

*DRAFT MINUTES OF TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Utilities Field Operations Training Center
35 Stony Point Road, Santa Rosa, CA
September 9, 2024

Attendees: Dan Herrera, City of Petaluma
Gina Benedetti-Petric, City of Petaluma
Matt Fullner, Valley of the Moon Water District
Jennifer Burke, City of Santa Rosa
Tony Williams, North Marin Water District
Craig Scott, City of Cotati
Mike Berger, City of Sonoma
Christina Goulart, Town of Windsor
Vanessa Garrett, City of Rohnert Park
Carrie Pollard, Marin Municipal Water District
Michelle Montoya, City of Santa Rosa

Staff/Alternates: Grant Davis, Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA)
Lynne Rosselli, SCWA
Pam Jeane, SCWA
Paul Piazza, SCWA
Todd Schram, SCWA
Chris Delaney, SCWA
Amanda Hudson, Valley of the Moon Water District
Molly MacLean, Marin Municipal Water District
Oriana Hart, City of Petaluma
Cortney Bowser, City of Rohnert Park
Shannon Cotulla, Town of Windsor
Peter Martin, City of Santa Rosa

Public: Peter Kiel
Brenda Adelman, Russian River Watershed Protection Committee
Dick Dowd, Sonoma County Alliance
Bob Anderson

1. Check In
Jennifer Burke, TAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.
2. Public Comment
Dick Dowd shared that today will be a good day since it is 09/09.
3. Proposed Alexander Valley Water District Presentation
Peter Keil presented.
Over the past three years representatives of agricultural water users in the Alexander Valley have been engaged to secure water supply and improve water resilience by working to form a water district. A draft application was submitted to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) in March. A considerable effort has been undertaken to develop, specify, and evaluate the proposed new Water District, including detailed mapping of boundaries and preparation of land use data, articulation of proposed services, outreach and engagement with landowners and affected agencies, and responding to LAFCO application requirements. The primary purpose of the proposed California Water District (WC 34000) is to improve the reliability and availability of the common supply of groundwater and surface water available to lands within the proposed district. The proposed district would have the following functions and services: water sharing program, new Eel River-Russian River diversion facility, groundwater investigation and management, and groundwater recharge program. The proposed district would not

provide retail water, sewer, or other municipal services. The proposed district would represent private water users in local and regional water supply and conservation efforts and regulatory proceedings and cooperate with other local and regional water supply organizations and non-profit entities. Proposed timeline is 6 to 9 months, to complete signature gathering and hold a hearing with LAFCO.

As part of the formation election, they would also propose an adoption of an assessment, so that there would be funding for the first few years. Requests of Sonoma Water contractors are to help identify concerns with the Alexander Valley Water District (AVWD) proposal, inform on how AVWD can help the Contractors and regional water management, help communicate with the Contractors' customers, and express support for the AVWD formation to LAFCO and elected officials.

Jennifer Burke, City of Santa Rosa, asked in terms of water supply, is this focused on the 10,000 acre-ft stored in Lake Mendocino and what role would the proposed district have in allocating the water supply.

Peter Keil answered that the lands within Alexander Valley have percolating groundwater rights. They are trying to stop the State from curtailing surface water rights. There is ample existing supply if it is accounted for and managed properly. Water sharing allows for more efficient distribution.

Craig Scott, City of Cotati, asked if the proposed district will form its own groundwater sustainability agency (GSA).

Peter Keil answered that they would consider joining a joint powers authority if one is developed but they may recommend forming their own GSA so that they can have their own financial powers.

Matt Fullner, Valley of the Moon Water District, asked about aquifer storage and recovery in the valley and, with no infrastructure, what would the long term plan be for conveyance and what would be the source of that water.

Peter Keil answered that the current pilot project includes on farm recharge and diversion of surface flow from the Russian River during high flow periods to be applied to the land through sprinklers or possibly through flood irrigation.

Brenda Adelman, Russian River Watershed Protection Committee, shared concern about inadequate information being available to the public and asked if by establishing district, it would make more information available about water use. How much info will be available to the public and how would it differ from what is done now.

Peter Keil answered that the existing water use data are largely estimates based on land use type and land use water demand information is pretty good. Efforts will be made to better refine the data, which will be public. Harder thing to nail down is water use at vineyards. For Russian River flows, it would not be feasible to get a water right permit for groundwater recharge.

4. Water Supply Conditions and Temporary Urgency Change Order

Chris Delaney, SCWA, presented.

Lake Mendocino storage is currently at 71,000 acre-ft with releases at 210 cubic ft per second (csf). Also, seeing a 350 acre-ft draw down per day. Lake Sonoma storage is currently at 236,000 acre-ft. SCWA just took control of operating Lake Sonoma from the Army Corps due to the minor deviation, which allowed for storage in the flood pool. Currently at 100 csf for releases and the current rate of decline is 210 acre-ft per day. Potter Valley Project and Eel River imports are being operated by PG&E according to their variance approved on June 26. This reduces diversions through the Potter Valley Project to 5 csf down from 75 csf. This does include contract water to the Potter Valley Irrigation District. Diversions are currently from 40 csf to 44 csf, which is why we are seeing the draw down in Lake Mendocino. Sonoma Water is currently operating according to a Temporary Urgency Change Order (Change Order) issued on June 6, which reduces the minimum in stream flow requirement for the upper Russian River from 175 csf to 125 csf and from 125 csf to 70 csf on the lower Russian River. This Change Order expires on October 15, and Sonoma Water is preparing for a new Temporary Urgency Change

Petition, which will be looking to modify the hydrologic index. Under decision 1610 the hydrologic index is defined by cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury. However, that index is no longer effective due to the reduced diversion into the Potter Valley Project. With that, Sonoma Water is looking to modify the hydrologic index from inflows into Lake Pillsbury to storage at Lake Mendocino. If approved, the Temporary Urgency Change Petition would likely go into effect November 1, 2024. The State Water Resources Control Board Division of Water Rights is currently reviewing the Petition. It is currently in the public comment period, which closes on September 27th.

