

# Solano Subbasin Virtual Town Hall: Implementation and Funding May 3, 2022 Meeting Summary



Held virtually via zoom from 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm Pacific

## Virtual Town Hall Objectives

1. Describe funding needed for implementation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and share information about the approach to establishing charges
2. Provide updates on GSP implementation and highlight ways to get involved

## Virtual Town Hall Agenda

View the Town Hall agenda [here](#) and the video recording [here](#).

## Summary of Participation: Number of Participants

Number of registrations: 98

Total participants: 75

Participants from the general public: 65

Solano Subbasin Project Team and translation teams: 10

## Outreach Summary

The Solano Subbasin Virtual Town Hall was announced in a number of ways to raise awareness of the event and encourage participation by community members. A newsletter and an e-blast went out to a listserv of 1,026 members. The Solano and Dixon Resource Conservation Districts assisted with outreach through social media and e-blasts to 600+ members of the irrigated lands regulatory program. Event flyers and an outreach message were provided to the GSA Collaborative agencies for distribution to their networks. Online advertisements were placed in The Daily Democrat, The Reporter, and The Rio Vista Beacon.

## Participant Poll Responses

Virtual Town Hall participants were asked to respond to three poll questions via Zoom. Polls were offered in both English and Spanish. The poll questions asked how participants heard about the Town Hall, what kind of water user they are, what organization they represented (if any), and whether they had seen, read, or commented on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

## Presentation Highlights

### Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Overview

Chris Lee, Solano County Water Agency and the Solano Groundwater Sustainability (GSA), welcomed participants on behalf of the Solano Subbasin GSA and the other GSAs who worked to develop the Solano Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan. The meeting was recorded and simulcast in Spanish.

Jenn Fox, Ag Innovations and the Solano Subbasin Community Engagement Team, thanked everyone for joining the call. She emphasized the importance of community involvement and invited those on the call to introduce themselves using the chat feature. Representatives of family farms, water districts, environmental organizations, and state agencies participated in the Virtual Town Hall. The meeting included presentations on funding requirements for implementation of the GSP, implementation updates and ways to stay involved. The meeting agenda includes significant time for a panel to answer participant questions.

Throughout the meeting, links to information were shared via the chat, including [SolanoGSP.com](http://SolanoGSP.com), and its subpages which provide information about the GSP.

## GSP Implementation Updates

Chris Lee acknowledged the efforts of the GSAs that make up the Solano GSP Collaborative: City of Vacaville, Sacramento County, Solano Irrigation District, Solano, and Northern Delta. Over the past five years, the groups and their respective Board members, have worked with stakeholders and community members to develop the Solano Subbasin GSP. Additionally, five Reclamation District GSAs have signed on to the GSP. The GSP describes strategies for protecting the groundwater resources in the Solano subbasin.

Chris Lee showed a timeline of GSP implementation activities. The study on charges is underway and will be presented to the Solano GSA Board on May 12th. Maintaining local control is vital. Without local control and funding, groundwater management decisions for the Solano Subbasin could be made by the Water Resources Control Board.

Implementation activities include monitoring and data management, outreach, reporting, regional coordination, and project and management actions.

## Solano Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Annual Report

Nick Watterson, Luhdorff & Scalmanini Consulting Engineers (LSCE), said that the first Annual Report was submitted to the Department of Water Resources on April 1, 2022. The Report summarizes groundwater conditions and implementation activities in the subbasin. The long-term trends in groundwater levels are generally stable. Nick also described that as a result of the current drought, groundwater levels are showing declines.

Nick noted that projects and management actions to support local groundwater sustainability are focusing on groundwater recharge. Grant funding is being pursued to develop multi-benefit projects that benefit habitat and groundwater supplies.

## California Governor's Executive Order

Chris Lee described the Governor's recent Executive Order N-7-22 which was one of a series of orders aimed at addressing the impacts of the drought. Section 9 requires well permitting agencies to obtain written verification from the GSAs that proposed new well locations are consistent with the GSP and are not likely to interfere with neighboring wells or local groundwater sustainability goals. Local agencies are working to draft policies to implement Section 9 of the Executive Order. The Solano GSA has recently approved emergency provisions for the replacement of wells that have stopped producing or have failed.

There is also a recently proposed California Assembly Bill 2201 which seeks to permanently establish these and other requirements for the permitting of wells.

