A picture containing snow, mountain, outdoor, sky

Description automatically generated



**Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document**

**DRAFT**

**Siskiyou County Groundwater Sustainability Agency**

**Prepared by Stantec**

**Consulting, Inc.**

**June 2023**

**Contents**

[1. Background 3](#_Toc135060738)

[1.1 Areas for Improvement 3](#_Toc135060739)

[2. Vision Statement 3](#_Toc135060740)

[3. Goals and Strategies 4](#_Toc135060741)

[4. Tactics and Actions 5](#_Toc135060742)

[Attachment 1: Interview Participants 7](#_Toc135060743)

[Attachment 2: Questionnaire 8](#_Toc135060744)

[Attachment 3: Assessment Memo 9](#_Toc135060745)

**Acronyms**

District Siskiyou County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

DWR California Department of Water Resources

GSA Groundwater Sustainability Agency

GSP Groundwater Sustainability Plan

SGMA Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Stantec Stantec Consulting, Inc.

Strategy Document Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document

SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

This document was funded through the Department of Water Resources’ Facilitation Support Services Program.

1. Introduction
   1. Background

The Siskiyou County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) acts as Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) and plan manager for the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) of the Shasta Valley, Butte Valley, and Scott Valley basins, under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). In January 2022, the Siskiyou County GSA submitted the three GSPs to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) for review. To meet the compliance requirements of SGMA, the GSA must maintain groundwater conditions consistent with the thresholds set for each sustainable management criteria as defined in the GSPs and complete administrative functions required by SGMA, such as updating the GSPs every five years and submitting annual reports to DWR. These responsibilities are collectively referred to as “GSP implementation” and will carry forward through 2042.

This Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document (Strategy Document) outlines the GSA’s near- and long-term organizational, managerial, financial, and institutional goals and strategies, consistent with its SGMA responsibilities for the three basins. Its development was informed by:

* A stakeholder assessment interview process conducted by Stantec Consulting, Inc. (Stantec) in the Fall of 2022, details about which are documented in **Attachments 1, 2, and 3,**
* Two workshops with the GSA Board on February 7 and June 6, 2023, and,
* Input received from members of the Scott Valley, Butte Valley, and Shasta Valley Advisory Committees during their meetings on April 25, 26, and 27, 2023, respectively.

Stantec prepared the Strategy Document through an effort funded the by the DWR Facilitation Support Services Program.

* 1. Key Areas for Improvement

The stakeholder assessment included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which is detailed in **Attachment 1** and summarized below:

This SWOT analysis reveals three predominant themes around which this Strategy Document organizes itself: improvements for decision-making, funding and resources, and communications and engagement.

* + 1. **Decision-Making**

The GSA’s Board, Advisory Committees, staff, and consultants all have a role in sharing knowledge, providing recommendations, and making decisions that influence GSP implementation. The roles and functions of these entities have evolved over time and stakeholder assessment participants agreed that the GSA’s organizational structure and decision-making processes for GSP implementation could be clarified.

* + 1. **Funds and Resources**

The most significant weaknesses and potential threats that surfaced in the SWOT analysis are related to a lack of resources, both in the form of insufficient staffing capacity and uncertainties around sustainable funding sources. Thus far, the GSA has relied heavily on grant funds to develop the GSPs, however, as the GSA moves into long-term GSP implementation, grants may be a less reliable funding source. Managing grants is also a time-intensive endeavor and the GSA’s ability to administer grants may be limited by staffing shortages.

* + 1. **Communications and Engagement**

A strong area of consensus among stakeholder assessment participants was the importance of conducting proactive and robust outreach and engagement with residents in the basins. The GSA currently convenes publicly noticed Advisory Committee meetings for each of the three basins on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the GSA posts materials related to the GSPs on their website and maintains an interested parties emailing list. The Communications and Engagement Plans which were created in 2020 during GSP development, however, have not been updated for GSP implementation.

1. Vision Statement

The GSA’s vision statement describes the region’s future end state that will result from proactive, strategic activities. The vision statement was reviewed and confirmed through the stakeholder assessment and by the GSA Board. It reads:

The Siskiyou County GSA will collaboratively work towards effective groundwater management to achieve and maintain the sustainability of the Shasta Valley, Butte Valley, and Scott Valley Basins, consistent with SGMA and the near- and long-term goals defined in the GSPs, with fair consideration given to all beneficial groundwater users.

