County of Monterey

Item No.3

Board Report

Board of Supervisors Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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Update on staff's participation in the Sainas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Advisory Committee. (Staff Presenting: Shaunna Murray)

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

Background

The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) has an Advisory Committee which plays a key role in shaping groundwater management in the Salinas Valley by providing input and consensus-based recommendations to the SVBGSA Board of Directors. The Advisory Committee reflects a broad range of perspectives, representing agencies and groundwater users across the region. Members collaborate to support the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act through the integrated execution of six Groundwater Sustainability Plans. The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) has a seat on the Advisory Committee and will provide periodic updates to the Agency BOD as it affects or is of interest to the Agency.

Summary

Staff participated in the Advisory Committee's special meeting held on July 16, 2026.

The goal of this meeting was to have the Advisory Committee reach consensus on a Portfolio of projects to recommend for consideration at the full SVBGSA Board of Directors. There was little new information presented and more of a deliberation on all the information that had been presented over the last six months. Agenda Item 3.3 was Integrated Implementation Strategy PMA Final Portfolios. Recommendation: Recommend to the Board of Directors a preferred Integrated Implementation Strategy (IIS) portfolio of Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) selected from among Portfolio 1, Portfolio 3A, and Portfolio 4 - together with a list of considerations to guide the preferred portfolio's refinement and implementation.

SVBGSA consultants reviewed the Portfolios by describing the activities and modeling results related to how they reached the Sustainable Management Criteria by both 2040 and beyond. The three Portfolios are described below.

Portfolio 1 - Medium BGRP, Injection Only: A medium-sized Brackish Groundwater Recharge Project (BGRP) delivering water for injection into the 180 and 400-Foot Aquifers, paired with C&E recharge basins in the Eastside (100 cfs diversion), CSIP optimization, and 10% agricultural demand management in the North Valley. It has the highest portfolio yield (approximately 56,000 AF/year) and is the only portfolio that fully addresses seawater intrusion to the current minimum threshold. It also carries the highest cost.

Portfolio 3A Small BGRP with Direct Delivery and Injection: A smaller BGRP with partial direct delivery to Salinas and partial injection, paired with C&E recharge basins in the Eastside (100 cfs), CSIP optimization, and 10% agricultural demand management. Yield is approximately 37,700 AF/year. It addresses seawater intrusion nearly - but not fully to - the current minimum threshold and does not address Monterey Subbasin seawater intrusion, so it requires mitigation activities. Cost is lower than Portfolio 1.

Portfolio 4 - Low-Cost Projects: C&E recharge basins (50 cfs) and C&E injection into the 400-Foot Aquifer (50 cfs diversion), CSIP optimization, and 20% agricultural demand management - double the demand-management level of the other portfolios. Yield is approximately 10,200 AF/year. It is the lowest-cost portfolio and performs well on 180-Foot and 400-Foot groundwater levels, but it does not address seawater intrusion.

The Advisory Committee was able to reach consensus that Portfolio 1 was not supported by the members. There were various reasons for this including a better understanding of how this scale of injection would work in the pressure zone, localized impacts of the project that actually increase salinity levels in the groundwater basin, and better idea of what Demand Management would look like. The Committee was split on whether Portfolio 3A or 4 was best suited to be the foundation for additional investigation, planning and project development. The BGRP continued to cause concern for many of the members but the lack of effectiveness of the PMAs in Portfolio 4 made it difficult to support for many members. Therefore, the Committee landed on recommending that both Portfolios be evaluated going forward.

The Committee then identified numerous considerations that described data gaps and investigations that would be important to further develop before making a decision on PMAs or Portfolios. Those contingencies addressed the concerns described above as well as considering source water options for all projects, defining contingency projects for DWR's consideration, permitting feasibility, downsizing projects, and moving the time it takes to reach the Minimum Threshold. Both the cost of the Portfolios as well as the cost allocation throughout the Salinas Valley continue to be a significant concern for all parties. The final list of the considerations will be drafted by the SVBGSA staff and presented to their Board of Directors in August.

Additional information related to the Advisory Committee can be found on the SVBGSA's website: <https://svbgsa.org/about-us/board-and-committees/advisory-committee/>

The Advisory Committee has the next regular meeting scheduled for August 20, 2026.

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