



**South American  
Groundwater Subbasin**  
Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

**South American Subbasin (SASb) Groundwater Sustainability Agencies  
Executive Committee Meeting**

February 23, 2026, 3 PM to 5 PM

**MEETING SUMMARY**

*On-line*

*This is a joint, working meeting of representatives for each Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) of the South American Subbasin (SASb). The Committee considers shared GSA management issues related to implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Water Management Act (SGMA) and the SASb Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) as described in the January 26, 2023, Memorandum of Understanding.*

**Meeting Goals**

1. Review the Subbasin activities underway to implement the GSP and SGMA
2. Inform on the physical and fiscal status of the Subbasin now and into the future.
3. Receive feedback on GSP Implementation

**Attendance** – See Attachment A

**Action Items**

Hold the next fall committee meeting on the 21st at 2:00 p.m., as tentatively selected during the meeting.

| #  | ITEM                                                                                                                         | OWNER                                               |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Work with Sloughhouse to seek at least a partial payment for the current fiscal year.                                        | Plan Manager                                        |
| 2. | Document the unmanaged area issue in the annual report and periodic evaluation.                                              | Technical Team, Plan Manager                        |
| 3. | Continue exploring a Joint Powers Authority amendment, and an eventual fee-study implications for the unmanaged area.        | Plan Manager                                        |
| 4. | Move forward with the late-March public meeting and June draft for the periodic evaluation.                                  | Facilitator, Plan Manager                           |
| 5. | Continue evaluating monitoring network additions, including pilot-program wells and potential new wells.                     | GSA Managers, Technical Team, Plan Manager          |
| 6. | Continue coordinating with the County SB 552 drought-planning work, including roles/responsibilities and drought indicators. | GSA Managers, Plan Manager, Sacramento County Team. |
| 7. | Expand website/resource coordination and circulate useful links/materials.                                                   | Plan Manager, Facilitator                           |
| 8. | Schedule the next Executive Committee meeting for October 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2:00 p.m.                                       | Facilitator                                         |

## **Order of Business**

### **1. Welcome and Greetings**

The meeting was opened by facilitator Lisa Beutler who served as the meeting moderator. She explained the South American Subbasin Executive Committee consisted of the North Delta GSAs, Omochumne-Hartnell Water District (OHWD), and the Sacramento Central Groundwater Authority (SCGA), which includes the County of Sacramento.

She then reviewed the session agenda.

### **2. Memorandum of Understanding Update (MOU)**

SCGA Executive Officer Piret Harmon oversees SCGA's SGMA related fiscal management services for the Subbasin and serves as the Subbasin GSP Plan Manager. In this role she reported that the Sloughhouse Resource Conservation District, GSA (Sloughhouse) had submitted a withdrawal letter removing them from both the South American Subbasin Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and its GSA role in the basin. This created two immediate issues: an unresolved mid-year financial obligation and an unmanaged area within the basin.

She explained that the existing MOU does not clearly define what happens when a member withdraws midway through a fiscal year. SCGA had already invoiced Sloughhouse for the current fiscal year, but payment had not been received. Piret said she planned to work with them to seek at least partial payment.

She identified the larger issue as governance. Once Sloughhouse withdrew as a GSA, the basin was left with an unmanaged area. Piret said she had discussed this with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), which considers the situation a red flag relative to SGMA requirements, but had indicated they were willing to work with the basin as it moved to resolve the issue. DWR had also noted that SASb had otherwise been compliant and sustainable. DWR is hoping the subbasin can resolve the issue and avoid coming under the jurisdiction of the State Water Board for non-compliance.

Piret provided more details on the situation indicating the County had declined to assume GSA responsibilities for the unmanaged area. Other entities with existing jurisdiction or the ability to annex the area could theoretically file as the GSA for the area, but Piret believed the most logical possibility may be for SCGA to do so as it already served as the plan manager and has the largest footprint of any of the other agencies. She reported that the SCGA board had generally shown support for considering that role.

To bring the unmanaged area into SCGA, several steps would be required:

- Amend the JPA because current boundaries do not include the area.
- Obtain approval from all member agencies, not just the SCGA board.
- File with DWR as the GSA for the area.
- Complete a 90-day public comment period.
- Follow up later with a fee study, fee assessment, and MOU updates.

