

Big Valley Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee (BVAC)

Unapproved Meeting Minutes

BVAC Members:

Lassen County BVAC – Aaron Albaugh, Board Representative; Gary Bridges, Alt. Board Representative; Kevin Mitchell, Public Representative; Duane Conner, Public Representative
Modoc County BVAC – Geri Byrne, Board Representative; Ned Coe, Alt. Board Representative; Jimmy Nunn, Public Representative; John Ohm, Public Representative

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

4:00 PM

Adin Community Center
605 Highway 299
Adin, CA 96006

BVAC Convene in Special Session.

Present: Committee Members: Byrne, Albaugh, Mitchell, Conner, and Ohm.
Absent: Committee Member: Nunn

Also in attendance: BVAC Secretary Maurice Anderson
BVAC staff Gaylon Norwood
BVAC staff Tiffany Martinez
BVAC Recorder Brooke Suarez
Modoc County Counsel Sean Cameron (via Zoom)
BVAC Alt. Board Representative Gary Bridges

BVAC Chairman Byrne called the meeting to order at 4:11 p.m.

Flag Salute: Chairman Byrne requested Duane Conner lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

General Update by Secretary: M. Anderson stated that everyone is working hard. He noted that the GEI Consultants contract was in the meeting packet. He also said that AB 754 was introduced and this bill would extend the deadline of groundwater sustainability plans to January 31, 2023 if passed.

Matters Initiated by Committee Members: Vice-Chairman Albaugh stated that DWR was out taking well measurements. They showed up in new 4X4 Dodge trucks with one person per truck. He was disappointed in seeing tax dollars being spent this way.

Correspondence (unrelated to a specific agenda item): None

Approval of Minutes (March 3, 2021) –

A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Albaugh to approve BVAC meeting minutes from March 3, 2021, with two changes. The motion was seconded by Representative Ohm. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Byrne, Albaugh, Mitchell, Conner, and Ohm.

Laura Snell facilitated the meeting and Gaylon Norwood reviewed GSP schedule and agenda for the meeting and slide presentation was handed out (Exhibit A).

SUBJECT #1:

Introduction of Draft Executive Summary for Chapters 1-6 of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

ACTION REQUESTED:

1. Receive report from the BVAC Secretary, Staff, and/or Consultant.
2. Receive public comment.
3. Provide direction to staff.

GEI consultant, D. Fairman led the discussion on the executive summary which was handed out (Exhibit B). The first three chapters give the background of GSP. The next three chapters are the science chapters. Chapters 7 through 9 are the planning chapters and the last three chapters are the implementation chapters. The executive summary is shortened down version of the GSP chapters. There is also a summary brochure in development.

Committee comment:

Vice-Chairman Albaugh asked if the summary will be updated as we move forward, can the summary be changed if needed, and if the committee could help with the brochure? The answer to all three was yes. L. Snell reviewed benefits of having an executive summary.

Public comment: None

SUBJECT #2:

Continued discussion on Revised Draft Chapter 7 (*Sustainable Management Criteria*) of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and discussion on groundwater monitoring networks in preparation for Draft Chapter 8 (*Monitoring Networks*) of the GSP.

ACTION REQUESTED:

1. Receive report from the pertinent ad hoc committees, BVAC Secretary, Staff, and/or Consultant.

2. Receive public comment.
3. Accept and “set aside” Revised Draft Chapter 7 for future inclusion into the Draft GSP.

Section 7.1 and 7.2

T. Martinez presented Sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the revised draft of Chapter 7. Prior to the written presentation of the sustainability goal, a written discussion of the uniqueness of the valley is captured.

Committee comment on sections 7.1 and 7.2:

Chairman Byrne said is pleased with Chapter 7. Vice-Chairman Albaugh recommended many changes to the verbiage of the chapter.

Section 7.3.1

G. Norwood presented Section 7.3.1. Thresholds were reviewed and Vice-Chairman Albaugh had changes to verbiage. Representative Conner reviewed pumping costs. The deeper the depth of water in the well the more it costs to pump. It depends on the crop if it is economically feasible to pump water. David Lile presented electric costs of pumping.

L. Snell presented a well depth analysis. She discussed the percentage of wells that would go dry at different lowering of water levels.

Committee comment on section 7.3.1:

Representative Mitchell stated that the analysis is presuming a “bath tub” effect. Vice-Chairman Albaugh concurred and stated that the plan is being forced to draw a line. D. Fairman said that domestic wells are concentrated in Adin and Bieber. Chairman Byrne stated that if agricultural wells go dry then domestic wells will not be needed because the agricultural industry drives the population of the valley.

Section 7.3.4

T. Martinez presented Section 7.3.4. She reviewed changes that were made to this section. All the water quality programs that are already in place in the valley are noted in this section. Water quality in the basin is excellent and will be monitored and criteria will be established in the 5-year update, if necessary.

