surface water conditions exist, to characterize the spatial and temporal exchanges between surface water and apply the tools and methods necessary to calculate depletions of surface water caused by groundwater extractions. The monitoring network shall be able to characterize the following: (A) Flow conditions streams and rivers cease to flow, if applicable. (C) Temporal change in conditions due to variations in stream discharge and regional groundwater extraction. (D) Other factors that may be necessary to identify adverse impacts on beneficial uses of the surface water. DWR guidance provides detailed information on developing a monitoring network to accurately assess these concerns.	Depletion of surface water in the "Robles Reach" was estimate without pumping to determine streamflow depletions. The small compared to surface water flows during the steelhead no significant and unreasonable depeltions of surface water that detailed monitoring is not necessary in these areas due funding avaialble for monitoring should be prioritized in the that significant and unreasonable effects could potentially of GSAs and are not intended to be applied without considerate potential undesirable results in the Basin.
18-Jun-21	Paul	Jenkin	15)Establishing Minimum Flow Thresholds As described above, the current GSP analysis incorrectly concludes that groundwater pumping has little to no effect on surface flows throughout the majority of the basin. But even for the identified groundwater dependent "Habitat Areas," the development of minimum flow thresholds is inadequate. For example; For the Foster Park Habitat Area, while the City's low flow thresholds are based on only one HSI score evaluated in the Padre study (average thalweg depth), we understand this currently provides the best available information to establish minimum thresholds for the depletion of interconnected surface water sustainability criteria. This statement ignores best available science, including the recently published CDFW Draft Instream Flow Recommendations (2021) as well as the NMFS Draft Biological Opinion for Foster Park Wellfield (2005).	SGMA does not require UVRGA to establish minimum surface minimum thresholds for <u>depletion</u> of surface water flow. The responsible for the total flow in the Ventura River. UVRGA has and has concluded that depletions are small relative to typic required for those areas because UVRGA has concluded that effects. For the Confluence Area, it is unclear if depletions of proposed to answer that question. For Foster Park, the min science, which is the site-specific study by Hopkins (2013). No identify a threshold for significant and unreasonable effects Hopkins (2013) does. The CDFW study and BO include surface habitat conditions for steelhead. Although the UVRGA agree health of aquatic species and their habitats including steelher water conditions for riverine species, but rather to manage spumping.

esponse

hated using the numerical model. The model was run with and e results indicated that depletion in the Robles Reach was very d migration season. Therefore, it was concluded that there are er in the critical riffle areas caused by pumping. UVRGA concludes e to the very small modeled depletions and that the limited e Confluence and Foster Park Areas, where UVRGA has concluded occur. It is also noted that the DWR BMPs are not binding on ation of basin-specific conditions and priorities relative to

ace flow thresholds. Rather, SGMA requires UVRGA to establish That is a very critical distinction because it means UVRGA is not has quantified depletion of surface water throughout the Basin ical surface flows upstream of the Confluence area. SMC are not at the small depletions do not cause significant and unreasonable cause significant and unreasonable effects and monitoring is nimum thresholds are based on the current best available Neither the CDFW flow recommendations nor the NMFS draft BO s based on groundwater pumping like the Padre study included in face flow recommendations or requirements to maintain optimal ees that optimal surface water conditions are important to the nead, SGMA does not require GSA's to maintain optimal surface e significant and unreasonable effects related to groundwater