



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission (Commission) during 2009. This year, the financial crisis of the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) continued to occupy a large portion of the Commission discussions. The Commission also spent a significant amount of time on the county's water resource management efforts, the status of ongoing Prop 50 funded water resource projects, public outreach on water resource related issues, the proposed desalination plant, the Bonny Doon Quarry EIR, drought-driven water restrictions, and potential impacts to the county water resources from climate change. To better understand the impact on water resources from climate change, the Commission has been coordinating information exchange with the County Commission on the Environment (COE). The Commission invited numerous guest speakers to address the Commission on water related topics in their areas of expertise. This report describes organizational activities, additional significant items discussed, and other activities of the Commission in 2009.

ROLES OF THE WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

The Commission was established in 1975 to serve as a policy advisory body to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on issues relating to the use and protection of the county's water resources. The roles of the Commission, as outlined in its bylaws are as follows:

1. Advise the Board on all policy issues impacting water resources in Santa Cruz County, including but not limited to the following categories:
 - a. Water quality and conservation.
 - b. Water supply development, storage and distribution.
 - c. Forestry and watershed management.
 - d. Preservation of fish, wildlife, and riparian habitat.
 - e. Groundwater extraction.
 - f. On-site sewage disposal systems.
 - g. Recreation.
 - h. Water reclamation.
 - i. Public health and safety.
 - j. Monterey Bay preservation.
 - k. Local agency water management plans.
 - l. Water resource development proposals.
 - m. Santa Cruz County Water Master Plan/General Plan.
 - n. County ordinances, and departmental policies and regulations.

2. Staffing, funding, and other resources available to the Commission necessarily limit the duties and responsibilities outlined above. Therefore, the Commission will utilize discretion in devoting time to those activities that are most important to achieving its overall goal of enhancing and preserving Santa Cruz County water resources. County departments (Planning, Environmental Health Services (EHS), and Public Works (DPW)) will assist the Commission in its work, by including the Commission in water related correspondence, and by having staff provide timely oral reports on pending issues.

MEETING DATES, TIME AND LOCATION

Meetings are held at 4:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each active month in the County Governmental Center at 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (January and July are considered inactive months). This year the Commission meeting location was moved to the fifth floor Redevelopment Agency conference room). Agendas are posted at least five days in advance of meetings, and are distributed to all Board members, local water districts, AMBAG, interested persons and the press. Agendas and attachments are posted on the County website:

http://sccounty01.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/eh/Water_Resources/WAC_home.htm

COMMISSION STRUCTURE

The Commission consists of seven members, five of whom are concerned citizens appointed by individual supervisors and two that are appointed at-large. The two at-large positions represent public water purveyors and private or mutual water companies in the county. For 2009, Raymundo (Ray) Pereyra served as the Commission Chair and Matt Johnston served as Vice-Chair. In April 2009 Ned Spencer replaced long-time representative from the 1st District, David Reetz.

Membership during 2009 was as follows:

- 1st District: Ned Spencer, David Reetz
- 2nd District: Carol Hamilton-Monkerud
- 3rd District: Linda Wilson
- 4th District: Ray Pereyra-Chair
- 5th District: Matt Johnston-Vice Chair
- Public Water: Chris Berry, City of Santa Cruz Water Dept.
- Mutual Water: Gerald (Skip) Fehr, San Andreas Mutual Water Company

COMMISSION STAFF

Michael Cloud, currently the staff Hydrologist in the EHS division of the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, served as administrative secretary to the Commission throughout calendar year 2009. The Water Resources Division Director, John Ricker, also attends most meetings.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance by Commission members is shown on the attached roster. The Commission typically recesses for vacation during the month of July and, due to logistical constraints, the Commission also does not

meet in January. Because the Commission held a special joint meeting with the COE in late October, the Commission did not hold separate November meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Commission meetings typically attract several members of the public and representatives from various stakeholder groups that have an interest in water resource management in this county. During the year, numerous individuals attended the Commission meetings to listen to and often discuss water-related topics pertinent to their areas of purview or interest. Several individuals, at the request of the Commission, gave presentations. These individuals included: 1) John E. Eiskamp, President of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, gave a presentation on the need for historical and current status of the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) from the perspective of the County Farm Bureau. 2) Betsy Herbert, a member of COE and staff at the San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD), gave a presentation on work the SLVWD is performing to quantify and reduce its carbon footprint, 3) David Carlson, Quarry Planner for Santa Cruz County, gave a presentation on the hydrologic aspects of the Bonny Doon Quarry Expansion Final EIR, and 4) County Counsel Rahn Garcia addressed the commission on the legal role and authority of the Water Commission.

