



Monterey County

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Board Report

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Consider receiving a report on final recommendations from the Ninety-Day Working Group to address seawater intrusion in the coastal Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin; and, provide direction to Staff regarding implementation of the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey, Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, and Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Directors:

- a. Receive a report on final recommendations from the Ninety-Day Working Group to address seawater intrusion in the coastal Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin; and
- b. Provide direction to Staff regarding implementation of the recommendations.

SUMMARY:

In October 2017, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Agency) released a report titled *Recommendations to Address the Expansion of Seawater Intrusion in the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin* (Report). On December 12, 2017, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey and Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Board) directed County and Agency staff to coordinate with the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) and report back to the Board with a strategy for implementation of these, or other, recommendations at forty-five and ninety day intervals.

In response, the Ninety-Day Working Group (Working Group) was formed, a nine-member group which includes staff from the County (Health Department) and Agency, and staff and Board members from the SVBGSA. The Working Group also includes a facilitator from the Consensus Building Institute. The Working Group has met six times between January 11 and April 5, 2018 to consider the recommendations in the Report and formulate the recommendations presented herein.

The Working Group's preliminary recommendations were presented at a number of public meetings and to stakeholder groups during the development process, including the: Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey; Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency; Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board of Directors; Advisory Committee to the SVBGSA; Water Quality and Operations Committee; Monterey County Planning Commission; Monterey County Farm Bureau Joint Water Committee; and Grower-Shipper Association of Central California.

Based on feedback received during public meetings and through discussion with stakeholders, the Working Group has continually refined its recommendations, resulting in those presented in this report.

The recommendations were conceptualized as a comprehensive solution intended to protect public health and drinking water quality; give consideration to and preserve agricultural production and economics; and act immediately to reduce the effects of and slow further advancement of seawater intrusion, bearing in mind the imminent development and implementation of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

The Working Group requests that the Board receive these final recommendations and provide direction as to implementation of the recommendations.

DISCUSSION:

The Working Group used the recommendations in the Report as a starting point and made refinements to content and to acknowledge that there are multiple time frames over which the recommendations may apply, including the short term (within the next two years), the mid-term (two to four years), and the long term (up to twenty years). Development of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by the SVBGSA will occur within two to four years.

Many of the recommendations reference the term “replacement well.” This term is also used in multiple policies from the 2010 Monterey County General Plan, but a definition for “replacement well” is not included in the glossary of the 2010 General Plan. The Working Group is proposing a definition for “replacement well” that the Board could consider implementing along with the recommendations (Attachment 1).

Following are the recommendations from the Working Group, organized by prioritization and time frame for implementation. These are also summarized on Attachment 2.

- **Short Term** - intended to begin immediately
 1. Identify funding for and, within 90 to 180 days, initiate destruction of the eight (8) wells within Agency Zone 2B that are identified in the Report as “urgent” priority.
 2. Finalize the extent of the Area of Impact (Attachment 3).
- **Short to Mid-Term** - beginning immediately and continuing at least through 2020
 3. Prioritize data collection, processing, and analysis of water quality data so that timely reports on the extent of seawater intrusion are made available by the Water Resources Agency.
 4. An immediate moratorium on new wells within the 180-Foot and 400-Foot Aquifers of the 180/400 Foot Aquifer Subbasin within an identified Area of Impact. Consider allowing only for construction of replacement wells in these aquifers within the Area of Impact.
 - a. Domestic and municipal water supply wells should be exempt from this replacement well requirement.

5. Until the completion of an investigation of the Deep Aquifers or implementation of the GSP, whichever occurs first, minimize the construction of wells in the entirety of Deep Aquifers. Consider allowing only for construction of replacement wells.
 - a. The Deep Aquifers will be defined on the basis of depositional environment.
 - b. Require the destruction of the existing well that is being replaced by a replacement well in the Deep Aquifers.
 - c. Domestic and municipal water supply wells should be exempt from this replacement well requirement.
 6. Require well owners to meter groundwater extractions and monitor groundwater levels and quality in all existing and replacement wells in the Deep Aquifers, and submit all data to the Agency, SVBGSA, and/or other identified agency.
 7. Initiate and diligently proceed with an investigation to determine the long-term viability of the Deep Aquifers.
 8. Develop a County program to incentivize the destruction of abandoned wells, especially within the Area of Impact.
 9. Initiate and diligently proceed with optimization and enhancement of the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) to minimize undesirable impacts to drinking water, while simultaneously developing an annexation plan for the expansion of the CSIP Service Area.
 - a. The annexation plan should prioritize expansion into areas nearest the actively advancing seawater intrusion front, to the extent practicable.
- **Mid- to Long-Term** - beginning in late 2018 and potentially continuing past 2020
10. Rigorously pursue the destruction of the remaining 134 wells within Monterey County Water Resources Agency Zone 2B that are identified in the Report and are part of Ordinance 3790.
 11. Expansion of the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) Service Area in accordance with the annexation Plan.
 12. Following expansion of the CSIP Service Area, termination of all pumping from existing wells in the 180- or 400-Foot Aquifers within the Area of Impact, with exemptions for domestic and municipal water supply wells, CSIP supplemental wells, and monitoring wells.

The Working Group discussed the application of these recommendations to all types of wells within the Area of Impact, but acknowledges that existing General Plans and land use policies will supersede any attempts to restrict new domestic or municipal water wells. Recognizing this, the Working Group suggests that land use policy changes be considered in the future, as well as near-term implementation

of incentives for all water users to reduce groundwater pumping and increase irrigation efficiencies.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Monterey County Health Department; Monterey County Water Resources Agency; Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

FINANCING:

There is no financial impact for receiving this status report from the Working Group. The financial impacts of funding any actions directed by the Board as a result of the Working Group's recommendations would be addressed in connection with the consideration of those actions.

The Working Group recommends that the Board consider the use of \$1,000,000 in emergency funds to enable the Monterey County Water Resources Agency to initiate destruction of the eight (8) wells within Agency Zone 2B that are identified in the Report as "urgent" priority, which will cost an estimated \$400,000. The remainder of the emergency funds would be used to continue destruction of the remaining wells identified under Ordinance 3790 until Proposition 1 grant funding is received.

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Attachments:

1. Replacement well definition
2. Matrix of Recommendations by Timeline
3. Map of Area of Impact