1. Goals and Strategies

Based on the results of the stakeholder assessment, the GSA has identified three Goals which answer the question of *what* they will do to accomplish the overall vision. For each Goal, two Strategies have been developed which describe the general approach or method for *how* the GSA will achieve those goals. Section 4 expands on the Strategies to include specific Tactics or Actions for the GSA to act on.

|  |
| --- |
| **Decision-Making**  **Goal Clarify GSA decision-making roles and responsibilities and the decision-making support processes that inform GSP implementation**.  **Strategy 1** Better define the decision-making roles and responsibilities of GSA Board members, GSA staff, and Advisory Committee members and identify where additional staffing resources may be needed.  **Strategy 2** Establish regular communications and strengthen partnerships and projects with public agencies and basin stakeholders. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Funds and Resources**  **Goal Develop and implement a sustainable funding and resourcing strategy for GSP implementation and GSA administration that minimizes impacts to residents and ensures adequate GSA staff resourcing to effectively implement the GSPs.**  **Strategy 1** Catalog short- and long-term GSP implementation and administration costs, determine what additional funding and staff resources may be needed, and identify how those remaining costs will be covered, with a priority on minimizing impacts to residents and identifying sustainable funding sources.  **Strategy 2** Secure grant and other external funding sources to support groundwater sustainability efforts within and across the basins. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Communications and Engagement**  **Goal Demonstrate the value of SGMA, the GSA, and GSP implementation to the public through regular engagement, education, and communication activities related to GSP implementation.**  **Strategy 1** Increase transparency and the accessibility of data and information to the public (e.g., on the GSA website) so that groundwater users in the basin can clearly understand the status of the basin and monitoring efforts.  **Strategy 2** Increase education and engagement of stakeholders and other interested parties on GSP implementation activities, with a focus on communicating information related to projects and management actions and GSP funding and fees. |

1. Tactics and Actions

Near-term tactics are those which are envisioned to occur in the next year. Long-term tactics respond to challenges that may require more time or resources to mobilize and are envisioned for implementation by the GSP updates in 2027.

|  |
| --- |
| **Decision-Making**  **Near-Term**  **Tactic 1** Develop a document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of GSA Staff, Board members, and Advisory Committee members and the process for making decisions and recommendations during GSP implementation. In addition to supporting the GSA and staff, this document would also be used as a tool to onboard new Advisory Committee members.  **Tactic 2** Establish regular communications with agencies and organizations to outline shared goals and identify opportunities for collaboration on GSP implementation. This may include the development of coordination of agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding with Tribes.  **Long-Term**  **Tactic 3** Collaborate with other agencies and organizations on improvements to the groundwater monitoring network and on implementation of multi-benefit projects.  **Tactic 4** Identify gaps in staff resources and capacity and secure additional personnel to assist the GSA with GSP implementation activities. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Funds and Resources**  **Near-Term**  **Tactic 1** Conduct an evaluation of fee/rate options for GSP implementation.  **Tactic 2** Develop a process for tracking and sharing updates on funding pursuits for groundwater-related projects undertaken by other agencies and organizations.  **Long-Term**  **Tactic 3** Develop a long-term staffing plan for identifying, prioritizing, applying for, and managing grants. This may include leveraging resources across other County departments with similar grant management needs.  **Tactic 4** Develop a rate and fee schedule to fund GSP implementation and GSA administration costs. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Communications and Engagement**  **Near-Term**  **Tactic 1** Update the Communications and Engagement Plan for GSP implementation, including an outlined schedule of activities and milestones through 2025.  **Tactic 2** Update the GSA website to improve navigability and maintain regular (at least quarterly) updates.  **Long-Term**  **Tactic 3** Improve the public accessibility of groundwater monitoring data for sustainable management criteria.  **Tactic 4** Conduct public workshops and educational events to proactively communicate anticipated GSP funding and fees and incorporate community input into the fee options and resourcing strategy. |

Attachment 1: Assessment Memo

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To: | Matt Parker | From: | Marisa Perez-Reyes, Emily Finnegan |
|  | Siskiyou County Flood Control District GSA |  | Sacramento, CA (C Street) |
| File: | 184032016 | Date: | December 2, 2022 |

Reference: Assessment Memo – Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document

This Assessment Memo documents the interviews conducted to support development of the Siskiyou County Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) Multi-Basin Management Strategy Document (Strategy Document).

