



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 1/25/2022

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File #: 22-65

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** Public Works

**Agenda Section:** Public Hearing

**SUBJECT:**

Public Hearing of the Humboldt County Groundwater Sustainability Agency to Consider Adoption of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Eel River Valley Groundwater Basin and Approval of the First Amendment to the Professional Services Agreement with GHD, Inc. Regarding the Provision of Professional Consulting Services Designed to Assist with the Preparation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Eel River Valley Groundwater Basin

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adjourn as the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors;
2. Convene as the governing board of the Humboldt County Groundwater Sustainability Agency and consider the following agenda:
  - a. Roll Call
  - b. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items
  - c. Agenda Items
    - i. Public Hearing Regarding Adoption of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Eel River Valley Groundwater Basin
      1. Open the public hearing
      2. Receive a staff report
      3. Receive comments from the public
      4. Close the public hearing
    5. Adopt the attached resolution adopting the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Eel River Valley groundwater basin
3. Adjourn as the governing board of the Humboldt County Groundwater Sustainability Agency;
4. Reconvene as the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors; and
5. Approve, and authorize the Public Works Director, or a designee thereof, to execute, the attached first amendment to the professional services agreement with GHD, Inc. regarding the provision of professional consulting services designed to assist with the preparation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Eel River Valley groundwater basin.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

General Fund (1100)

DISCUSSION:

On January 4, 2022, the Groundwater Sustainability Agency received an informational report regarding the administrative draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (“GSP”) for the Eel River Valley groundwater basin (“Basin”), prepared in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (“SGMA”). At that meeting, the governing board of the Humboldt County Groundwater Sustainability Agency directed staff to return at the meeting scheduled for January 25, 2022, to consider adoption of the final GSP. SGMA requires submittal of a GSP to the California Department of Water Resources for evaluation and assessment by January 31, 2022. A resolution adopting the final GSP is contained in Attachment 1. The final GSP is contained in Attachment 2.

The draft GSP was revised after reviewing and considering the written comments received during the public comment period and the oral comments received during the January 4, 2022, meeting. Revisions to the draft GSP include the following:

- Background information was added regarding groundwater in California, key principles of SGMA, groundwater rights and the California Department of Water Resources’ process for evaluating and assessing submitted GSPs (Section 1).
- The GSP states more clearly the expectation that upstream surface water diversions from the Potter Valley Project in Mendocino County will be discontinued during the dry season when the Pacific Gas and Electric Company decommissions Scott Dam in the near future (Section 2).
- The GSP incorporates additional discussion of groundwater and surface water elevation data collected in 2021 (Section 4).
- Calculations and discussion regarding the components of the water budget and changes in groundwater storage were updated (Section 5).
- The sustainable yield was determined to be 30,000 acre-feet per year (Section 6).
- The basis for sustainable management criteria, as a percent increase of current pumping levels, was adjusted from 150% to 100% (Section 6).
- Content was added identifying the benefits of a watershed-based approach for actions to enhance surface water flows entering the Basin, including, without limitation, water storage and forbearance, wetland restoration, groundwater recharge and ecologically-based forest thinning (Section 8).
- An appendix was added containing the comment letters on the administrative draft GSP and responses to the comments (Appendix G).
- Content in various sections was clarified and/or completed.

Accordingly, staff recommends that the governing board of the Humboldt County Groundwater Sustainability Agency adopt the attached resolution adopting the final GSP for the Basin.

On August 18, 2020, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors approved the professional services agreement with GHD, Inc. regarding the provision of professional services designed to assist with the preparation of the GSP for the Basin. Additional staff time beyond the original scope of work has been needed for GHD, Inc. to complete data collection and analysis and GSP development tasks. In

addition, a pressure transducer within a monitoring well was vandalized and requires replacement, and the subcontractor cost for monitoring well construction exceeded the originally budgeted amount. Attachment 3 contains an amendment to the professional services agreement adjusting the scope of work and budget accordingly.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Costs to prepare the GSP are funded through a grant from the California Department of Water Resources. The maximum reimbursable amount under this grant is \$1,900,000 pursuant to Grant Agreement No. 4600013562, dated May 14, 2020. Expenditure appropriations related to the professional services agreement with GHD, Inc. are incorporated into the fiscal year 2021-22 budget at revenue line 1100251-800600 and expenditure line 1100251-2118. The attached amendment would increase the budget in GHD, Inc.'s agreement from \$1,450,000 to \$1,620,000. Due to cost savings within other aspects of the project, the attached amendment will not result in a net increase in the project budget. As a result, approval of the attached amendment to the professional services agreement with GHD, Inc. will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund. Costs for implementing the GSP could affect the General Fund. If costs exceed the baseline funding for the Water Management budget unit (1100251), staff will seek guidance and direction on a funding strategy.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

The recommended actions support the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Framework by providing for and maintaining infrastructure and creating opportunities for improved safety and health.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

California Department of Water Resources

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board of Supervisors may choose not to approve the attached first amendment to the professional services agreement with GHD, Inc. regarding the provision of professional services designed to assist with the preparation of the GSP for the Basin. However, this alternative is not recommended because such services are necessary for completion of the GSP, which is a mandatory compliance action.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution Adopting the Groundwater Sustainability Plan
2. Final Eel River Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan
3. First Amendment to the Professional Services Agreement by and between County of Humboldt and GHD, Inc. Regarding the Provision of Professional Consulting Services Designed to Assist with the Preparation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Eel River Valley Groundwater Basin

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: C-29; L-1  
Meeting of: August 18, 2020; January 4, 2022  
File No.: 20-1015; 21-1849