Additionally, at a joint meeting with the COE, presentations were given by John Ricker, Water Resources Division Director in EHS, on an overview of county water management efforts and then discussed the hierarchy of organizations/ agencies at work on water issues in Santa Cruz County and ongoing and planned integrated water projects. Ron Duncan, Public Service Manager for the Soquel Creek Water District and Toby Goddard, Water Conservation Manager for the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, each spoke about Water Conservation Programs in their respective organizations. And Heidi Luckenbach, Desalination Program Coordinator for the City of Santa Cruz, discussed the Proposed Desalination Project to be jointly funded and used by Soquel Creek Water District and City of Santa Cruz

In addition to those who gave presentations, the Commission was fortunate to have representatives from the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD), Santa Cruz County Fish & Game Commission, LAFCO, the Scotts Valley and Central Water Districts, the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, the Rural Bonny Doon Association and representatives from various local businesses attend the Commission meetings during the year. Tom Sanders, representative of the Santa Cruz County Board of Realtors, regularly attended the Commission meetings in 2009 and continued to give the Commission insight on how water management actions affect property owners and also provided the Commission with updates on water issues that may impact the county. The Commission is grateful for the input of these individuals who have taken time from their personal schedules to add to the discussion of water resources in this county.

CORRESPONDENCE AND RELATED EVENTS

This year the Commission gave feedback to the Water Resources Division Director regarding the content of staff reports to the Board on water resource management efforts. This year a majority of the Commission recommended that the Board declare a groundwater emergency in the Pajaro Valley.

All information regarding the Commission activities is available on the internet. The website facilitates data access and makes the Commission's work more available to the public. The Commission website address is: http://sccounty01.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/eh/Water_Resources/WAC_home.htm

In addition to preparing an agenda and minutes from the previous meeting, staff regularly includes pertinent water related articles in the Commission agenda packets to stimulate discussion on related topics.

ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Listed below are the principal issues and events that were discussed by the Commission during the year:

1. Pajaro Valley Groundwater Management Issues

The major ongoing issue for the Pajaro Valley is the PVWMA loss of revenue and repayment of augmentation fees to its customers. Without an additional viable source of income, the agency's efforts for balancing the groundwater basin (i.e. implementing the 2003 Basin Management Plan (BMP)), are placed in jeopardy. PVWMA formed an ad-hoc committee to evaluate mechanisms to generate revenue that would be acceptable to the majority of the basin stakeholders. The Water Resources Division Director and the Chair of the Commission regularly participated in that committee. The Ad-hoc Funding committee recommended to the PVWMA Board to develop a new water consumption fee revenue structure. The Board accepted the recommendation and has hired consultants to guide the agency through the Prop 218 ballot process.

County Water Resources staff continues its review of the PVWMA financial deliberations and gives periodic status reports to the Board of Supervisors, with input from the Commission, as to what the County can do to address the situation in the Pajaro Valley.

In light of the fact that the agency has yet to come up with an acceptable plan to finance its operations, this year the Commission recommended that the Board declare a groundwater emergency in the Pajaro Valley.

This year the City of Watsonville completed the upgrade of the wastewater treatment facility to provide tertiary treated recycled water to coastal farmers. The wastewater treatment facility was designed to deliver 4,000 acre-feet per year, however only 1,000 acre-feet of the treated wastewater was purchased by farmers this year. The water produced from this upgrade is delivered to farms through the coastal distribution system that was completed in 2008. However, the additional volume of available recycled water alone is insufficient to stop seawater intrusion.

