



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

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

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March 07, 2025

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Matter Type: WRA Finance Item

- a. Consider receiving a draft of the Groundwater Monitoring Program Fee Study; and,
- b. Provide feedback to staff as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Finance Committee:

- a. Receive a draft of the Groundwater Monitoring Program Fee Study; and,
- b. Provide feedback to staff as appropriate.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

In October 2024, the Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (“Agency”) passed and adopted Agency Ordinance Number 5426 (“Ord. No. 5426”) which repealed Ordinance Numbers 3660, 3717, and 3718; adopted updated Agency regulations requiring well owners to register wells with the Agency and periodically report well extraction data; affirmed Agency requirements for groundwater level and quality monitoring; allowed the Agency to enter into groundwater management support service agreements with requesting entities; provided for Agency collection of a regulatory fee to be set by resolution of the Agency Board of Supervisors; provided for a variance process; and established penalties for violations (Attachment 1).

At the same time, the Agency Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 20-348 to approve and implement the Agency’s Groundwater Monitoring Program Manual which accompanies Ord. No. 5426 and sets forth specific requirements for the Groundwater Monitoring Program (“GMP”), which comprises the well registration, groundwater extraction reporting, groundwater level monitoring, and groundwater quality monitoring programs (Attachment 2).

The GMP is used to produce the data necessary to understand the hydrologic budget of the monitored area, facilitate implementation of the Agency Act, inform operations of Agency projects, and support resource management that allows for continued well owner operations throughout the community. Historically, the Agency implemented the GMP across Zones 2, 2A, and 2B in a discretionary manner as funding allowed. However, with passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (“SGMA”) in 2014 came the establishment of local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (“GSAs”) and a need for consistent, reliable collection of groundwater and well data, like that collected by the GMP. In the interest of improving operational efficiency and reducing costs, some local GSAs have chosen to leverage the data collection, analysis, management, and reporting expertise captured by the Agency’s GMP rather than creating a separate, parallel, monitoring program. As such, the geographic extent of the GMP is expanding to cover most of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin and collection

of the GMP data is now required to support GSAs and their need to meet SGMA regulatory obligations.

In June 2024, the Agency engaged Lechowicz & Tseng Municipal Consultants to prepare a fee study to establish a schedule of cost-based fees for the GMP, a draft of which is included as Attachment 3. The purpose of the draft study is to establish a schedule of cost-based fees for the regulatory functions covered by the GMP based on the reasonable staff time, materials, and equipment needed to provide the services.

The Agency intends to hold a public workshop on the draft GMP fee study in early April 2025 to capture and consider comments, in preparation for presentation of a final GMP fee study to the Agency's Board of Directors in April 2025. Ultimately, the goal is to have the GMP regulatory fee adopted as part of the Agency's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 ("FY26") budget through a recommendation from the Agency's Board of Directors and approval by the Agency's Board of Supervisors.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The County Counsel Office has provided review of the draft GMP Fee Study.

FINANCING:

Funding for completion of the GMP Fee Study is provided through a Subgrant Agreement between the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency and the Agency, related to a Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Round 1 Implementation Grant (Number 4600014638).

If approved as presented in the draft GMP fee study, the proposed FY26 fee would result in approximately \$812,000 in cost recovery, which would be included in the Agency's FY26 budget.

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Attachments:

1. Agency Ordinance No. 5426
2. Resolution No. 20-348
3. Draft GMP Fee Study