
SACRAMENTO ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Margie Namba
Mark White
Robert Bailey
Dana Curran, Vice Chair
George "Buzz" Link, Chair
Dr. Anthony DeRiggi
Eric Rivero- Montes
Secret Charles-Ford
Mark Barry

A JOINT COMMISSION APPOINTED BY:
County of Sacramento
City of Sacramento
City of Isleton
City of Folsom
City of Galt
City of Elk Grove

MEETING MINUTES

**MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2015 6:00 P.M.
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
10590 ARMSTRONG AVE., MATHER, CA 95655**

ITEM

1. **Call to Order – Chair Link**

The meeting of the Sacramento Environmental Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. **Roll Call – Staff Secretary**

Commissioners present: Secret Charles-Ford, Richard Hunn, Dana Curran, Dr. Anthony DeRiggi, Mark Barry, Mark White, George "Buzz" Link, Robert Bailey

Newly appointed commissioner Eric Rivero-Montes attended the meeting as a member of the public. Voting privileges begin at the April meeting.

3. **Introduction of Commissioners – Chair Link**

The Commissioners each took a turn introducing themselves.

4. **Public Comment – Vice Chair Curran**

There was no public comment.

5. **CONSENT ITEMS-** Approval of February 2015 Minutes, March Additions of Links to Webpage

A motion to approve the February 2015 minutes was made by Richard Hunn and seconded by Robert Bailey.

Ayes: Secret Charles-Ford, Richard Hunn, Dana Curran, Dr. Anthony DeRiggi, Mark Barry, Mark White

Noes: None

Abstentions: George “Buzz” Link, Robert Bailey

The March list of link additions to the webpage was pulled for discussion. All the web links were approved for addition to the SEC webpage except ECOS and the Sierra Club. The commissioners wanted to investigate whether those two entities were involved in litigation with the County.

A motion to approve the links was made by Mark White and seconded by Dr. Anthony DeRiggi.

Ayes: Secret Charles-Ford, Richard Hunn, Dana Curran, Dr. Anthony DeRiggi, Mark Barry, Mark White, George “Buzz” Link, Robert Bailey

Noes: None

Abstentions: None

***Action:** Dr. Anthony DeRiggi will modify #3 and #5 of the guidelines for adding links to the SEC webpage to clarify the term “commercial” and to address the issue of adding links of organizations that may be involved in litigation between local cities or the County of Sacramento.*

6. Implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Act

1. Department of Water Resources- Trevor Joseph, Supervising Engineering Geologist, Sustainable Groundwater Management Section Chief

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is the first piece of legislation to govern ground water in California. It requires that local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) must be formed that will be responsible for creating groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs). The creation of GSA’s has an aggressive deadline of June 30, 2017.

The State recognizes that groundwater is best managed at the local and regional level with the proper tools. Only when localities cannot manage their groundwater efficiently and meet the benchmarks, will the State step in and implement a plan to manage things temporarily. In order to prevent the State from intervention in local ground water management, sustainability goals must be established by the GSA’s that prevent the following undesirable results: chronic lowering of ground water levels, degradation of ground water, sea water intrusion and surface water depletion. The SGMA authorizes GSA’s to report and collect data on wells, manage extractions and impose fines as needed. There is a 20 year timeline for basins to return to sustainability, phased in over a time with measurable goals along the way.

There are 515 water basins identified throughout the state that are rated high, medium and low priority. A basin may be rated high due to high extraction because of high population while low risk basins are likely to be unpopulated areas with natural vegetation that doesn’t require much water.

Implementation milestone requirements can be viewed on the Department of Water Resources website. The State Water Resources Board is the back stop if local agencies cannot establish plans or establish plans that are not sustainable.

The Department of Water Resources will play a large role in providing technical assistance for data collection, plan formulation assistance, financial assistance, and a framework for management. It is possible for localities to request adjusted basin boundaries when establishing basin oversight to accommodate regional water issues.

The Department of Water resources has and is establishing basin boundaries and developing regulations and best practices for sustainability plans that are due by GSA's. Public listening sessions are scheduled for late April to hear public concerns related to basin boundaries.

***Action:** Richard Hunn agreed to stay current on the SGMA, perhaps listening to the webcast, and reporting back to the commission on new developments.*

The implementation of the SGMA may include reducing demand, changing land use or building projects that increase water storage. GSA plans could limit how much water is drawn by consumers. Property owners and farmers in the Central Valley can expect that their water districts will join local GSA's in order to maintain control over local ground water usage.

Proposition 1 was passed and will assist local GSA's in paying for the administration and oversight of local water basins.