2. Santa Margarita Groundwater Issues

This year the dialogue regarding the Santa Margarita focused on the two Prop 50 funded projects that are focused in the Scotts Valley area. Component 3 of the Prop 50 grant is a conjunctive use project that staff hopes will utilize surface water sources and recycled water to reduce groundwater pumping and help recharge local groundwater aquifers. Several technical reports have been completed on this project and the project consultant is developing a final group of preferred alternatives for more detailed analysis. Component 6 consists of three pilot projects, one of which will be constructed within the City of Scotts Valley. This project, to be completed at the new city library site, will capture stormwater and recharge it into the underlying aquifer.

Twice per year the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee, comprised of members from the SVWD, SLVWD, City of Scotts Valley, and the County, meets to discuss activities that have an

impact on the basin water resources. County staff attend these meetings and report back to the Commission.

The City of Santa Cruz Water Department and the SVWD continue to discuss potential system interties; for both potable and recycled water. A grant application was submitted to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to help fund the design, but failed to get funding.

3. Water Conservation Efforts, Countywide

Due to several years of below average rainfall, many county water purveyors requested voluntary water use cutbacks by their customers. The City of Santa Cruz implemented water restrictions for its customers. The Commission regularly followed the current conservation actions by the various water agencies.

County water resources staff kept the Commission apprised of possible revisions to the County water conservation ordinance and the County Landscaping ordinance. The California Department of Water Resources completed model landscape ordinance and a graywater use ordinance this year. Local agencies are required to either adopt the state requirements or develop their own ordinances for landscaping and graywater use.

4. Update on County Water Resources Management Efforts

Staff in Environmental Health gave regular updates to the Commission throughout 2009 on the County water resource activities. County efforts included obtaining the DWR regional acceptance for the Santa Cruz integrated regional water management program (IRWMP), application for water resource grants the U.S. Bureau of reclamation, implementation of a coordinated water resource monitoring program, commencement of update of the integrated Regional water Management Plan, development of a mid-county groundwater monitoring system, acceptance of the county stormwater management plans, participation in preparing the update to the State Water Master Plan, status reports on the Prop 50 funding process and project progress, and giving technical and administrative support to local agencies for their water management projects. Water resource management status reports were given to the Commission for review and comment prior to submittal to the Board.

5. Mid-County Water Issues

A well master plan for the SqCWD was also prepared in 2007 and the EIR for that Plan is currently being prepared. The Master Plan recommends shifting pumping away from the coast and initiating pumping at the Polo Grounds and O'Neil Ranch well sites. Based on a reinterpretation of the aquifer structure, the City of Santa Cruz Water Department expressed concern that the new O'Neil well might significantly impact groundwater levels in the City's Beltz well field. County staff met with the two water agencies and their consultants to discuss the reinterpretation and implications for groundwater management in the Beltz well field area.

SqCWD installed groundwater monitoring wells near the Polo Grounds production well in anticipation of increased production on the Polo Grounds well to evaluate pumping impacts on surrounding groundwater and flow in nearby Valencia Creek. The Central Water District (CWD) expressed concerns that increased pumping at the Polo Grounds would adversely impact CWD wells located to the southeast. SqCWD and CWD began the use of a small system intertie for water exchange.

The SqCWD 2008 State of the Basin report, released in mid-2009, indicated that the sustainable pumping volumes from the Aromas Formation, from which SqCWD gets 1/3 of its groundwater supply, may have been over-estimated in previous studies. To maintain adequate groundwater elevations along the coast near the SqCWD Aromas well field, pumping may have to be significantly reduced. The district consult is slated to conduct a more in depth analysis of the sustainable yield this year.

SqCWD and the City of Santa Cruz propose to jointly finance and operate a seawater desalination plant to supplement their water supplies. The desal pilot plant tested was successfully completed this year and the work on an EIR will begin this year for the full scale plant.

Starting in late 2008, county water resources staff initiated a bi-annual groundwater monitoring program in the mid-county area. In spring 2009 the program was expanded to include 9 wells, to be measured monthly, in the Valencia Creek area.

6. Commission on the Environment

Because the Commission has overlapping interests with the COE, it has kept abreast of COE agenda topics. The COE deals with local energy consumption, carbon footprints, and impacts to the environment from Climate Change. Water supply is intimately linked to these issues. To help facilitate information exchange the Commission and the COE held a joint meeting in late October where presentations were given on county integrated water management, water conservation programs and the proposed seawater desalination plant.