Piret emphasized that this was not a matter that could be resolved in a matter of weeks. She said a more realistic timeline is approximately 9 to 12 months, depending, in part, on other annexation

workload LAFCO already had underway. She also said the basin intends to document the situation in both the annual report and the 5-year periodic evaluation.

Mike Wackman, the manager of OHWD, noted that his water district briefly considered annexing the area, but because its own annexation process is already far along, including the additional property would be too costly. He said both OHWD and SCGA are trying to time completion of required boundary and fee work efficiently so they only need to complete those exercises once.

In discussion, a participant noted that the MOU does contain some language about financial obligations upon withdrawal, though it may not be strongly enforceable. Piret acknowledged that point and said she still hopes to work toward a practical outcome with Sloughhouse.

### **3. Annual Report Water Year 2025**

Bryan Thoreson, the lead technical consultant (from the engineering firm GEI), provided an overview of the Annual Report to be submitted to DWR prior to April 1<sup>st</sup>. During the presentation he summarized key findings on the monitoring network, groundwater levels, storage, sustainable yield, groundwater quality, and projects completed or in progress. Highlights from that report include:

- On groundwater levels, Bryan reported most wells are above the measurable objective and only a small number are below the minimum threshold. The wells below threshold are concentrated in the northeast area near the Aerojet superfund site. Overall, he said the basin remains in good shape and has no undesirable results related to chronic lowering of groundwater levels.
- On storage, he reported that basin storage increased by about 7,000 acre-feet according to the Cosumnes model. He also reported total extractions, surface water diversions, and total water use, and said the storage trend has improved in recent wet years.
- On sustainable yield, he said total groundwater extractions, including remediation pumping, were well below the basin's sustainable yield. He characterized this as good news for basin conditions.
- On groundwater quality, he explained that the basin relies on an established external network for water quality data rather than collecting all data independently. He described nitrate and specific conductance results as generally favorable, with most monitored conditions in the green or otherwise well below thresholds of concern.
- He also reviewed project implementation status and said the major GSP projects remain broadly on schedule. These included the Harvest Water project, OHWD's groundwater recharge project, the regional conjunctive use system, the Vineyard ASR well, and flood-related recharge efforts including work under Water Code section 1242.1 and the Wilton Road floodplain reconnection.
- He also highlighted outreach, collaboration, and the volunteer monitoring program supported by the Domestic Well Advisory Group (DWAG).

He concluded that the basin has had no undesirable results for groundwater levels, groundwater storage, groundwater quality, or land subsidence in water year 2025 or in prior reported years leading up to 2025.

### *Public Comment*

Suzanne Pecci noted that the DWR community monitoring program has started and that surveyed wells will be checked monthly, with public open-source data expected. She suggested this could be acknowledged in the report as a useful basin activity.

#### **4. GSP Periodic Evaluation 2027**

Bryan Thorenson then presented a progress update on the basin's 2027 Periodic Evaluation, which is due January 27, 2027. He said the evaluation is intended to review new information about basin conditions, sustainable management criteria, the status of projects and management actions, and any needed changes to the basin setting or GSP itself. He explained that the basin is identifying improvements and changes based on information collected since the GSP was adopted, then evaluating whether any resulting updates would require a GSP revision or a formal amendment.

His preliminary conclusion was that no major impacts to the GSP have yet been identified, that projects and management actions remain on schedule, and that no major basin setting or water use changes are currently expected. However, he noted that some monitoring network revisions are being reviewed, including possible additions from the domestic well monitoring pilot work.

#### *Discussion*

Member Barbara Evoy raised concerns about whether information from the Aerojet superfund site has been fully incorporated into basin thinking. She said she was encouraged to hear that the periodic evaluation will more directly consider that information. Bryan responded that he and others had met with staff associated with the site and are looking more closely at whether those wells should be treated differently in basin monitoring and evaluation.

Barbara also asked about the status of guidance on interconnected surface waters. Dominic Blum-Gutierrez from DWR said he expected the final draft guidance to be released either in the current quarter or, at the latest, the next quarter. He said there would then be a public comment period and suggested that the basin could use the remaining planning-cycle time to map out a five-year implementation approach. He also offered to help set up discussions with DWR staff once guidance is available.

Bryan noted that the basin held a public launch meeting in December, is planning another public meeting in late March to review progress, and expects to have a draft periodic evaluation available around June.

Bruce said he was pleased by the overall good groundwater conditions in the basin and especially interested in understanding more about the representative monitoring points near Aerojet, since those wells have been repeatedly flagged over time.

