



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Names: Water Agency
Department No.: 054
For Agenda Of: November 2, 2021
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Directors, Water Agency
FROM: Department
Director(s) Scott D. McGolpin, Public Works Director, (805) 568-3010
Contact Info: Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, (805) 568-3436

SUBJECT: Authorization to Implement a Groundwater Well Metering Assistance Program, 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Supervisorial Districts

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: NA

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Directors:

- a) Approve and authorize the Santa Barbara County Water Agency to proceed with the development and implementation of a Well Metering Assistance Program to financially assist qualifying landowners with the purchase and installation of totalizer water well meters within groundwater basins subject to California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act compliance; and
- b) Determine that the above action involves an administrative activity which will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment and is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5).

Summary Text:

In accordance with California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), groundwater basins within Santa Barbara County are currently in the process of developing and implementing basin specific Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP). These basins include Carpinteria Groundwater Basin, Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin, Montecito Groundwater Basin, San Antonio Creek Valley Groundwater Basin, and the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin. Each basin-specific GSP is

developed by a local Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), with the primary goal of creating a detailed plan for long-term sustainability of the basin.

Accurate monitoring of groundwater extraction volumes is vital to the long-term understanding, management, and sustainability of these basins. As a result, GSAs are considering mandatory well metering to provide reliable and defensible pumping data for better management and decision making. The Cuyama Basin GSA has already begun implementing a mandatory metering program. Mandatory metering requirements, while important for basin management, can impose a significant cost burden on private domestic and agricultural groundwater users. Costs for meter installation and calibration can exceed several thousand dollars. To facilitate metering programs throughout groundwater basins in the County, the Water Agency has developed the Well Metering Assistance Program (WMAAP) to financially assist qualifying landowners with up to a \$500 refund for the purchase of a qualifying water well meter within the designated groundwater basins. These meters are designed to measure instantaneous flow rates, and continuously sum the total amount of water pumped from the well. Landowners will provide these pumping data to their respective GSA at predetermined intervals throughout the year, to be determined by each GSA.

This program is intended to last until June 30, 2022, or until funding is depleted. The program benefits will be evaluated, and possibly extended following Fiscal Year 2021-22.

The Well Metering Assistance Program will consist of a five-step application process, as outlined below.

- STEP 1** The Applicant completes the online Well Metering Assistance Program Application (Attachment A). Qualifications are outlined in the application and on the webpage (Attachment B).
- Qualifying meters must be located within the Department of Water Resources Bulletin 118 groundwater basin boundary and required or recommended by the basin's GSA.
 - When a completed application is received for a qualifying meter, a Notice to Proceed will be provided to the applicant within 21 days of submittal.
- STEP 2** The Applicant purchases a qualifying meter after receiving the Notice to Proceed
- Qualifying meters must meet or exceed standards outlined by the GSA.
 - If no standards are provided by the GSA, calibrated meters must meet a 2% accuracy standard.
- STEP 3** Applicant installs the meter
- Following manufacturer and GSA recommendations
- STEP 4** Applicant submits documentation to the Santa Barbara County Water Agency (SBCWA). This documentation must include the following:
- Calibration documentation from the manufacturer
 - Original or copy of original receipt showing meter serial number and cost
 - Photo of installed meter
- STEP 5** Reimbursement payment
- SBCWA will issue a check in the amount of up to \$500 for the approved installation, on a first come first served basis, within 6-8 weeks of receipt and confirmation of documentation (STEP 4). The WMAAP is limited to \$200,000 for the current fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

Background:

SGMA was passed in 2014 to create a framework for groundwater sustainability throughout California. Groundwater basins designated as high or medium priority by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) must form a GSA, which is responsible for the development and implementation of a basin-specific GSP. GSPs must achieve groundwater sustainability within 20 years of GSP adoption, which occurs when the volume of water withdrawn equals volume of water recharged into the basin. GSP objectives also require that future groundwater use does not lead to any of the following undesirable outcomes: declining water levels, reduction of groundwater storage, seawater intrusion, degraded water quality, land subsidence, and depletion of interconnected surface water.

GSAs have been formed for all high and medium priority basins in Santa Barbara County. Categorized by DWR as a critically overdrafted basin, the Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin GSA submitted its GSP to DWR in January 2020. In the San Antonio Creek Valley Groundwater Basin and the Santa Ynez GSAs are currently being prepared for submittal in January 2022. Montecito and Carpinteria Groundwater Basins are defined by DWR as a medium and high priority basins respectively, with GSPs due in 2024.

The Cuyama Valley GSA adopted a GSP in January 2020. During the November 4, 2020 Cuyama Basin Board Meeting, a motion was passed which will require all groundwater users pumping more than 2.0 acre-feet/year to install water measuring devices on all groundwater extraction wells no later than December 31, 2021. The GSP subsequently developed annual meter reporting instructions (Attachment C) and meter selection guidelines (Attachment D).

The Water Agency expects the WMAP to initially focus on wells located within Cuyama Valley. Similar well metering requirements will likely be implemented in San Antonio Creek Valley and Santa Ynez River Valley areas once GSPs have been finalized and adopted in 2022. Carpinteria and Montecito Basins may follow in 2024 when the GSPs are completed.

Collection and reporting of well flow data are integral in establishing proactive and adaptive management of groundwater resources and documentation of seasonal fluctuation in water demand. This data is more accurate than evapotranspiration estimates which are currently being used, and will provide additional data for ongoing groundwater model calibrations. In addition to providing a reliable estimate of groundwater pumping, this data may be used in conjunction with groundwater level data to improve the understanding of groundwater basin conditions. This is especially important for sustainable regional management of our County’s groundwater resources.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u>
General Fund			
State			
Federal			
Fees			
Water Agency Funds	\$200,000	\$200,000	
Total	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$ -

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding for this program was included in the adopted FY 2021-22 budget in the Water Resources Division of the Public Works Department as shown on page D-340 in the budget book.

Special Instructions:

Direct the Clerk of the Board to email a copy of the minute order of these actions to Christina Lopez at clopez@cosbpw.net

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Santa Barbara County Well Metering Assistance Program Application
- Attachment B: Santa Barbara County Well Metering Assistance Program public webpage
- Attachment C: Cuyama Basin Well Metering Program: Guidance on Well Metering Data Reporting
- Attachment D: Cuyama Basin Well Metering Program: Guidance for Meter Installation and Data Collection

Authored by:

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