



ADVISORY COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 17, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 4.b

SUBJECT: Deep Aquifers Study Update and Proposed Cooperative Funding Partnership

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive update on effort to identify and secure funding to commence with the Deep Aquifers Study in early 2022 and provide comments and recommendations.

BACKGROUND:

The initiation of a study on the Deep Aquifers was identified in the 180/400-Foot Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) as a priority management action. The scoping of such a study has been conducted by the SVBGSA Seawater Intrusion Working Group (SWIG) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) over the past year since the SWIG was convened. The SWIG TAC comprises leading scientists that have studied the 180/400-Foot Aquifer and the Deep Aquifers over the past thirty years.

DISCUSSION:

Staff has worked over the past year to scope and complete a cost estimate to initiate the Deep Aquifers Study in 2022. The importance of the study is recognized in multiple studies conducted by the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA), the County of Monterey, Marina Coast Water District and other domestic water providers and irrigated agriculture. Studies of the Deep Aquifers have also been identified as critical information for addressing seawater intrusion and effectively managing groundwater sustainability.

Funding for the study has been difficult to identify utilizing available grant resources. In order to secure necessary funding staff has developed a funding mechanism that includes a cooperative agreement with partner agencies, domestic water suppliers, and irrigated agriculture. Funding requests were made of the partner agencies during May and June and meetings have been held with the Salinas Basin Agricultural Water Association to discuss use of a fee for agriculture contribution to the study. The study of the deep aquifers is part of the regulatory program that is SGMA and implemented by the SVBGSA, but the fee levied for this purpose is a discrete component of that program and distinct from the regulatory fee that funds the operations of the SVBGSA. Discussions are currently ongoing with irrigated agriculture.

The primary tasks associated with the study will include:

- Describing the Geology, Hydrogeology, and Extents of the Deep Aquifer
- Estimating a complete water budget for the Deep Aquifers
- Addressing the Economic and Administrative Constraints on Extracting from the Deep Aquifers
- Providing Guidance on the Practical Aspects of Managing the Deep Aquifers within the Salinas Valley
- Proposing and Initiating a Deep Aquifers Monitoring Program

The current proposed funding structure for the Deep Aquifers Study is set forth below. The Study will be conducted over two years and the contributions identified are over the two-year study period.

Cooperative Funding Partnership for the Deep Aquifers Study

Agency	Contribution/Status
MCWRA	\$400,000 confirmed
Monterey County	\$100,000 confirmed FY 21/22; 2-year commitment
SVBGSA	\$105,000 mid year budget adjustment
City of Salinas*	\$50,000
Marina Coast Water District*	\$50,000
California Water Service	\$15,000 confirmed
Castroville CSD	\$15,000 confirmed
Alco Water	\$10,000 confirmed
Irrigated Agriculture**	\$155,000
TOTAL	\$1,000,000

* Commitment confirmed – awaiting official budget approval

** Per acre fee being explored

It is staff's desire to utilize the Advisory Committee as one of the key meetings to notify the public of the proposal for possibly imposing a fee for agriculture to contribute to the Deep Aquifer Study and also to inform the Advisory Committee of the focus of the study and its timeline. Currently agriculture is leaning towards a per acre fee on irrigated acres to contribute to the study. Following the Advisory Committee, this item will come before the Executive Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee for further discussion. The fee would require approval by the Board of Directors at its July 8 meeting for placement of the fee on the tax roll for FY21/22. The is a one-time fee that will only be levied during FY21/22 if approved by the Board of Directors.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This work is a priority management action in the 180/400-Foot GSP and will be managed by SVBGSA staff for two years.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Montgomery & Associates Technical Memorandum: SWIG TAC Recommendations for Deep Aquifer, November 10, 2020

PREPARED BY:

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