



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 Name: Water Agency
Department No.: 054
For Agenda Of: 11/4/14
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Tme: 30 minutes
Continued Item: Yes
If Yes, date from: 10/15/13 and 10/21/14
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Directors, Water Agency

FROM: Department Scott D. McGolpin, Public Works Director, 568-3010
Director(s)
Contact Info: Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, 568-3436

SUBJECT: San Antonio Groundwater Basin Study, Third, Fourth and Fifth Supervisorial Districts

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

Recommended Actions:

- a) Approve and authorize the Chair to execute the Joint Funding Agreement #14WSCA600081610 with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to initiate a comprehensive five-year study (project period being November 1, 2014 through October 31, 2019) of the San Antonio Groundwater Basin in order to assess current and future water availability in the amount of \$778,928 for the first phase of the project in which \$673,950 to be funded by the County Water Agency, \$104,978 to be funded by the USGS; and
- b) Find that the San Antonio Groundwater Study is exempt under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, Section 15262; Feasibility and Planning Studies and Section 15306 (Class 6) Basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities, and direct the Clerk of the Board to file the attached CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Summary Text:

The San Antonio Groundwater Basin has been identified as a high priority study area by staff as groundwater serves as the sole source of water to meet the agricultural and municipal needs of the greater Los Alamos Valley, and augments State Water as part of Vandenberg Air Force Base's (VAFB) water supply. In addition, the County of Santa Barbara and all of California is in the midst of persistent drought and recent legislation requires groundwater basin management in many of the Counties groundwater basins. Therefore, staff is recommending a comprehensive study in cooperation with the

USGS since they have the most expertise and highest level of credibility in water resources science investigations. The study would be conducted over a five-year period as was the Cuyama Groundwater Basin Study, the report for which was received by the Board of Directors on September 9, 2014.

This study was previously brought before the Board of Directors on October 15, 2013. At that time the Board directed staff to conduct and report on additional stakeholder outreach. Therefore, meetings were held and presentations given at the following venues:

- Agricultural Advisory Committee* – February 5, 2014
- Cattlemen’s Association – May 14, 2014
- Los Alamos Public Meeting – July 10, 2014
- Farm Bureau – July 15, 2014
- Agricultural Advisory Committee* – August 6, 2014
- Agricultural Advisory Committee* – October 1, 2014
- Multiple informal meetings with the Cachuma Resource Conservation District (CRCD) Board of Directors

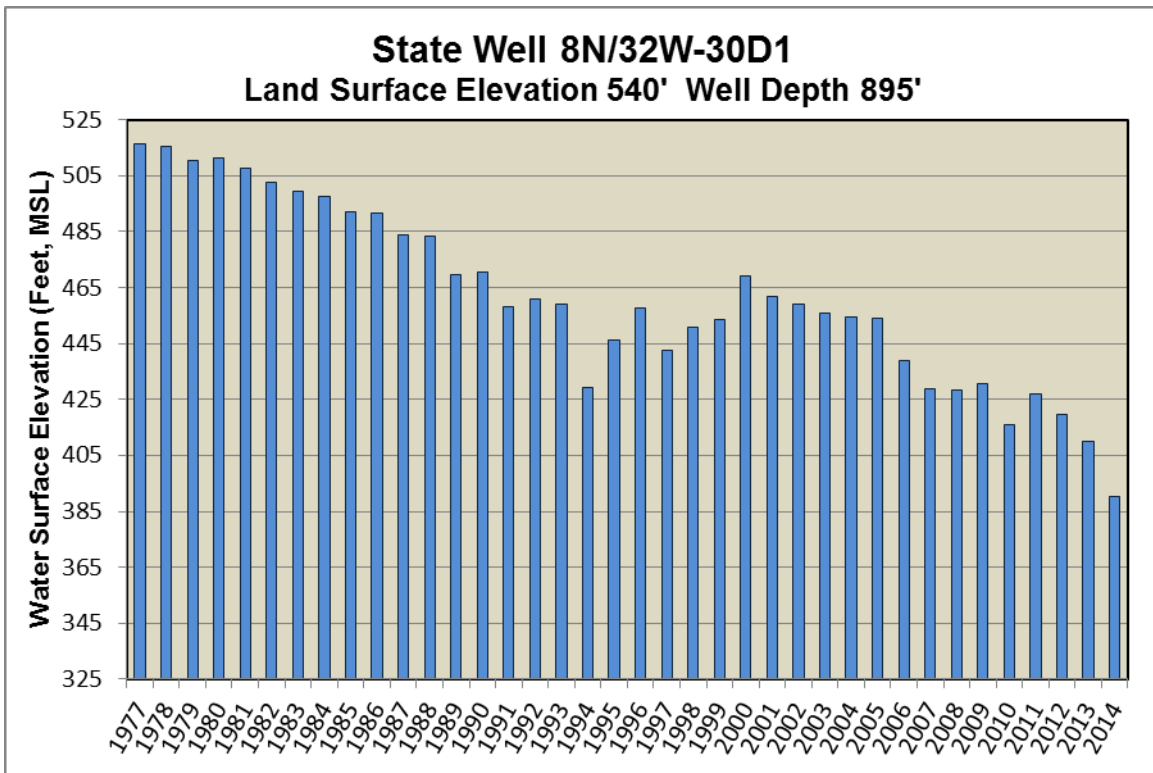
** Multiple meetings were held at the Agricultural Advisory Committee at the Committee’s request to update them on project development.*

At each venue, staff answered questions and solicited comments from those in attendance. The comments and concerns raised in these meetings are summarized below.

