



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 7/1/2020

Agenda Placement: 8A

Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

TO: Napa County Planning Commission

FROM: Charlene Gallina for David Morrison - Director
Planning, Building and Environmental Services

REPORT BY: Brian Bordona, Deputy Director of PBES - (707) 259-5935

SUBJECT: Water Availability Analysis (WAA) Workshop and Groundwater Monitoring Update

RECOMMENDATION

COUNTY OF NAPA - WATER AVAILABILITY ANALYSIS (WAA) WORKSHOP

Request: Receive an overview and presentation of the County's Water Availability Analysis Guidance Document and related procedures, and hear an update on County groundwater monitoring and sustainability planning efforts.

Staff Recommendation: Information and discussion item. No action proposed.

Staff Contact: Brian Bordona, Deputy Planning Director (707) 259-5935 Brian.Bordona@countyofnapa.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning Commission will be provided a general overview of the County Water Availability Analysis (WAA) policy and related process. The Commission will also receive a brief update on the County's 2019 Annual Groundwater Monitoring Report and Groundwater Sustainability planning efforts. This is not a presentation of potential policy changes or updates. The WAA Guidelines are attached (Attachment A).

This is not a public hearing, but the Planning Commission may allow public comments at the Chair's discretion.

FISCAL & STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

County Strategic Plan pillar addressed:

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This presentation and discussion is not a project defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Groundwater History

Actions to better understand and manage Napa County's groundwater resources date back to the 1960s. These actions include numerous scientific studies, policies, ordinances and community meetings. The following link provides a timeline of the County efforts to manage groundwater dating back to the 1960s: (<https://tinyurl.com/Napa-County-GW-Timeline>) The WAA was first put in place in the early 1990's and has been used since that time, with periodic revisions, as a tool for analyzing groundwater impacts resulting from discretionary projects such as wineries, new vineyards on slopes over 5%, restaurants, hotels and other discretionary uses located in the unincorporated area of the County that propose to use groundwater. Following the work of the Groundwater Advisory Committee (GRAC), policy direction from the Board of Supervisors, information provided by consultant reports and the County's experience over the last 20 plus years using the existing procedure, various changes to the WAA were proposed to the Board of Supervisors. On May 12, 2015, the Board of Supervisors adopted the current Water Availability Analysis Guidance Document, which is the subject of this workshop and included in Attachment A.

The Napa County Groundwater Sustainability: Annual Report - Water Year 2019 is the sixth Annual Report, with five previous reports prepared for the years 2014 through 2018. The report is a technical documents that includes a summary of the County's groundwater monitoring and planning efforts. A brief update on the newly created Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), 2020 groundwater monitoring program and Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) development for the Napa Valley Groundwater Subbasin will be provided.

Water Availability Analysis (WAA)

Napa County is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code 21000–21177 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000–15387) to conduct an environmental analysis of all discretionary permits submitted for approval. CEQA requires analysis of dozens of environmental aspects; including: "Would the project substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of preexisting nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?" The purpose of the WAA is to provide guidance and a procedure that will assist applicants, neighbors, county staff, decision makers, and other interested parties in gathering the information necessary to adequately answer that question. The WAA is not an ordinance, is not prescriptive, and project specific conditions may require more, less, or different analyses in order to meet the requirements of CEQA. The WAA is used procedurally as the baseline to commence groundwater analysis of any given discretionary project.

A Water Availability Analysis is required for any discretionary project that may utilize groundwater or will increase the intensity of groundwater use of any parcel through an existing, improved, or new water supply system (Napa County Groundwater Conservation Ordinance, Section 13.15.010). As such, it is most commonly used for discretionary development applications using groundwater such as wineries and commercial uses. Since CEQA

is not applicable to non-discretionary (“ministerial”) projects, the WAA Policy does not apply to projects such as building permits, single family homes, track II replants, etc. While discretionary vineyard projects are welcome to borrow from the WAA, such vineyard projects, due to their size and scope, generally receive a much more exhaustive analysis under longstanding processes managed by the Conservation Division of the Planning Building & Environmental Services (PBES) Department. The WAA may also apply when a discretionary Groundwater Permit is required by the Groundwater Conservation Ordinance, Section 13.15.010 of the Napa County Code.

2019 Annual Groundwater Monitoring Report and Groundwater Sustainability Planning

Since 2008, the County has been instrumental in implementing groundwater management actions to better understand groundwater conditions, establish monitoring to track conditions, conduct education and outreach, and develop programs to assess and maintain groundwater sustainability. These efforts included the adoption of Goals and Policies in Napa County’s 2008 General Plan, commencing new studies of groundwater resources in 2009 through 2016, and spearheading groundwater sustainability planning, management implementation, and community outreach.

A Napa County Groundwater Monitoring Plan was prepared in 2013 to formalize and augment groundwater monitoring efforts conducted as part of a Comprehensive Groundwater Monitoring Program. The Monitoring Plan recommended annual reports on groundwater conditions and modifications to the countywide groundwater monitoring program as needed. To date, five prior Annual Reports have been prepared. This is the third Annual Report that was prepared to also meet the annual reporting requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) as required by Section 356.2 of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Regulations.

The Napa County Groundwater Sustainability: Annual Report – Water Year 2019 (Report) presents an update on groundwater conditions in Napa County. The Report meets reporting requirements of SGMA for the Napa Valley Subbasin (Subbasin), which underlies much of the Napa Valley Floor. The Report extends beyond the requirements of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) regulations by also including an update on groundwater conditions elsewhere in the county (i.e., outside of the Napa Valley Subbasin). The Report provides an update on the implementation of management actions to date to maintain groundwater sustainability.

Groundwater level trends in the alluvial aquifer system of the Napa Valley Subbasin (Subbasin) are stable in most wells with long-term groundwater level records. Many monitored wells experienced somewhat increased (i.e., shallower) groundwater levels in 2019 compared to 2018, consistent with wet water year conditions in 2019. While agricultural land use, especially vineyards, have covered much of the Napa Valley Floor for decades, water requirements for agriculture in the Subbasin (predominantly vineyards) are significantly lower than agricultural commodities grown elsewhere in California. Due to the high recharge potential of the Subbasin in most years and relatively low water requirements for agriculture, the Subbasin remains full relative to its storage capacity. Cumulative changes in groundwater storage show a net increase of 15,762 acre-feet from water years 1988 to 2019, reflecting long-term stability in groundwater supplies across the Subbasin. Estimated groundwater extraction in the Subbasin in water year 2019 was 18,005 acre-feet. This volume is within the sustainable yield range of 17,000 to 20,000 acre-feet per year identified in the Basin Analysis Report (LSCE, 2016). These and other findings on groundwater conditions and trends demonstrate that the Napa Valley Subbasin has continued to be managed sustainably through 2019.

The full Report, monitoring results, and details on local groundwater management and planning efforts are available on www.napawatersheds.org/groundwater. To get updates on the activities of the Napa County Groundwater Sustainability Agency, one can sign-up on the GSA email list at: <http://eepurl.com/bWgdiin>

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A . Attachment A - Water Availability Analysis Guidance Document

B . Exec. Summary - 2019 Annual Groundwater Monitoring Report (9mb)

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: Brian Bordona