## Paying for GSP Implementation

Section 9 of the GSP provided tables describing estimated costs to implement the GSP. An Engineer's Report is identifying administrative cost breakdowns for each GSA, with consideration to the specifics in each GSA area. Jacques DeBra, LSCE, explained that implementation occurs over a long period of time and requires stable funding.

Across the State, many GSAs are using a Prop 218 process to cover costs. The Engineer's Report describes different funding approaches, such as Prop 218 efforts, and will be presented to the Solano GSA Board on May 12. If a Prop 218 process is approved for the Solano GSA, a formal hearing will be scheduled, likely on July 14. Participants were reminded that today's meeting is not a public hearing. If charges are approved at the formal hearing, the charge would apply to the appropriate properties within the Solano GSA. Other GSAs have existing funding mechanisms.

An interactive map is being developed and will be posted on the [www.SolanoGSP.com](http://www.SolanoGSP.com) website which will help users identify their GSA. Also, [www.solanogsp.com/schedule/](http://www.solanogsp.com/schedule/) includes a link to a Fact Sheet about charges.

## Question and Answer Session

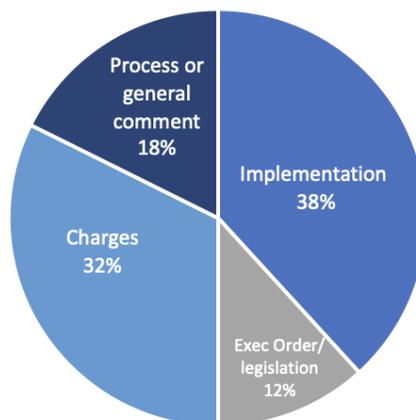
Meeting participants submitted questions through the Zoom Q & A feature. Some questions were responded to during the Virtual Town Hall discussion and others were responded to directly using the zoom function. Both sets of Questions and Answer responses are listed below in the "Next Steps" section.

### Virtual Town Hall Question and Answer Session

Throughout the meeting, participants were encouraged to offer questions and comments. Jenn Fox, Ag Innovations, and Solano Subbasin Community Engagement Team, moderated a question and answer session. This section includes a summary of answers provided live, followed by answers shared with all via the Zoom Question/Answer function.

During the question and answer session, 34 unique questions were submitted. Many questions were answered with a typed response. were responded to verbally. As shown in the figure below, just over a third of the questions were about implementation, about a third were about charges, and another third were either about the Executive Order/AB2201 or general comments. The variety of questions shows that there was a diversity of interests among participants.

Question and Answer Session Topics of Interest  
34 Unique Questions



The questions below are verbatim questions as typed by individual participants. The responses were provided verbally by panelists.

**Question:**

What are the sources of information used to determine extraction volumes in the Annual Report?

*A: A hydrologic model has been developed for the Solano Subbasin. Reported pumping values are entered into the model, along with an analysis of total water demand and total water supplies. The resulting net demand is assumed to come from groundwater pumping.*

**Question:**

If the basin is sustainable now, is there any idea of how many more wells the basin can handle and still be sustainable?

*A: This is a great question. It is difficult to forecast land-use changes in relation to the sustainable use of groundwater. We do think the basin is sustainable into the future. It's hard to know how many new wells could be supported and still maintain groundwater levels.*

**Question:**

Will fee rates be based on the actual amount of water being used?

*A: In other basins, annual implementation costs have been distributed over the related GSAs. Depending on how much groundwater is extracted, the GSAs contribute to implementation actions across that basin.*

**Question:**

Will voters need to approve this new charge?

*A: If a Prop 218 process is approved, landowners would be notified of the proposed charge at least 45 days before a Solano GSA public hearing where the charge itself would be approved. There is an opportunity to file a protest before the GSA Board takes action.*

**Question:**

How will improvement projects be funded?

*A: The long-term funding strategy proposes that Prop 218 charges will cover the costs for complying with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Funding for actual projects will come from other sources, such as grants.*

**Question:**

Why are additional housing developments being allowed to proceed in areas exclusively relying on groundwater (Dixon, Rio Vista)? Is there a plan in place to limit the number of homes built in SC and has the GSP taken that into consideration?

*A: Statewide, every city must show adequate water sources for any new housing. In terms of water supply, the basin is in good shape, although we do need to monitor this and ensure it continues.*

**Question:**

Will we be going back to in-person meetings soon?

