

Board Meeting Recap: Spring 2022

Water Year 2021 Annual Report shows stable groundwater levels

[Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency](#) (SMGWA) has held three board of directors meetings in recent months: Feb. 24, March 24 and April 28. Meetings used both remote-only and hybrid formats.

At the February meeting, the Board established an agency policy for issuing letters of support or comments and reviewed the proposed new cost share allocation for the agency.

At the March meeting, the Board received its first Santa Margarita Basin (SMB) Annual Report, which summarizes groundwater extractions, overall water use, groundwater conditions and progress toward achieving sustainability for the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin. The report, a state requirement that must be met annually, is for Water Year 2021 (WY2021), Oct. 1, 2020-Sept. 30, 2021. The report stated that WY2021 was a critically dry year for the SMB, with lower precipitation than any year since 1947. Rainfall is the primary source of natural groundwater recharge. Dry conditions reduce the amount of recharge, negatively impacting groundwater levels and baseflows for streams during dry months. Despite the critically dry conditions, groundwater levels remained generally stable in the SMB.

WY2021 is the first year that SMGWA has assessed groundwater conditions relative to sustainable management criteria established in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), which SMGWA completed and adopted in 2021. The [GSP](#) guides long-term management of SMGB to ensure a reliable and resilient water supply for community needs and the environment, and has been submitted to the state Department of Water Resources for review and approval. Groundwater conditions in WY2021 generally meet the Basin's sustainability goals, except for the Mount Hermon-Pasatiempo-South Scotts Valley area where the Santa Margarita and Lompico aquifers showed declines in groundwater levels and reduced groundwater in storage.

Also at the March meeting, the Board appointed Director Edan Cassidy, who represents private well owners, to the County's Drought Response Working Group. The Working Group is tasked with developing a plan that includes potential drought and water shortage risk analysis as well as proposed interim and long-term solutions for small water systems and domestic wells in Santa Cruz County.

At the April meeting, the board approved a surface water monitoring contract with Balance Hydrologics and received the Fiscal Year 2023 draft budget. It also reviewed and provided input for the scope of work and budget for administrative and planning services, and the proposed project activities in near term GSP implementation approach.

The next SMGWA board will be on Thursday, May. 26 at 6 p.m. To learn more about the Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency and upcoming events, visit our website at www.smgwa.org.



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