The Siskiyou County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) acts as GSA and plan manager for the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) of the Shasta Valley, Butte Valley, and Scott Valley Basins, under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Stantec is preparing the Strategy Document through an effort funded the by California Department of Water Resources Facilitation Support Services Program.

**Purpose**

The Strategy Document is intended to identify, catalog, and prioritize the District’s near- and long-term organizational, managerial, financial, and institutional goals and strategies, consistent with its SGMA responsibilities for the three basins.

This Assessment Memo provides the foundation for the Strategy Document development by summarizing the insights of key basin stakeholders and identifying potential goals for the Strategy Document to be elaborated and refined during Board workshops scheduled for early 2023.

**Methodology**

In order to understand the needs, challenges, goals, and objectives to be reflected in the Strategy Document, the five District Board of Supervisors (Board); three Advisory Committee chairs; GSA staff; and additional agricultural, environmental, and residential interests in the basins were interviewed between September and November 2022, either in person or via teleconference, for a total of 14 interviews. Marisa Perez-Reyes (Stantec) and Emily Finnegan (Stantec) worked with the GSA Manager (Matt Parker) to formulate the interview questionnaire and schedule interviews. Participants received the questionnaire in advance of the interview and were provided a brief background on the goals of the Strategy Document. Each interview was approximately one hour in duration using the same 10 questions.

In the interviews, participants were asked to describe their perspectives on what the GSA’s goals should be, how the GSA would measure success in those areas, and what changes would be required for the GSA to achieve those goals. Participants were also asked to define success and provide any expectations for the Strategy Document, as well as best methods for collaboration. The list of interview participants and interview questionnaire are included in Attachments 1 and 2, respectively.

A draft vision statement was developed in advance of the interviews, and each participant had the opportunity to voice agreement or offer modifications. The vision statement was refined to reflect feedback received during the interviews, and it now reads:

*“The District will collaboratively work towards effective groundwater management to achieve and maintain the sustainability of the Shasta Valley, Butte Valley, and Scott Valley Basins, consistent with SGMA and the near- and long-term goals defined in the GSPs, with (equitable) consideration given to all beneficial groundwater users.”*

Interviewees expressed diverging opinions on whether “equitable” should be included in the vision statement. The Board should discuss this at the Workshop.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis**

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was completed based on information received through the interviews to help the GSA visualize how its ideas for goals and objectives might align with potential opportunities and threats, as well as strengths and weaknesses.

The three main ***strengths*** that were identified include: (1) shared interest in collaborating on SGMA implementation, (2) high degree of consensus around groundwater recharge and getting projects started sooner rather than later, and (3) a robust collective knowledge of local issues and priorities among Advisory Committee members.

Several ***weaknesses*** were recognized. Interview participants generally agreed that the District lacks staffing capacity to effectively support GSP implementation. In particular, a need was identified for technical staff with backgrounds in biology and fisheries science and additional staff support for the pursuit and management of grants to offset the costs of GSP implementation. Interview participants noted that the GSA would benefit from a more clearly defined process for making recommendations and decisions in GSP implementation among Advisory Committee members, GSA staff, and GSA Board members, primarily related to monitoring of sustainable management criteria and minimum thresholds.

***Opportunities*** were discovered in the SWOT analysis. The District has the opportunity to proactively manage groundwater resources and define how they can be better supported by other agencies and institutions. These things could be accomplished through more regular communication and clearly defined relationships (e.g., coordination agreements) with other public agencies at the local, state, and federal scale, and among District departments. Advisory Committee members expressed great interest in helping the GSA get projects in the ground, and their combined wealth of knowledge could be better utilized in GSP implementation to identify project opportunities and potential funding sources, support with funding applications, implement projects, and support groundwater monitoring. There is also an opportunity for increased public engagement and education throughout GSP implementation.

