



County of Santa Cruz

Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312 ❖ Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-2022 ❖ Fax (831) 454-3128

<https://www.scceh.org/>

Drought Response Working Group – Meeting Summary

Meeting 1, May 13, 2022, 1-4PM

Hybrid via Teams and Redwood Room (701 Ocean Street room 520)

Attendees:

Working Group Members: Paul Lego (Water Advisory Commission (WAC), Frank Cheap (WAC), Brian Lockwood (WAC, PV Water), John Ricker (Envtl, RCD & former County staff), Edan Cassidy (SMGSA), Rachel Smith (RCAC), Becky Steinbruner (small water system customer and community), Julia Ekstrom (DWR) (missing Jon Kennedy and Stephen Rider)

Others: Sierra Ryan (Santa Cruz County, Water Resources Manager), Sean Abbey (County, Water Quality Specialist), Erin McCarthy (County, Water Resources Planner), Tatiana Brennan (County, OR3), Carly Blanchard (SLVWD), Ray Pereyra (WAC, resident)

Presentation by Sierra Ryan (County, Water Resources Manager): SB 552 Overview; Goals and Schedule of the DRWG. Presentation topics included: summary of SB 552; the role of DRWG; conduct for meetings; process for making recommendations to the WAC; schedule and goals of the DRWG.

Discussion outcomes:

- The establishment of the Drought Response Working Group, as an advisory body to the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission, satisfies the SB 552 requirement for the County to establish a standing drought task force by January 1, 2022.
- Info for the DRWG and about SB 552 will be posted here:
<https://scceh.com/NewHome/Programs/WaterResources/SenateBill552Compliance.aspx>.
- The County Plan required by SB 552, demonstrating the potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed solutions for state small water systems and domestic wells, can be a stand alone plan or can be integrated in other County plans. No deadline is currently established.
- County planning will likely draw on data, thresholds and portals that were created for SGMA.
- The State is putting together a number of resources to support counties with SB 552 compliance. The State is also receiving input from counties about priorities and resources needed to help meet County requirements.
 - **Dept of Water Resources (DWR) webinars on County compliance with SB 552:** Working Group members are encouraged to participate in a series of three webinars hosted by DWR to inform and solicit input from stakeholders on the development of a guidebook to support the preparation of County Drought Plans required under SB 552.
 - The first webinar is on June 2, 2022 from 10:30am to 12:30pm.
 - To register for the webinar visit this link:



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<https://csus.zoom.us/j/9121212121>

- Julia Ekstrom (DWR) will share a survey with Sierra to receive input on the types of assistance that could be helpful to counties for complying with SB 552. Sierra will complete and submit the survey.
- Discussion of the number of affected people in Santa Cruz County.
 - Based on table provided in the Water Status report and the presentation, the total affected people number around 37,000, the number of people served by water systems with populations between 1-1,000.

Presentation by Tatiana Brennan (County, OR3): Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). An updated CAAP will go to the Board of Supervisors for potential approval in December 2022. If approved, implementation will begin in 2023. Topics included in the plan include sustainable energy, drought, fire, flood, damage, costs and others. County is taking steps to prepare for funding opportunities that are anticipated. City of Watsonville completed a Climate Action Plan that can be referenced and City of Santa Cruz planning is in progress. County Plan will focus on solutions and strategies to impact behavior for the long-term. Currently in Phase 2 of the workplan. Collaborating to align with regional planning.

Discussion outcomes:

- County is collaborating with City of Santa Cruz; information on the City's water supply modelling work will be shared with Tatiana.
- The SB 552-related work ties into a number of programs related to climate change response and resiliency.

Presentation by Sierra Ryan (County, Water Resources): County Water Resources Supply Orientation.

Presentation topics included local water sources and water uses; domestic wells and small water systems; County may play important role for the many wells and small systems that are outside of GSA boundaries; issues in various parts of the county include overdraft, seawater intrusion, nitrate contamination, impacted surface flows, impacts to fish habitat, and others; past three years have had rainfall at 70%, 50% and 70% of average on top of major drought in prior years; areas with water supply challenges; strategies needed in areas where drilling deeper wells is not an option.

Discussion outcomes:

- Discussion of the need to prioritize areas where wells have already gone dry, areas on granite formations, and areas where drilling deeper is not an option;
- Discussion on household water use; our usage is low compared to other parts of the state; already very efficient.



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Presentation by Sean Abbey (County, Water Resources): County Water Resources Supply Orientation – Monitoring and Tools. Presentation topics included Santa Cruz County results from DWR [drought risk tool](#) and State Water Board [aquifer risk tool](#); data collected by County for well permits; additional information needed; groundwater level monitoring; water quality monitoring.

Discussion outcomes:

- Most monitoring wells are in mid-County and Pajaro areas; levels appear to be relatively stable currently;
- Need to leverage the work/resources of the State

Presentation by Sierra Ryan (County, Water Resources): County Water Resources Supply Orientation – Climate Change and Mitigations. Overall trend is warmer and drier; strategies include more monitoring and modeling, increase efficiency but our County is already efficient, expand conjunctive use, develop recycled water and increase recharge. SGMA, regional supply planning, and SB 552 are all part of overall water supply sustainability.

Discussion outcomes:

- Discussion of State requirements around indirect potable water use (potable reuse).
- Discussion of how Working Group members can inform this process.
 - County staff would like input on the best role for the County. Do residents want to inform County of the status of their wells? What do they want from County? Please talk to neighbors and constituents.
 - Suggestions for County or State to provide information about what problems water systems/wells may have, what users can do to be preemptive, and how they can get help with solutions.
 - Think about how to alleviate concerns that may prevent people from sharing information.
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) can provide technical assistance to counties, small water systems and well owners.
- Discussion about collaborating with LAFCO and leveraging the “Connect the Drops” event to perform outreach.
- Next meeting is June 16. Materials will be available in advance.