Committee comment on section 7.3.4:

Vice-Chairman Albaugh reiterated the redundancy of the already established water quality programs.

Section 7.3.5

T. Martinez presented Section 7.3.5. Public outreach has identified some subsidence due to agricultural leveling. Subsidence is very minor in this basin and is natural and mostly due to tectonic plate movement. There are no issues, but subsidence will be monitored and criteria will be established in the 5-year update, if necessary.

Committee comment on section 7.3.5:

Vice-Chairman Albaugh requested change in verbiage in this section.

Section 7.3.6

T. Martinez presented Section 7.3.6. Interconnected surface water is difficult to understand due to data gaps. Once again there will be no criteria established at this time. As more science becomes available, more management criteria will be established.

Committee comment on section 7.3.6:

Vice-Chairman Albaugh stated it is difficult to prove. DWR should prove there is an issue prior to the GSAs proving there isn't an issue. We shouldn't comment on requirements of the GSP that are not a problem. L. Snell's response stated we should comment or a general science will be applied to Big Valley which may or may not be realistic to the area.

Section 7.3.2 Groundwater storage

Committee comment on section 7.3.2:

Vice-Chairman Albaugh questioned the depth of the basin and how do we know how much water there is. Discussion was held regarding how the number was derived in previous chapters.

Public comment on all of Chapter 7:

Julie (online) commented that there is a data gap for Adin wells. She asked if we are writing off the possibility that the Bieber mill site will be revived for novel wood product uses that require significant water? She also asked if the cost per foot of deepening wells can be calculated?

Barbara Donahue wanted to bring up domestic wells. Four years ago, she had to drill her well 100 feet lower and neighbors are having to put in filters as they are hitting the bottom of their wells. Water quality has been going down and less recharge is happening. Mills and mining industry have declined, but recreation is increasing. There are people coming into the area impacting the water shed areas.

Doreen Powers would like to see thresholds defined better. She would like to see the number of wells by type and whether they are opened or closed. How do ditches and canals play in?

BVAC meeting recess: 5:54 to 6:10

Chapter 8 was present by D. Fairman. He stated that most of the well monitoring is already in place under existing programs. Water levels and groundwater storage will be monitored by 12 representative wells. The groundwater contour network will utilize 21 wells. The groundwater contours will capture highs and lows of water levels. These levels are required in the annual reporting. Seventeen wells will be used for measuring surface water depletion. D. Fairman explained what surface water depletion is. Ian Espinoza from DWR clarified the definition of the word depletion as used.

To monitor water quality, the thought is to use electrical conductivity transducers in the wells. D. Fairman stated that having no threshold on water quality in the GSP will probably not pass DWR review. DWR will probably say that omitting this requirement in the GSP is inadequate and will be for the other items that thresholds are not set. Vice-Chairman Albaugh said that state agencies should talk to each other as they already have water quality reports from other programs rather than put the onus on the GSAs.

Subsidence is being measured by GPS and InSAR. Subsidence is minimal in the basin.

Streamflow and weather monitoring are also needed for the annual update of the water budget. Precipitation and evapotranspiration are measured by CIMIS Station in Fall River Valley and spatial CIMIS. Streamflow will be measured at Pit River at Canby, Ash Creek at Adin, Willow Creek, and Pit River at Muck Valley Diversion. A measurement at Pit River north of Lookout has been proposed.

Committee comment:

D. Fairman was asked when draft chapter 8 can be expected and he said he would have the draft done by April 14, 2021.

Public comment: Julie (online) asked if D. Fairman had any ideas on how to use this monitoring data in innovative ways to solve some of Big Valley's specific data gaps and questions that have arisen, beyond the reasons that DWR wants the data collected?

The committee decided to bring back Chapter 7 at the next meeting.

SUBJECT #3:

Discussion on projects and management actions, in preparation for Draft Chapter 9 (*Projects and Management Actions*) of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

ACTION REQUESTED:

1. Receive report from the BVAC Secretary, Staff, and/or Consultant.
2. Receive public comment.
3. Provide direction to staff.

Discussion was held on changing the BVAC meeting time. It is possible to present an action at the next meeting to change the time.

T. Martinez stated that there has been a lot of input regarding projects. There are three feasibility levels. Level I projects are things that can be done now, Level II are projects that the counties are committed to do but may not have the funding now, and Level III are projects in the concept stage. She reviewed the proposed projects in each level. There are regulatory requirements for each project.

Committee comment:

Vice-Chairman Albaugh wanted to know the delineation between a project and management action.

Public Comment: None

Matters Initiated by the General Public (regarding subjects not on the agenda): None

Establish next meeting date: May 5, 2021 at 2:00 pm. in Bieber.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Byrne asked for a motion to adjourn.

A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Albaugh to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Representative Ohm at 7:13 pm.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Byrne, Albaugh, Mitchell, Conner, and Ohm.