**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

Thursday, November 3, 2022 3:00 PM Adin Community Center

605 Highway 299

Adin, CA 96006

BVAC Convene in Special Session.

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

Absent: Committee Members: Nunn

Also in attendance: BVAC Secretary Maurice Anderson (via Zoom)

BVAC Staff Tiffany Martinez

BVAC Staff Gaylon Norwood

BVAC Recorder Brooke Suarez

Alt. Board Representative Gary Bridges

BVAC Chairman Byrne called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. Chairman Byrne read the public comment rules for the meeting.

**Flag Salute:** Chairman Byrne requested Representative Mitchell lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Election of a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman:**

**A motion was made by Representative Ohm to elect Representative Albaugh as Chairman of the Big Valley Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee. The motion was seconded by Representative Conner. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**A motion was made by Representative Ohm to elect Representative Byrne as Vice-Chairman of the Big Valley Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee. The motion was seconded by Representative Mitchell. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**General Update by Secretary:** Staff Member G. Norwood stated that the meeting will follow the agenda which addresses what is coming up in the future and that the committee is waiting for the Department of Water Resources’ (DWR) response to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

Chairman Albaugh addressed the DWR representatives in attendance as to when the committee might expect an update. I. Espinoza stated the review might take the full two years but they will push for getting it done sooner even though the BVAC GSP is one of many currently being reviewed. P. Vellines followed by stating, that since the Big Valley Groundwater Basin is not tied into other basins, she is expecting the time frame will be more like one and a half years.

**Matters Initiated by Committee Members:** None

**Correspondence** (unrelated to a specific agenda item): None

**Approval of Minutes (October 20, 2021) –**

**A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Byrne to approve BVAC meeting minutes from October 20, 2021. The motion was seconded by Representative Ohm. The motion was carried by the following vote:**

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

**SUBJECT #1:**

Amended and restated Memorandum of Understanding between the Lassen County Big Valley Groundwater Basin Sustainability Agency and the Modoc County Big Valley Groundwater Basin Sustainability Agency, adopted on August 23, 2022.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Receive report; and
2. Receive public comment; and
3. Possible direction to staff.

G. Norwood recapped that the two GSAs (Lassen County Big Valley Groundwater Basin Sustainability Agency and Modoc County Big Valley Groundwater Basin Sustainability Agency) came together to come up with the GSP and now they are a permanent committee. The amended and restated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in the packet. He pointed out that Section 18 of the MOU acknowledges the UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor Offices’ help in developing the GSP and how appreciated they are. He also pointed out that Section 22 of the MOU now requires the committee to start working on an annual work plan and budget. The committee will need to provide guidance to staff to move forward.

**Committee comment:** Chairman Albaugh asked DWR’s I. Espinoza about a time frame on when basin modification and reranking might happen. I. Espinoza said he has not heard anything regarding the process, but after the reviews of all GSPs they will be in the que. Chairman restated that once all GSP reviews are done, then DWR will come back to the basin modification and reranking and I. Espinoza responded with a yes.

**Public comment**: None

**SUBJECT #2:**

Comments submitted to the Department of Water Resources during public review of the adopted Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Receive correspondence; and
2. Receive public comment; and
3. Possible direction to staff.

G. Norwood said that the GSP, during the public review process, got 3 public responses and are in the packet.

**Committee comment:** Chairman Albaugh was irritated with the responses from the Nature Conservancy and other groups. He viewed their responses as ridiculous and asked DWR how much credibility does DWR give them? I. Espinoza responded that all comments are taken into consideration, but they are using template language on all the GSPs and so the comments do not fit with all GSPs. If the comments are applicable to a GSP then DWR will take them into consideration. Chairman Albaugh stated that they are using a shotgun approach. I. Espinoza stated that GSAs can respond to the public comments. DWR is just making sure the GSP meets requirements. Vice-Chairman Byrne stated that the comment made during the GSP public review period saying that there was not enough Public Outreach by the committee shows that “they” are not credible. G. Norwood said that the Nature Conservancy was asked to provide comment all along but they did not comment until the end.

**Public comment**: None

**SUBJECT #3:**

Potential Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) grant application.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Receive report; and
2. Receive public comment; and
3. Possible direction to staff.

G. Norwood said DWR now has a grant opportunity available and asked if the committee would be interested in applying. He stated that we have no current consultants but the Request for Proposals had generated three responses. He also recapped some of the projects the committee had come up with in the past. T. Martinez stated that the committee should apply for the grant and spoke about what the grant money could be used for. She said there was a ranking sheet for the water projects in the packet.

**Committee comment:** Representative Mitchell asked, “If we apply, are we admitting guilt?” T. Martinez responded that the money should be used to obtain information. Chairman Albaugh is nervous about taking the money and “it feels like DWR is sucking us in.” Vice-Chairman Byrne said we are guilty until proven innocent so we should take the money to prove our innocence. She said it would be foolish not to take the money, otherwise the community would end up having to pay for projects. G. Norwood stated that the committee will have to move quickly if they decide to apply for the grant as the deadline is November 30th.