2. State Water Resources Board-Jessica Bean, Engineering Geologist

Ms. Bean emphasized that the intent of the State Water Resources Board (SWRB) is that local GSA's retain the management of ground water basins. SWRB is meant to be only a back stop and will only intervene if local efforts fail. In the event that local efforts are unsuccessful and the State temporarily takes over groundwater management, local agencies can remedy plans and get back the management of their ground water at many points in the process.

To avoid State intervention the following 4 steps need to be successfully accomplished:

- A. Formation of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) by 6/30/17*
- B. Completion of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), if in a critically over drafted basin, by 1/31/2020*
- C. Completion of GSP if in any other high/medium priority basin 1/31/2022*
- D. Successfully implement GSP under local management, with 20 year implementation period*

The early phases of implementation of GSPs will include data collection, resolution of data sharing between the State and GSA's, having fees in place and monitoring and managing wells and basins. If the SWRB must intervene and manage these activities they will bill local agencies for the service. Counties currently have data on ground water that does not translate in sharable form to State software. The standardization of data management will need to be achieved at the State level so that county and state computer software systems can share information.

Many factors have contributed to the depletion of groundwater. The population has doubled in the last forty years without many changes in how we approach and manage our water resources. Land use is one factor in the depletion history because natural vegetation that requires little water has gradually been replaced by crops that are harvested 3-4 times a year and are large water users.

The State Water Board reiterates that groundwater is best managed at the local level and State intervention is a last resort.

7. **Sustainable Groundwater Laws- John Woodling, Executive Director Regional Water Authority and Sacramento Groundwater Authority**

Mr. Woodling reviewed the definition of sustainability as **not** having the six following undesirable results:

- A. Chronic lowering of groundwater
- B. Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage
- C. Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion.
- D. Significant and unreasonable degraded water quality.
- E. Significant and unreasonable land subsidence that substantially interferes with surface land uses.
- F. Depletions of interconnected surface water that adversely affect uses of surface water.

The Water Forum Agreement was the beginning of managing groundwater in the Sacramento Region 14 years ago in part to address the downward trend in groundwater resources, Mr. Woodling reported that our local ground water basins are recovering by a half foot a year.

The SGMA provides the Groundwater Sustainability Agency the authority to assess fees, require reporting of extractions and can enforce the reduction of extractions. It does not authorize well permitting. Mr. Woodling reiterated the factors that would require state intervention. A picture of Northern California showed ground water basin/sub basin levels and their rankings as high, medium, low, or very low priority. Sacramento water basins are ranked high prioritization due to water basin levels and high population.

The Sacramento area is roughly divided into 3 basins with Joint Power Authorities currently overseeing the respective basins. Agencies must apply to the Department of Water Resources to be recognized as the GSA and two possibilities to become local GSAs are the existing Sacramento Groundwater Authority and/or the Central Sacramento Groundwater Authority. They have been engaging with water users and stakeholders for several years already. The DWR determines who becomes the GSA if there is more than one applicant.

Commissioner Charles Ford asked about the relationship of levees and groundwater. There is potentially an impact to groundwater when levee slurry walls are embedded 50-60 feet deep which could potentially cut off recharge to the river. The question of future development restrictions was also raised. Mr. Woodling explained that the SGMA authorizes GSAs to limit pumping but cannot control land use or issue well permits so land use agencies and GSAs will need to work together.

Building new reservoirs is one possible solution for increasing storage, but it would be a minor one. Surface water has traditionally recharged ground water levels but in the new, drier climate model, we need to find new methods to mitigate the decrease. Negative water impact vs. normal hydrology is difficult to measure as solutions are sought.

8. Update of the SEC Vision Statement

The electronic version of the vision statement is circulating to each commissioner for edits and additions.

11. Sacramento County Environmental Management Department (EMD) Directors Report

12. Environmental News Review- Vice Chair Curran

13. Commissioner Comments:

Creek Week Announcement

The Bag Ban restriction letter was signed by Chair Link and sent out on 3/4/15.

The letter in support of EMD's Fee Ordinance has been signed by Chair Link and sent to EMD on 3/5/15

Chair link mentioned that some time ago the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors agreed to submit legislation to the state to request the state abandon the state's responsibility for highway 16 and giving responsibility to the County. The County has talked about considering making it into a 6 lane highway and adding an additional 12 signals. Issues of vernal pools being usurped by right of way and air quality were brought up. Surrounding counties are opposed to the plan.

The Commission agreed to present the SEC awards at the July 20th meeting, instead of April 20th and asked for volunteers for an awards subcommittee. Mark White, Richard Hunn, Buzz Link, and Robert Bailey volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

Action: The Awards subcommittee will arrange a meeting this month to discuss the nominations

Action: Chair Link will draft a letter to surrounding cities inviting participation in the Sacramento Environmental Commission.

14 Adjournment- Adjourned at 8:01 p.m. Next Meeting April 20, 2015 at 6:30 p.m., 700 H Street, Sacramento, CA 95814