#### *Public Comment*

Suzanne Pecci added that the community monitoring pilot may help, particularly if some of those wells are useful for evaluating interconnected surface water conditions.

#### **5. Domestic Well Update**

Lisa Beutler reported that the Domestic Well Advisory Group (DWAG) met on December 5 and had engaged in substantial discussion regarding collaboration with the DWR domestic well monitoring pilot program. She stated that the group discussed confidentiality, how data would be used, coordination with existing monitoring efforts, and communication with community members. She also

noted that the group helped inform newsletter content and that a newsletter had been distributed in December.

#### *Member and Public Comments*

Member David Trask explained the issue of confidentiality for domestic well participants. He stated that some individuals are willing to participate in monitoring but want assurance that their data will remain anonymous and that their privacy will be protected. He emphasized that preserving trust is essential to broad participation. He also stated that domestic well users want to remain actively engaged and contribute to responsible basin stewardship.

Suzanne Pecci, a DWAG member, stated that the DWAG group also discussed the importance of involving newer residents and younger generations, noting that many newer residents may not fully understand that their water source is a private well. She further reported that the statewide drought task force she is a member of remains active and that work is continuing on roles and responsibilities and drought indicators.

Dominic Blum-Gutierrez noted that some participants expressed concern that groundwater level monitoring might somehow be tied directly to extraction volumes. He stated that this is not how the program functions and said he hoped that clarification helped reassure participants.

Piret Harmon commented that, based on her discussions with domestic well users, the basin does not yet have a fully developed structure for aligning the various groups involved, and she indicated that this area would receive attention in next year's work planning.

### **6. SB 552 Drought Planning**

Austin Miller gave an overview of Sacramento County's SB 552 drought and water shortage planning requirements. He explained that the County is required to establish a drought and water shortage task force focused on small water systems and domestic wells and to develop a county drought plan addressing drought data, forecasting, short- and long-term response, emergency and interim drinking water solutions, implementation steps, and funding considerations.

Austin stated that County departments form the steering committee for this work and that the broader task force includes GSAs, local public agencies, the public, NGOs, and water suppliers. He explained that the County views GSAs as important partners for basin data, local condition monitoring, and implementation of long-term solutions through GSPs, while emergency response would continue to be led by the County and the Office of Emergency Services in the event of a declared local emergency.

### **7. Monitoring Network Discussion**

Brian Thorenson provided additional detail on the basin's monitoring network. He stated that the original domestic well analysis in the GSP was based on DWR well completion reports and that, after the GSP was completed, the basin also identified a UC Berkeley Water Equity Science Shop study that refined estimates of likely and possible domestic well areas. He reported that updated review now identifies approximately 5,250 domestic wells in the subbasin.

Brian reported that the basin originally had 45 monitoring wells in the level/storage network, though two were destroyed, leaving 43 active wells. He stated that the current monitoring configuration covers approximately 86 percent of the basin under the applicable best management practice framework.

He outlined draft options to improve coverage, including use of wells enrolled in the DWR Level C pilot-program well and the possible addition of three other wells, subject to further review of their suitability. He stated that using the Level C well could raise coverage to approximately 89 percent and that adding the other proposed wells could raise coverage to approximately 95 percent.

Barbara Evoy expressed concern that a monitoring network should not be evaluated solely by spacing or well counts because the basin is hydrogeologically complex and not all wells are equivalent. Brian responded that considerations such as well depth, screened intervals, and aquifer zone are part of the technical review and that a separate team is also evaluating wells specifically for interconnected surface water purposes.

#### *Public Comment*

Suzanne Pecci similarly stated that private wells vary significantly because they are constructed based on different homeowner decisions, budgets, and drilling recommendations, and she emphasized that those differences should be taken into account.

### **8. Groundwater Week Recognition**

Piret Harmon reported that DWR selected the South American Subbasin for recognition during Groundwater Awareness Week and that the basin would be featured in relation to its work on outreach and engagement with domestic groundwater users. She described this as significant recognition because DWR could have selected any basin or subbasin in the state.

Dominic Blum-Gutierrez stated that he had nominated the basin and emphasized that the work being done was the reason for the selection. He also commented that Groundwater Week is a valuable opportunity for both the public and other GSAs to learn from featured efforts.