Chairman Albaugh asked DWR what happens if the BVAC gets the grant but then DWR doesn’t approve the GSP. P. Vellines said if the GSP isn’t approved, BVAC would have 180 days to correct the plan. The grant money could be used to correct the GSP if needed. The SGMA Proposal Solicitation Packet lists how grant money can be used. Grants can be requested from $1 million to $20 million over a four-year period. Chairman Albaugh asked if we have to fix the GSP in 180 days, how long does DWR have for a second review period? I. Espinoza stated that there is no legislated time period for the second review. Chairman Albaugh again expressed his concerns in regards to taking the grant money. P. Vellines suggested that the BVAC use the money to complete mandated reports and fill the water data gaps; she looks at the whole process as a way to prevent future water issues in the area. Chairman Albaugh’s response to that was “that the State just wants every drop of water it can take.” He also stated that our basin should not be part of SGMA and asked how do we get out. P. Vellines said to continue as we are and a reranking may take us out. Vice-Chairman Byrne said we need to take the money to gather more data to prove we shouldn’t be in SGMA. Representative Mitchell said DWR is going to steal the water any way possible and Representative Conner said the more we are involved with the State the worse it is going to get. Representative Ohm agreed with both.

T. Martinez requested an adhoc committee be formed to rank projects. Chairman Albaugh and Vice-Chairman Byrne will be on the adhoc committee.

**Public comment**: Jeff (from Lookout) stated that his clients are ranchers and farmers in the area and they all share the same concern that the State of California is coming after the water to ship to the cities. He says the water is needed here as the ranchers and farmers are supplying food for the county, state, and the world. He asked if someone could confirm what the State is doing? Representative Mitchell confirmed that the State is coming after the water. Rosemary Nelson questioned if there has been enough time to gather the data needed as the pandemic has thrown a wrench into the process. Chairman Albaugh responded that the committee did request an extension but DWR denied it. Julie Rechtin noted that it would be beneficial to use grant money to do more studies to determine the difference between the east and west wide of the basin, subsurface studies, well status studies, and recharge studies.

**SUBJECT #4:**

Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) Survey results.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Receive report; and
2. Receive public comment; and
3. Possible direction to staff.

DWR representative P. Vellines spoke on the Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) Survey results. She pointed out key items on the map and discussed what various things meant. She gave the web site address and stated that there was more detail on the website and it was easier to read the maps on the website. She also stated that the AEM survey map was correlated to other geological data that DWR has on the area to give a more accurate geologic mapping of the basin.

**Committee comment:** Chairman Albaugh asked her expert opinion on where the best recharge areas were and she responded that the southwest or east areas of the basin were the best. Representative Mitchell asked about at what depths should the recharge be? P. Vellines proposed that the recharge should go into the sand and gravel areas. She said that she would look into it in more detail and let us know. Further discussion was held regarding details on the AEM mapping.

**Public comment**: Julie Rechtin stated that the map looks fairly complex and asked how alluvium fits into the map? P. Vellines stated it fits into the sand category. Adrianna from LandIQ commented that she put the AEM map link into the meeting chat.

**SUBJECT 5:**

University of California Cooperative Extension office report on applicable research and projects.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Receive report; and
2. Receive public comment; and
3. Possible direction to staff.

# Laura Snell, from the Modoc County UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor Office, recapped what previous grant money has been spent on: wells have been drilled, stream monitoring, work on annual report, created templates and directions for future annual reporting, revisions for the water budget, evapotranspiration and applied water study in regards to hay crops, winter recharge, stream gage installed in northern location, and the Modoc forest Juniper project. Grants provide money for outreach for staff and she hopes that the BVAC will apply for more grant money.

L. Snell introduced Garret Rapp, Associate Engineer II, from West Yost. West Yost was a consultant hired with grant money to investigate and implement agricultural managed aquifer recharge (AgMAR). Garret outlined the tasks involved to be able to divert enough water for recharging. The tasks would involve: 1) coordinating with the State Board, California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, and other agencies, 2) collect and evaluate data, 3) conduct water availability analysis, 4) document water availability analysis, and 5) evaluate applicability of temporary transfers.

**Committee comment:** Chairman Albaugh asked if the UC Cooperative Extensions can do the annual report? L. Snell said that a certified geologist is required to sign off on the annual report. A grant would help pay for a certified geologist and that the UC Cooperative Extensions can help vet the next consultant.

Chairman Albaugh had water rights questions for Gary of West Yost. Gary commented that water rights are unclear in the basin. Pre-1914 water rights, upstream water rights, as well as downstream water rights need to be factored in. Chairman Albaugh wanted clarification as to why California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife had to be involved. The answer was that they need to be involved because it is required for the DWR water recharge transfer permit.

**Public comment**: Jeff from Lookout stated that there have always been droughts. A Sierra Nevada study determined that there were two major droughts between the 11th and 14th centuries. One lasted 220 years and the other lasted 140 years, so droughts are real, but not caused by humans. We need more water storage. The current water storage system was created to accommodate 17 million people in the state but now we have over 40 million people in the state.

**SUBJECT 6:**

LandIQ Mapping Workshop.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Receive report; and
2. Receive public comment; and
3. Possible direction to staff.

Casey Gudel and Adrianna Delucchi were introduced as representatives of LandIQ. C. Gudel detailed the accomplishments of LandIQ. She reviewed the Big Valley mapping that they did in 2020. She stated that Adrianna wanted their public input how irrigation water was delivered to the ranches and farms in the valley.

**Committee comment:** Chairman Albaugh stated they would adjourn the meeting and hold the workshop afterwards.

**Public comment**: None

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

**Establish next meeting date:** To be determined.

**Adjournment:**

Chairman Albaugh adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.