- 1) The study results may be used, either by the County, State, or other entity to impose additional regulation regarding groundwater extraction, monitoring, or use.
- 2) Data and information might be kept from the stakeholders so that conclusions and results could not be checked or monitored.
- 3) The study may lead to an outside entity banking water in the basin and local water will be lost with removal of the banked water.
- 4) Water projects such as recharge or supplemental water supplies should be pursued in lieu of a basin study.
- 5) The study will enable stakeholders to keep local control and is an essential component of complying with the new groundwater legislation.
- 6) When polled at the Public Meeting in Los Alamos, nobody was absolutely opposed to the study.
- 7) Cachuma Resource Conservation District (CRCD) involvement in the study would help to ameliorate some concerns and increase trust.
- 8) An “advisory committee” should be formed to keep stake holders informed and allow input regarding aspects of the study.
- 9) The study will help to evaluate the current and future impact of Vandenberg Air Force Base use of water from the Basin.

In regard to comments received, the study will include an advisory group composed of key stakeholders, data collected will be available to the advisory group and the public, and the CRCD will have a lead role in implementing the advisory committee and public meetings. The advisory group will be selected by staff in collaboration with Basin stakeholders and will include representatives from the major geographic areas and land uses of the Basin.

Significant changes in land use have occurred since the San Antonio Groundwater Basin was last comprehensively studied in the early 1980's. Specifically, much of the Uplands part of the Basin has been converted from livestock to grapes. Data has thus far been limited in the Uplands, but in areas there have been water level declines of over 50 feet since the early 1980's. This project is being conducted over a five-year period in order to allow adequate time to collect and analyze the necessary data. Along with periodic updates to Stakeholders and the Board of Directors, a final report will be published. The USGS has agreed to cost share for some elements of the project. Total cost to the Water Agency over the five year study period is estimated to be \$1,563,314 with a total project cost of \$2,514,813.



Well located W. of Los Alamos

Background:

The San Antonio Groundwater Basin lies about 15 miles south of the City of Santa Maria and 50 miles north of Santa Barbara in the central portion of Santa Barbara County. The surface water drainage of the watershed is about 154 square miles and the Groundwater Basin covers an area of about 128 square miles. The Valley is bounded on the north by the Casmalia Hills and Solomon Hills, on the south by the Purisima Hills and the Burton Mesa, and on the east and west by uplifted consolidated rocks. At the western end of the Groundwater Basin, about five miles east of the Pacific Ocean, consolidated rocks form a barrier to the seaward flow of water which creates upwelling of groundwater and the 660 acre marshland known as the Barka Slough. Land in the San Antonio Creek Valley is used primarily for agriculture. Historically, the Upland parts of the Valley have been used for dry farming or pastureland and the flatlands along the streams for irrigated farming. Since 1980, however, large sections of formerly non-irrigated pastureland in the Upland parts of the Valley have been converted to irrigated

vineyards. The western quarter of the Valley is owned by VAFB and they have agreed to participate in the project with a discrete level of funding and interaction.

Due to the fact that groundwater serves as the sole source of water for this basin, concerns raised by Valley constituents and water managers, and the importance of groundwater to both VAFB and Valley agriculture, the Water Agency proposes to work with the USGS and VAFB to complete a thorough and detailed analysis of current and future water availability for the basin.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Fiscal Analysis:

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total 5-year Project Cost</u>
Federal USGS	\$ 104,978.00		\$ 418,325.00
Water Agency	\$ 673,950.00		\$ 1,563,314.00
VAFB	\$ 150,113.00		\$ 533,174.00
Total	\$ 929,041.00	\$ -	\$ 2,514,813.00

Narrative:

The project is included in the Adopted 2013-2014 Budget under the Water Agency cost center of the Water Resources Division of the Public Works Department as shown on page D-226. No General Fund monies will be utilized for this project.

This current fiscal year costs are estimated at \$673,950 and are estimated to drop to \$462,479 next fiscal year as described in the proposed FY 14-15 budget. This project will be conducted over a five-year period with a total estimated cost of \$1,563,314 to the Water Agency. The USGS is providing a cost share of specific project costs. The USGS will be the lead on the project and Water Agency staff will assist as needed. Under a separate contract VAFB has entered into agreement directly with the USGS as both are federal agencies.

The scope and detail of this project may change over time to reflect changes in funding. Staff anticipates returning to the Board annually with an update and amendment adjusting scope and cost for each fiscal year. The culmination of this project will be a detailed report and fact sheet on current and future water availability in the San Antonio Groundwater Basin under current and future cultural and climatic scenarios. When complete the final report will be brought back to the Board to receive and file.

Special Instructions:

Direct the Clerk of the Board to post the attached CEQA Notice of Exemption and to return two originals of the agreement along with a copy of the NOE and minute order of these actions to the Water Agency office, Attn: Christina Lopez.

Attachments:

Contract Summary

Joint Funding Agreement #14WSCA600081610 (3 originals)

Notice of CEQA Notice of Exemption

Authored by: Matt Naftaly, Water Agency Manager, 568-3542