### **9. Financial Update, Cost Sharing, and Preliminary FY 2027 Work Plan**

Piret Harmon presented a financial update and preliminary outlook for the upcoming fiscal year. She stated that the current budget year is larger than usual, largely because of the 5-year periodic evaluation. She explained that year-to-date expenditures remained relatively low at that point because some annual report work overlaps with the periodic evaluation work and heavier expenditure was expected later in the year.

Piret explained that the withdrawal of Sloughhouse creates a projected revenue shortfall if payment is not received. She stated that her working assumption was that approximately half of Sloughhouse's annual contribution might still be collectible due to its participation during roughly half the fiscal year. She further stated that she hoped the shortfall could be absorbed

through budget management without immediately seeking additional contributions from the remaining members.

Piret then described the preliminary work plan for the next fiscal year, which included SGMA compliance activities, governance work such as SCGA's Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and the SASb MOU updates, funding analysis and a possible fee study, strategic direction for SCGA, and coordination and engagement across the basin and related stakeholder groups.

She noted that a key unresolved question is whether a future fee study should be evaluated basinwide or only within SCGA's footprint, and she stated that this issue remains open for further discussion.

Lisa Beutler commented that the managers were trying to complete as much work as possible at their level before returning to boards with more final numbers and recommendations, with the goal of avoiding surprises. Bruce thanked Piret for preparing preliminary estimates early in the process. David asked how the basin could maintain contributions toward shared objectives in the former Sloughhouse area, and Piret responded that there is no current mechanism to impose fees there until the governance and fee structure issues are resolved, although voluntary cooperation would be welcome.

#### **10. Website, Resources, and Distribution List**

David Trask thanked Dominic Blum-Gutierrez for sharing resources in the meeting chat and requested that those items be circulated more broadly. Lisa agreed to make sure those materials were distributed.

Piret Harmon suggested that those links and materials be incorporated into the website as a standing resource so participants would not need to search for prior emails. Lisa Beutler further stated that work is underway to improve coordination between the overall subbasin website and the SCGA website so the public can find information more easily. She also reported that the email distribution list is being transitioned and that website responsibilities are being coordinated among participating entities.

#### **11. Future Meeting Date**

The committee discussed scheduling its next meeting for the fall. After reviewing scheduling conflicts, participants expressed support for holding the next meeting on the 21st at 2:00 p.m., and Lisa Beutler stated that she would place the meeting on attendees' calendars.

#### **12. Closing Comments**

During final comments, several participants thanked the presenters and staff for the meeting and the work completed. Bruce Kamilos specifically thanked Piret, Austin Miller, and Chris Hunley for their efforts. Barbara Evoy thanked the presenters for their willingness to answer questions. Other participants described the meeting as informative and reflective of substantial work.

David Trask then shared a positive water conditions update, stating that the Cosumnes River was running well, that recent snow at lower elevations suggested continued flow, and that

pumping operations had already put more than 40 million gallons of water into the ground. Participants responded positively to this update.

### **13. Adjournment**

Lisa Beutler thanked attendees, expressed appreciation for the domestic well advisory group and all participants, and concluded the meeting.

## **Attachment A – Attendance**

### **Members**

Bruce Kamilos (SCGA)  
Barbara Evoy (SCGA)  
David Trask (SCGA)

Erik Ringelberg (North Delta GSAs)  
Mark Stretars (OHWD)  
Shoaib Ahrary (SCGA)

### **Facilitator**

Lisa Beutler (Stantec)

### **Plan Manager**

Piret Harmon (SCGA Manager)

### **State Agencies**

Dominic Blum-Gutierrez (DWR)  
Robert Stanley (CDFW)  
Sean Fogenburg (CDFW)  
Lynn Takata (Delta Stewardship  
Council)

### **Technical Team**

Ali Taghavi (Woodward and Curran)  
Bryan Thoreson, (GEI)  
Olin Applegate (Larry Walker &  
Associates)

### **Other GSA Staff or Members**

Austin Miller (Sacramento County)  
Denise Silva (SCGA)  
Ethan Livingston (Sacramento County)  
Kerry Schmitz (Sacramento County)  
Michael Wakeman (OHWD)  
Tim Mullins, (SCGA)

### **Domestic Well Advisory Group**

Lynn Wheat  
Suzanne Pecci

### **Other Participants**

19163465147 (Phone Participant)  
Justin Gingery (Gingery Hammer & Associates)  
Lindsey Carter (Sloughhouse RCD)