



County of Monterey

Item No.16

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
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Staff update on the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Advisory Committee meetings in April. (Staff: Shaunna Murray)

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

The Board of Directors receives monthly updates on the status of Agency on staff's participation in the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency's Advisory Committee.

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 regular meeting held on April 16, 2026, and the special meeting held on April 29, 2026.

The significant topics at the April 16th meeting were the Integrated Implementation Strategy Process Roadmap, the Baseline and No Action Alternative Simulation, Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Feasibility Study Overview, and the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) Optimization Overview.

The Integrated Implementation Strategy (IIS) Process Roadmap reiterated the roles that the 6 subbasin committees have played and the current efforts of the Advisory Committee to get to a consensus-based recommendation for the SVBGSA Board of Directors. Now that the various feasibility studies have been completed, SVBGSA staff and consultants are currently developing portfolios that bring the various Project and Management Actions (PMAs) together to meet SGMA's Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC). These individual feasibility studies are being presented in numerous meetings, including this one, and portfolios will be forthcoming. The selection of PMAs are needed in October/November, and possibly sooner to meet the Department of Water Resources deadlines. There was a discussion about moving the Minimum Thresholds (MTs), which are the target for the PMAs to reach by 2040. It was clarified that action is outside of the Advisory Committee's

scope and to stay focused on recommending the PMAs to the Board.

Next was the Baseline and No Action Alternative Simulation. The Baseline is the status quo and the modeling results for all PMAs are evaluated against this simulation. The progression of SWI was modeled in 10-year time increments through 2070. In contrast, the No Action Alternative assumes no project implementation, no laws are violated and attempts to achieve the MT for SWI by 2040 using only pumping reductions. This is also referred to as Demand Management. They ran 6 scenarios but none of those achieve the MT by 2040. Additionally, the regional economic effects of agricultural pumping limits were evaluated resulting in a \$1.845 Billion to \$2.781 Billion reduction on annual economic output (based on 30-50% pumping reductions, respectively).

SVBGSA staff presented the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Feasibility Study Overview. The ASR project addresses SWI in the 180/400-Foot Aquifer Subbasin by maximizing surface water diversion, injecting treated surface water to raise groundwater elevations, and reducing pumping. There were multiple scenarios developed that utilize stored reservoir water or winter flows to provide to CSIP. Multiple challenges with the current infrastructure and permitting were discovered and the projects did not stop SWI. An IIS Scorecard was developed to summarize the key criteria to evaluate each PMAs. Those criteria are: Effectiveness of meeting SWI and groundwater level MTs; Geographic reach; Timeline to SMCs; Reliability; Total Cost; and Adaptability/Scalability. The ASR project received mostly low scores on the IIS Scorecard.

Finally, Agency staff presented the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) Optimization Overview. The CSIP Optimization project addresses seawater intrusion (SWI) in the 180/400-Foot Aquifer Subbasin by enhancing water production from recycled sources and conveyance through the CSIP Distribution System via several upgrades that remedy conveyance limitations and distribution reductions. There are three Capital Improvement Projects that resulted from this study. Additional evaluation of this PMA is needed before the IIS Scorecard can be completed. That will be shared in a future agenda packet.

The significant topics at the April 29th meeting were the Brackish Groundwater Restoration (BGR) Feasibility Study Overview, Castroville & Eastside Canals and Alternatives (C&E) Feasibility Study Overview, New Seawater Intrusion Project (NSIP) Feasibility Study Overview, and the Integrated Implementation Strategy Portfolios Concept Overview.

The Brackish Groundwater Restoration Project (BGRP) installs a row of wells parallel to the coast to extract brackish water, treats it, and injects treated water into the 180 and 400-foot aquifers inland of the SWI front. The BGRP Injection Only was the preferred scenario selected by Board in October 2025. This scenario allows for existing agricultural and domestic wells to continue operating but does not include any direct delivery of treated water. BGRP Injection Only meets SWI MT and reduces chloride concentrations. The BGRP received mostly medium and high scores on the IIS Scorecard.

The Castroville & Eastside Canals and Alternatives (C&E) Project primarily uses MCWRA's Water Right Permit 11043, to divert Salinas River water, to address four groundwater sustainability goals: raise groundwater levels in the central and/or southern Eastside and 180/400 Subbasins; raise groundwater levels in the northern Eastside Subbasin; slow or halt SWI

in the coastal aquifers; support groundwater recovery in the Deep Aquifers and seawater intruded area. The study found that diversion of Salinas River water, when paired with storage and recharge or injection, can meaningfully contribute to SGMA groundwater goals, but that no single project concept is sufficient on its own to fully resolve all groundwater challenges. The Eastside Recharge Basins provides the most cost effective and geographically widespread groundwater benefits. The C&E Project received mostly low and medium scores on the IIS Scorecard.

The New Seawater Intrusion Project (NSIP) proposes to serve existing agricultural users outside of the existing CSIP system and west of the City of Salinas to offset dependence on groundwater supplies. The source water supply portfolio includes numerous surface and recycled waters, in close proximity to the use area, which would be treated and stored or directly delivered, in the 180/400-Foot Aquifer Subbasin. The study found that available source supply is variable due to hydrologic conditions but that the Maximum NSIP scenario could be served in most years. Although the modeling showed groundwater levels rising in some areas, the SWI MT would not be met by 2040. The NSIP received mostly medium scores on the IIS Scorecard.

Staff then described the Integrated Implementation Strategy Portfolios Concept. No single project meets the SMCs in all four subbasins and therefore a portfolio of projects will be needed to meet them comprehensively. Staff are working on developing two portfolios, one that will be representative of a bare minimum approach and the other that covers all SMCs in the four subbasins. These will be presented to the Advisory Committee on May 15th for discussion as well as thoughts on additional portfolios in the future.

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/>](https://svbgsa.org/about-us/board-and-committees/advisory-committee/)

The Advisory Committee has a special meeting tentatively scheduled for May 15, 2026 and the next regular meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2026.

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