

PV Water kicks off next phase of basin plan

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WATSONVILLE — A standing-room-only crowd greeted the Board of Directors as the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency introduced its plan Monday to address the Valley's critically overdrafted groundwater basin with local resources and become compliant before the state's 2040 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act mandate.

"We're in the early stages of implementing our Basin Management Plan," PV Water Board Chair Rosemarie Imazio told the crowd during the meeting at the Watsonville Civic Plaza. "That's why it's so important to hear from you."

General Manager Brian Lockwood explained that California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) legislation placed new requirements on communities such as the Pajaro Valley. This legislation mandates that groundwater basins achieve a sustainable water supply by 2040 or the State Water Resources Control Board may intervene and impose pumping restrictions to balance the basin.

Lockwood described PV Water's plan to achieve sustainable water resources. The plan, developed by community members and stakeholders over a two-year period, includes a water conservation program, optimizing existing recharge and recycling facilities, and developing new water supplies.

"The first two components can only provide about two-thirds of the 12,100 acre-feet per year we need to balance the basin," Lockwood said. "We have to utilize new water supplies to make up another 4,000 acre-feet."

The plan proposes utilizing College Lake, northeast of Watsonville. The proposed College Lake Project would increase the storage capacity of the lake, allowing water to be stored, treated and delivered for agricultural irrigation.

Audience members queried PV Water about the proposed College Lake Project timelines for communicating with potentially affected property owners, and the effects of the project on riparian and natural habitat. They also had several questions about proposed and existing recharge facilities, and where the most efficient recharge areas are located within the Valley.

Kirk Schmidt, co-chair of the Basin Management Planning committee and a local farmer, noted that PV Water is ahead of the curve by 30 years and PV Water is going to succeed in meeting the state's mandates by 2025 or 2030.

"We will serve as a model for achieving sustainability without a reduction in agriculture, and we've done it within our own community," he said.

Schmidt encouraged community members to participate in future meetings because "PV Water is reliant on community support to make it all work."

Imazio encouraged the community to get involved by attending board and committee meetings and participating in the environmental review process. PV Water will hold a public scoping meeting this fall for the College Lake Project, initiating the environmental review process.

A copy of the community meeting presentation and fact sheet is available at pvwater.org under the "News" tab and comments can be sent to info@pvwater.org.