*A: We'll be asking for your preferences through a feedback form, asking for your ideas about community involvement. Some of the GSA Boards are already holding in-person and hybrid meetings.*

**Question:**

On the topic of getting well?

*A: GSAs are looking to establish policies that reflect existing policies. There may be considerations about which areas need additional attention. The goal is to ensure that the review and approval process is not delayed and is consistent across the Solano Subbasin.*

**Question:**

Will the May 12 meeting have a webinar option?

*A: Yes, it will be a hybrid meeting. The zoom link is included in the [board packet](#). Please note that this is a Board meeting and not a public hearing.*

**Question:**

Will we hear more about possible recharge projects and how landowners be able to participate?

*A: Yes, we are planning a future newsletter on how people can be involved in recharge efforts. This is a priority for future projects.*

**Question:**

Is Solano GSA working with Yolo County GSA?

*A: Yes, Solano GSA has been working with neighboring basins and GSAs for several years. That coordination is now increasing. Solano GSA has considered extending its model into areas of Yolo County, to better understand groundwater conditions. Currently, we are looking at options to partner with Yolo County on monitoring efforts along Putah Creek.*

## Written Question and Answers

The questions below are verbatim questions as typed by individual participants. The responses were typed in by panelists and shared with all meeting participants.

**Question:**

Are you going to monitor our personal wells?

*A: We are seeking volunteer wells to round out our data-but we are not going to require each well owner at this time to provide well data.*

**Question:**

Are you saying that no groundwater level data is not available until your proposed water level data collection?

*A: No, we have a lot of data. But there are areas within the subbasin where we would like to obtain additional data.*

**Question:**

Are there any restrictions on golf course irrigation?

*A: We are not at the point of restricting groundwater extraction within the subbasin.*

**Question:**

Will this plan affect SID AG water?

*A: SID GSA has participated in this process since the beginning. We don't see any restrictions on surface water or groundwater at this time but need to manage both sustainably.*

**Question:**

Where was that station that monitored precipitation? You can have huge fluctuations throughout the county.

*A: The station we are presenting precipitation data for in that chart is from the Davis station, which has a lengthy historical record, but we are also tracking precip at other stations in and around the Subbasin.*

**Question:**

Please explain how you know what the level of extraction was over time - what is the data source?

*A: The groundwater extractions in the annual report were based on a combination of metered pumping for urban pumping and some ag pumping, but largely from estimates of groundwater pumping using modeling that estimates water demands based on land use/cropping data and water inputs including precipitation and surface water deliveries.*

**Question:**

Will Solano County issue permits for groundwater test borings today?

*A: We are still waiting to develop a policy to make sure both the GSAs and Solano County are compliant with the Executive Order. We are hoping to have something in place soon.*

**Question:**

Davis is the lowest area of precipitation compared to the western edge (mix canyon, pleasants valley area).

Seems unrealistic to use the furthest east point in the GSA, very swaying to results.

*A: The use of Davis in this graphic is for illustrating the long-term precipitation trends in the area. When estimating water budget components in hydrologic analyses of the Subbasin, we are using additional data sources as well, which capture variability in precipitation that can occur.*

**Question:**

Has the Solano GSA come up with any guidelines yet about what they will allow when it comes to New wells?

*A: We are still talking with Solano County to develop the policies and guidelines.*

**Question:**

What are yearly costs right now, since you are tiptoeing around what we will have to pay?

*A: The Solano GSA will be reviewing the study next week and we hopefully will have answers to share with everyone then.*

**Question:**

Will there be a carve-out for domestic water wells only?

*A: The Solano GSA Board will be discussing many alternatives. There may be a process for the first year to make sure we are compliant and then a more thorough look in the following years.*

**Question:**

Does Solano GSA have a list of all the assessable parcels? What about wells that you may not have in the list?

*A: We do have a list of all the parcels.*

**Question:**

So would that mean that only property owners pay for the GSA charges?

*A: We are looking at all options.*

**Question:**

What was that state assembly bill number again Chris?

*A: AB 2201 is the assembly bill Chris mentioned when talking about the well permitting executive order.*

**Question:**

Will residents of say Rio Vista who get their water from Rio Vista be charged a fee?

*A: Very likely both residents of the Cities of Rio Vista and Dixon will be paying some charge.*

**Question:**

Will the cities of Vacaville, Dixon, and Rio Vista (all GE users for domestic use) be required to pay some type of fee, or is this only for farmers and residential well users?