Brenda Adleman stated flows at Hacienda have been in the 140 csf area for a while now. There were only a few times when it has gone under that. Assuming this is from the natural stream flow.

Chris Delaney, SCWA, said releases are being made to meet minimum flow requirements in Dry Creek, which are based on current operations and demand.

5. Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership

a. 2024 Water Production Relative to 2013 Benchmark

Jennifer Burke, City of Santa Rosa, presented.

For the month of July, the partnership's water use reduction was 16% compared to 2013. The year-to-date compared to 2013 is showing a 24% reduction. There has been a dip in population numbers, possibly based on updated census data.

b. Water Use Efficiency Outreach Messaging

Paul Piazza, SCWA, presented.

Wrapping up the summer campaign this month. Weekly social media posts, digital and print ads in the Press Democrat will wrap up at the end of the month. September focus is on graywater and rainwater rebates, water smart gardens, maintenance manel, and on the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) program. Social media outreach focused on Facebook and Instagram, but also have 430,000 followers on NextDoor. Weekly posts see just under 3000 views. Outreach from Sonoma County fair had over 600 people that stopped by. Press Democrat article brought attention to the exhibit but also to the Garden Sense program. From the article, Sonoma Water had a good uptick in sign-ups for the program. Fiesta de Independencia will be held on September 15. Will also be at the Fix It Fair that is put together by Zero Waste Sonoma.

Jennifer Burke, City of Santa Rosa, asked what the Fix It Fair is.

Paul Piazza, SCWA, answered that the event is put on surrounding zero waste week. It is looking at reuse, recognizing the ability to extend life of products. Sonoma Water focuses on fixing irrigation.

Gina Benedetti-Petnic, City of Petaluma, said Sonoma Water would be a welcome addition at the Petaluma Fix It Fair.

No public comment.

6. Biological Opinion Status Update

Pam Jeane, SCWA, presented.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project – Phases I – III are completed. SCWA is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to complete Phases IV – VI. Currently working on Reaches 10 and 13 in Phase IV and Reaches 4c and 2a in Phase V. McCullough finished constructing the last piece of the Phase V project. ROD construction has completed the remaining 4 sites in Reach 2, with the post-construction walk through scheduled for last week. Phase VI still working on right-of-way.

Habitat Monitoring and Maintenance – Completed 2023 effectiveness monitoring in December to evaluate newly and previously constructed reaches, to quantify the habitat areas meeting desired conditions, and to identify maintenance needs. Information collected is also being used to prioritize enhancement reaches to monitor in 2024, and plan for maintenance activities such as invasive vegetation management, removal of nuisance sedimentation, and repair of flood damage or erosion. This past rainy season

increased flows in Dry Creek which did cause some minor erosion damage to the recently constructed sites. Staff have been conducting habitat monitoring at Dry Creek, which is important to receive credit under the Biological Opinion.

Outreach – Reaching out to landowners involved in Phase VI. The annual meeting on the Biological Opinion will be held once the new Biological Opinion is issued.

Fish Monitoring – The camera is operating out at the Mirabel dam. Typically, do not see fish this early, but the average annual adult Chinook count is 2,610.

Russian River Estuary Management Project – The mouth of the Russian River is open as of August 27 and Sonoma Water is continuing to do water quality and pinniped monitoring.

New Biological Opinion – Not sure of exact timeline, but hoping it comes out soon.

Brenda Adelman asked for confirmation that the Biological Assessment was submitted a year ago. Asked if there were letters she could obtain related to this.

Pam Jeane, SCWA, confirmed the Biological Assessment was submitted a year ago but National Marine Fisheries Service asked for additional information, which means the final version was submitted in Spring 2024. Was unsure if there were letters but would have Sonoma Water staff look into it.

7. Eel Russian Project Authority and Potter Valley Project Update

Pam Jeane, SCWA, presented.

PG&E is currently working on the draft license surrender application and decommissioning plan which is scheduled to be released in January 2025. PG&E asked for clarification on the new Eel-Russian diversion project as part of the decommissioning plan. Sonoma Water has been answering their questions based on the current 30% design and continues to make sure there is understanding between stakeholders. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) grant has two of three pieces of the project complete. The Potter Valley water assessment is the final piece, and the monitoring wells should be installed by end of month. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation grant will provide funding for the 60% design on the new Eel Russian facility.

Jennifer Burke, City of Santa Rosa, asked what the timeline is for the final piece of the DWR grant and if the monitoring wells will be given over to landowners.

Pam Jeane, SCWA, confirmed that the grant deadline is the end of this year and confirmed that the monitoring wells will be given to the landowners as long as they want them.

No public comment.

8. Communications Update

Paul Piazza, SCWA, presented.

Continuing to release information to celebrate 75 years of Sonoma Water. There was information released earlier this month regarding the failure of the summer dam. There was a press release in August about the acquisition of some land in partnership with Ag+ Open Space and Russian River County Sanitation District. On September 26, Sonoma Water will be at Lo Cien's State of the Latino Community event.

Brenda Adelman asked about the purchase of the land and what role will the sanitation district play.

Grant Davis, SCWA, said that a public entity was needed to preserve those acres and that there is a long term easement to apply water to that area that precedes the purchase. Sonoma Water is essentially a caretaker that will protect the resources.

9. Items for Next Agenda

None.

No public comment.

10. Check Out

Chair Burke adjourned the meeting at 10:04 a.m.