Some ***threats*** were noticed, which mostly translate to future unknowns. Interview participants expressed concerns about SGMA’s unknown impacts on agriculture, economic revenue, and property values. Another unknown factor is the long-term cost of GSP implementation and the as-yet-to-be-developed financing plan. Participants also expressed concern about the effects of future changes to state regulations and curtailment orders.

**Initial Identification of Primary Goals**

Based on the interviews, three primary goals were identified:

1. **Communications and Engagement (CE):** Demonstrate the value of SGMA, the GSA, and GSP implementation to the public through regular engagement, education, and communication activities related to GSP implementation.
2. **Decision-Making (DM):** Clarify GSA decision-making roles and responsibilities and the decision-making support processes that inform GSP implementation.
3. **Funds and Resources (FR):** Develop and implement a sustainable funding and resourcing strategy for GSP implementation and GSA administration that minimizes impacts to residents and ensures adequate GSA staff resourcing to effectively implement the GSPs.

These goals will be further explored in two Board workshops scheduled for early 2023.

Attachment 2: Interview Participants

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Role/Responsibility of Interviewee** | **Date of Interview** |
| 1. | Butte Valley Advisory Committee Chair | September 23 |
| 2. | GSA Board Member | September 27 |
| 3. | Scott Valley Advisory Committee Chair | September 27 |
| 4. | GSA Board Member | September 28 |
| 5. | GSA Board Member | September 28 |
| 6. | Shasta Valley Advisory Committee Chair | September 29 |
| 7. | GSA Board Member | September 29 |
| 8. | Scott Valley Resident – Residential Interest | October 11 |
| 9. | GSA Plan Manager | October 13 |
| 10. | GSA Board Member | October 14 |
| 11. | Additional GSA Staff | November 2 |
| 12. | Scott-Shasta Watermaster District | November 2 |
| 13. | California Trout – Environmental Interest | November 18 |
| 14. | Siskiyou County Farm Bureau – Agricultural Interest | November 21 |

Note: A Tribal representative was contacted for interview but declined to participate in the initial assessment.

Attachment 3: Questionnaire

1. Do you agree or disagree with the working draft of the Strategy Document Vision Statement (below)? What should be changed?

***Vision Statement Working Draft***: The District will work towards effective groundwater management to improve the sustainability of the Shasta Valley, Butte Valley, and Scott Valley Basins, consistent with SGMA and the near- and long-term goals within those subbasins.

1. Describe your perspective on what the GSA’s near- (3-5 years) and long-term (20+ years) organizational and managerial goals should be. Organizational goals relate to GSA staffing and organizational structures, whereas managerial goals relate to GSA operation and management.
   1. What would success look like for each?
   2. For the basins to achieve sustainability in these areas, what changes need to be made?
2. Describe your perspective on what the GSA’s near- and long-term financial goals should be. Financial goals relate to the desired end state for GSA funding and financial planning processes.
   1. Describe how to measure success.
   2. What changes would need to be made for the GSA to achieve these goals?
3. Describe your perspective on what the GSA’s near- and long-term institutional goals should be. This is regarding the GSA’s relationship to other institutions and authorities.
   1. Describe how to measure success.
   2. For the basins to achieve sustainability, what changes would need to be made?
4. For the goals you have identified today, which ones should be prioritized in the Strategy Document and why?
   1. Do any stand out as “low-hanging fruit” – i.e., easier or more feasible to implement?
5. We’d like to understand the history of collaboration on groundwater management in Siskiyou County.
   1. Where has collaboration been successful and why? What hasn’t worked in previous collaborative processes and why?
   2. What would collaboration on groundwater management look like for these subbasins?
6. What challenges do you foresee when trying to develop the Strategy Document? What challenges do you foresee when trying to implement it? Challenges may be of a political, financial, legal, organizational, or technical nature, for example.
7. Given your relationship to the GSA, what are your expectations for the Strategy Document? How would you measure success in development and implementation of the Strategy Document?
8. Later this fall, there will be two Board Workshops to work as a group and further refine the goals and objectives of the Strategy Document. We would very much like for you to continue contributing to this effort. Are you available for either of the following dates and times? (Note that the second Workshop will be held in early 2023, but we are not polling for that date right now.)
   1. Option 1 (preferred)
   2. Option 2 (alternative)

Is there anything else you would like to discuss related to the Strategy Document? Any other thoughts, ideas, questions, feedback?