*A: The answer will very likely be yes. The methodology for the Solano GSA has yet to be determined.*

**Question:**

These new fees, how might they affect Drilling contractors?

*A: I don't believe the fees being discussed would affect drilling contractors directly, unless they are landowners within the Solano GSA.*

**Question:**

Is the GSA meeting on May 12 via Zoom for all to participate?

*A: It is a hybrid meeting-there will be a zoom link posted on the SCWA2.com website.*

**Question:**

Is the list of parcels on the GSA website? Or do I need to make a request for it?

*A: No it is not, we will be respecting private information.*

**Question:**

What might an ag landowner expect to pay via annual property taxes? \$5/acre? \$50? Other?

*A: live answered (See answer above)*

**Question:**

Will fee rates be based on the actual amount of water being used?

*A: live answered (See answer above)*

**Question:**

If the basin is sustainable now, is there any idea of how many more wells the basin can handle and still be sustainable?

*A: live answered (See answer above)*

**Question:**

Will we be going back to in-person meetings soon?

*A: The Solano GSA is back in person meetings with a zoom link also available.*

**Question:**

Why are additional housing developments being allowed to proceed in areas exclusively relying on groundwater (Dixon, Rio Vista)?

*A: live answered (See answer above)*

**Question:**

How is the cost-sharing divided amongst the various entities in the GSA?

*A: Currently, a cost allocation approach being considered is based on the proportion of the total groundwater use for the entire Subbasin that is allocated to each GSA.*

**Question:**

Are there any considerations for diverting water from the Sacramento River to recharge the groundwater?

*A: There have been discussions of potential projects involving the diversion of Sacramento River water for use in recharge. The focus on enhanced recharge in the Subbasin is currently in the more northern parts of the Subbasin. Promoting recharge of rainfall or stormwater from westside streams appears to be more feasible for achieving these objectives.*

**Question:**

Is the fee/tax plan intended to fund improvement projects or will improvement projects only be funded by grants?

*A: No, this is only for GSP actions to be compliant with SGMA. Projects would be funded separately and only in the areas that benefit from such a project.  
live answered*

**Question:**

Is there a plan in place to limit the number of homes built in SC and has the GSP taken that into consideration?

*A: Live answer (See answer above)*

**Question:**

Every city in California is required by law to show they have adequate water to meet any new housing units.

*A: Yes, that's right.*

**Question:**

Are you working with other GSAs that you border?

*A: It's interesting how most GSA's follow county borders. There are 10 GSAs involved in the Solano Subbasin.*

**Question:**

Since our basin is in such great (sustainable) shape why don't we up our hand and commit to ADDING 5 - 15 TAF/year to our groundwater storage. By 2070 we'd have an additional 250 - 750 TAF stored away for future generations. Is there the will to do this - or are we comfortable with our sustainability?

*A: Recharge opportunities are being actively explored. More information will be provided in the Subbasin newsletter as it comes available.*

**Question:**

I would really like to see a graph of average Solano County water levels over the last years.

*A: We don't have a graph that presents average water levels over time in the Subbasin, but there are many different graphs of water levels in the Subbasin in both the GSP and in the annual report. There are also graphs of changes in storage that correspond with changes in water levels.*

**Question:**

Is Solano GSA working with Yolo county GSA at all?

*A: Yes, we have had a lot of meetings with Yolo GSA.*

**Question:**

I know from my own experience that our water levels have dropped substantially like 50 ' or more over the last 5 years or so.

*A: It would be very helpful to know what part of the subbasin this is in?*

*We are just south of Putah creek on Gaddini Road*

## Next Steps and Ways to Stay Involved

In closing, Chris Lee extended his appreciation for those who have been involved throughout the last several years and for those who are becoming involved now. All comments are taken to heart. He encouraged everyone to visit the [SolanoGSP.org](https://solanogsp.org) website, where there is information on GSA meetings, signing up for the GSP newsletter, the Water Guide, upcoming events, and Frequently Asked Questions.

- A survey link was shared with Virtual Town Hall participants to provide feedback on this meeting
- Attend GSA Board Meetings
- Visit [solanogsp.com](https://solanogsp.com), join the Solano GSP newsletter list, and stay engaged
- Review the GSP at: <https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/preview/117>
- For more questions about outreach, contact [Guadalupe@aginnovations.org](mailto:Guadalupe@aginnovations.org)
- Visit <https://groundwaterguide.com/> which also includes information in Spanish.