

**SEASIDE GROUNDWATER BASIN WATERMASTER
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 In-Person

Monterey One Water Board Room, 5 Harris Court, Building “D”, Ryan Ranch, Monterey, California

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Oglesby called the meeting to order at 2:00p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

City of Seaside – Mayor Ian Oglesby

City of Sand City – Mayor Mary Ann Carbone

California American Water (CAW) – Director Chris Cook

Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) – Director George Riley

City of Monterey – Council Member Kim Barber

City of Del Rey Oaks – Council Member Kim Shirley

Monterey County/Monterey County Water Resources Agency – Supervisor Wendy Root Askew

Absent:

Coastal Subarea Landowner – Director Paul Bruno

Laguna Seca Subarea Landowner – Director John Gaglioti

Others Present:

Bob Jaques, Watermaster Technical Program Manager (TPM)

Jonathan Lear, MPWMD

Tim O’Halloran, Engineering Manager, CAW

Mike McCullough, External Affairs, Monterey One Water (M1W)

Sheri Damon, City of Seaside City Attorney

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS – There were no public communications.

IV. REVIEW OF AGENDA – There were no requested changes to the agenda.

V. ORAL PRESENTATION

A. 2023 Seawater Intrusion Analysis Report Overview

TPM Jaques introduced Georgina King, Montgomery and Associates, the primary author of the report who narrated presentation slides via teleconference connection. She pointed out locations of the four Seaside Groundwater Basin Watermaster (WM) sentinel wells along the coast, and the FO-10 Well deep and shallow just inland of Sentinel Wells 1 and 2. FO-10 Well deep and shallow is recommended to be destroyed and replaced due to a pipe that may extend to and transmit high chloride water from the Paso Robles aquifer to the deeper Santa Margarita aquifer. Sentinel Wells 1 and 2 are beginning to show increasing conductivity per induction logs. Sentinel Well 3 has a loose transducer and steel cable lodged so conductivity readings are not performed. Sentinel Well 4 is screened at 200-400ft where the majority of production wells are screened (unlike the other two functioning sentinel wells that are at deeper depth). Ms. King recommended in the report that the feasibility of determining chloride concentrations and water quality in the 200-400ft zone around Sentinel Well 4 be assessed and briefed the board on potential methods. At the coast, groundwater levels remain well below sea level (the deep aquifer is 40-60ft below sea level) causing an inland movement of water from beneath the ocean. The Laguna Seca Subarea groundwater levels continue to decrease half a foot a year.

Director Askew felt the conclusions in the report should include a statement that although total production for the year was 826ft below the Natural Safe Yield of the Seaside Groundwater Basin (SGWB), there are other contributing factors such as basin outflow that have precluded any trend toward basin stabilization being realized for many years. The Board requested an estimated amount of annual SGWB outflow be provided at a future meeting. Director Riley acknowledged that the Pure Water Monterey (PWM) projects serve only to meet demand, not to address the need for groundwater level stabilization of the Seaside Basin.

Relating to the report recommendation that the adjacent groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) be made aware of increasing conductivity being an indicator of the possible beginning of seawater intrusion, Director Cook encouraged sharing information across boundaries by having representatives from the Monterey and the Coral de Tierra GSAs present and discuss greater basin issues at Watermaster board meetings.

Sheri Damon, City of Seaside City Attorney addressed the board stating that per the Brown Act due to the item being listed as a presentation on the agenda the board is limited to direction to staff instead of making a formal motion. Watermaster Legal Counsel Hughes stated due to the presentation item having the slides included in the packet, that the recommendations involve surrounding basin agencies, and there is clarity to staff through formal action as opposed to informal discussion, he felt Brown Act requirements were met and recommended action be taken as a motion made by the board.

It was moved by Supervisor Askew, seconded by Mayor Oglesby, and unanimously carried 7-0 to support the recommendations in the 2023 Seawater Intrusion Analysis Report with the addition of a conclusion that states that although total production for the 2023 water year was 826ft below the Natural Safe Yield of the Basin, there are other contributing factors such as basin outflow that have precluded any trend toward stabilization of basin groundwater levels for many years.

B. Pure Water Monterey Expansion Project Status

Mike McCullough, M1W Director of External Affairs presented slides on the status of the project. Startup is estimated in March-May 2025.

C. Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project Desalination Plant

Tim O'Halloran, CAW Engineering Manager presented slides on the status of the project. Low-cost loans and additional grants are being sought. Twenty conditions of approval by the Coastal Commission are being addressed. Construction is anticipated to begin in late 2025.

Director Cook requested every six months a status update on both projects be provided to the board.

Director Cook announced that he would be stepping down from the Watermaster board on February 23rd. He felt the board would be solidifying the foundations for basin sustainability in the next few years, and was excited to have participated and appreciated each member's interest in the basin's health. Chair Oglesby presented Director Cook with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the board. Directors expressed sentiments of serving with Director Cook.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

- A.** Minutes of Regular Board meeting held January 3, 2023
- B.** Summary of Payments made November through December 2023
- C.** Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Reports through December 31, 2023

It was moved by Director Riley, seconded by Director Cook, and unanimously carried 7-0 to approve Consent Calendar Items A-C as presented.

VII. NEW BUSINESS – None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

- A.** Potential funding mechanism options for Replenishment Assessment Fund
Joe Hughes and Alex Dominguez, Watermaster Legal Counsel presented slides and recapped the information provided at previous meetings. Counsel Dominguez covered the methods of revenue collection available to WM. Two dozen Watermaster administered basins were researched and found to have similar structure/authority as the SGWB: Beaumont Basin has annual replenishment and administrative assessments; however, that basin’s judgement additionally recognizes and defines special project funding within its administrative assessments. The Main San Gabriel Basin judgement allows for replenishment assessments and seven or eight types of other assessments to be levied. The Santa Paula Basin is managed by a TAC comprised of various entities; the court looks to the pumpers’ association to issue assessments on the producers within their boundaries under non-profit law—for WM it is pertinent as an option for having another party levy additional assessment. The flexibility in the judgements of these other basins leads counsel to recommend that WM approach the court for additional funding authorities with Counsel providing the court with a specific, extensively detailed plan approved by the WM board. (Counsel Dominguez noted that he has developed a working relationship with the office of Judge Wills now assigned to the WM adjudication and he is familiar with his office’s processes for filings and requests.)

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) among a party or parties to implement additional authorities would have a very limited purpose, for example: 1) having the City of Seaside serve as Watermaster grant applicant; 2) “pass the hat” throughout member agencies for short-term revenue generation; 3) seek court approval for Watermaster/MPWMD MOU for MPWMD to create zones and levy assessments within the zones to fund Watermaster special projects related to basin replenishment; 4) explore water banking as used by many southern California basins for potential application to the SGWB. A fifth option was suggested by Director Riley with regard to the SGWB natural outflow to the north and east that benefits the Monterey/Corral de Tierra Subbasins: partnering with MCWD to benefit in return from its supply of non-native water. Counsel noted that several of the options could be explored together. Director Riley reminded, if additional assessments are pursued, that the entire water service district benefits from the SGWB, not just those within the SGWB boundary. The timeframe for obtaining approval from the court, after getting buy-in from all parties on a package, is estimated to be 60-90 days. Counsel will provide at next meeting for Board prioritization a listing of all options with next steps for each.

- B.** Consider format for future Watermaster board meetings.

It was moved by Supervisor Askew, seconded by Council Member Shirley, and unanimously carried 7-0 to now hold Watermaster board meetings at the City of Sand City Chambers with full Zoom participation for the public, and allow via the traditional Brown Act for a board member to participate via Zoom when unable to attend in person.

IX. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS (No Action Required)

- A.** Watermaster report of production of the Seaside Basin through Water Year 2023
(October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2023)
- B.** Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Monthly Updates December 2023 – January 2024

X. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS – None

XI. STAFF COMMENTS – None

I. CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to Government Code §54956.9(c), the board convened closed session at 4:21 p.m. to confer with district counsel on one matter of potential litigation. The board reconvened in open session at 4:39 p.m. No reportable action was taken.

- II. ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m. to a regular Board meeting to be held Wednesday, March 6, 2024 – 2:00 p.m. in the City of Sand City Council Chambers, in person and remote.

Respectfully submitted by Laura Paxton, Board Secretary