7. Bonny Doon Quarry Expansion Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

The Bonny Doon Quarry filed for an expansion permit to its mining operations in 2006. Because quarry operations have the potential to impact an important source of surface water supply for the City of Santa Cruz at Liddell Spring, the Commission opted to follow this topic through the EIR process and added it to the agenda list of unfinished business in 2008. In September this year, David Carlson from the County Planning Department gave a presentation to the Commission on the hydrogeologic conclusions of EIR. The Planning Commission has not taken an action on the quarry EIR, pending negotiations between the City of Santa Cruz and Cemex, the quarry owner, regarding mitigation of potential impacts.

8. Public Outreach

The Commission began evaluating ways to an effort to expand the public awareness of the Commission to both inform the public of this access to the Board and to solicit more public input on a range of water related issues. Commissioners prepared a draft of an information pamphlet that explained the roles of the Commission and EHS water resources group. However, that information and more will be included on the EHS website that is near completion. So work on the pamphlet is delayed until the website is completed.

ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANT ITEMS

In addition to the list of principle issues discussed above, the Commission also discussed or followed the progress of the following issues and ongoing projects:

- Invasive aquatic species in Loch Lomond and the San Lorenzo River
- TMDL standards for various county water bodies
- Sediment monitoring in county streams
- Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference
- The Coho recovery plan
- County policy on large woody material removal from streams
- Beach water sampling and safety postings
- Water agency fees and Prop 218 requirements
- Problems resulting from increased water charges following customer conservation efforts
- The potential impact of storms on the Summit burn area and downstream areas
- The Regional Coastal and Ocean Roundtable
- Update of the State Water Plan
- The use of adjudication to address groundwater basin overdraft
- State required Stormwater management
- Agricultural fertilizer management and irrigation efficiency
- Update of county septic system policies and ordinance
- Conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water
- The use of recycled wastewater to supplement existing water supplies
- The County Green Building program
- Management of storm water for groundwater recharge including rainwater harvesting
- Sustainable development and water supply
- Aptos Esplanade flooding mitigations
- Poor Clares property development
- Water hyacinth in Freedom Lake
- Grant sources for water resource project funding
- Current and developing water conservation technologies
- The possibility of creating a karst protection zone in the county
- Legal roles of the Water Commission, Commission by-laws, and the Brown Act

It should be noted that individual Commissioners attended a wide range of public meetings on water resource related matters. Their attendance at other public meetings occurs either in the interest of the Commission or to satisfy or educate the individual interest of each Commissioner. In addition, Commissioners were regularly updated on actions taken by the Board on items that affect water supply, water quality, fisheries and riparian habitat protection, groundwater recharge, flood control, drainage, reclaimed wastewater and other related issues.

FUTURE GOALS

In the coming year the Commission will be following-up on current endeavors. These endeavors include commenting on and providing recommendations to the Board on County Water Resource efforts and staying abreast of Proposition 50 funded water resource projects. The Commission intends to continue its trend of soliciting information from various individuals and agencies as this information relates to water resources in the county. Time permitting; the Commission hopes to explore the following issues:

- Climate change effects on local water resources and aquatic habitat
- Overall Integrated Regional Water Management implementation by water purveyors/County
- Plans for recharge (either in lieu, or directly) of Santa Margarita Aquifer
- PVWMA financing and Pajaro Basin Management Plan implementation support needs
- Bonny Doon Quarry Expansion effects on City of Santa Cruz water resources/North Coast watersheds
- Development of a SqCWD/SCWD desalination plant

- Water system inter-ties/conjunctive use
- Updated septic system policies and ordinance
- Countywide water conservation status
- DFG and State Water Board policies on permitting of water diversions
- Water purveyor DWSAP and Sanitary Survey implementation
- Countywide TMDL implementation status
- Contaminated groundwater sites cleanup status
- Review and possibly revise Commission by-laws

As always, the Commission will continue to evaluate important issues affecting the County's water resources, respond to requests by the Board and the public, and make timely recommendations on both policy and other appropriate matters.

Submitted by:

Michael Cloud
Administrative Staff
Water Advisory Commission

Reviewed and Approved by the Water Advisory Commission on February 3, 2010.

Attachment: Water Advisory Commission 2009 Attendance Roster