



**Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Domestic Well Owners Workshop – Durham Area
October 1, 2024**

Public Attendees – 16

GSA-affiliated attendees

- Anne Dawson – SHAC, Domestic Well Representative
- Matt Doyle – Board of Directors, Durham Irrigation District

Workshop Topics and Presenters:

- About the GSA – Kamie Loeser
- Well Monitoring Program – Ryan Fullerton, LWA
- Butte County Drought Resiliency Plan – Kamie Loeser and Becky Fairbanks
- 2024/2025 Fee Study – Catherine Hansford, HEC and Schaelene Rollins, RPRC

Well Monitoring Program and Butte County Drought Resiliency Plan Questions and Comments

Will private well water users eventually be charged based on usage (metered)?

Private wells that pump less than 2 acre feet will not be metered.

Why are agricultural wells flooding rice fields and then “selling” it as surface water to So Cal?

Butte County made this practice illegal in the late 1990s.

Is there an average depth of the monitoring network wells? What is a typical average depth for domestic wells? The depth of both well types vary based on location.

Butte County has monitoring wells and provides data to the Department of Water Resources. The GSA uses these monitoring wells to inform its Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

Fee-related Questions/Comments

How much revenue does the GSA need? What is the annual budget? The annual budget is about \$450,000.

How is the GSA fee different from what we pay to Cal Water?

Cal Water is a private water provider regulated by the Public Utilities Commission and the GSA is a state-mandated agency to manage groundwater sustainability.

Concern was expressed about the fee increasing to large sums in future years. There is concern about domestic wells being metered in the future.

Operating revenues may need to increase in future years to continue to advance the work of the GSA. The state does not allow metering on domestic wells. Agriculture wells can be metered.

How was the 2-acre limit for “di minimis” users determined? Two acre-feet was historically considered sufficient to meet the annual needs of a typical household, including both indoor and outdoor water usage. In the Western US, this would have been sufficient water for a homestead.

How will the balance between agriculture/commercial and domestic users' consumption be made equitable in the fee structure?

These considerations are part of the fee study and will be discussed.

What are the environmental beneficiaries of groundwater management?

Groundwater dependent ecosystems are the primary environmental beneficiaries. These are places where groundwater meets the surface (discharging to springs typically), and where rare, threatened, and endangered species often reside.

What is the accountability of funds collected for the GSA to ensure the revenue is only used for operating and management activities versus projects?

The GSA files annual reports including financial reports to demonstrate how GSA funds and grant funds are used.

Domestic Well Owners Perceived Benefits of GSA

- Ability to use well in future years
- Support community vitality
- Sustained water table for all users

Domestic Well Owners General Input on Fee Structure

- Should estimate (water) use based on land type
- Parcel fee: not equitable for every parcel to pay the same amount per year per parcel

Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency Domestic Well Owners Workshop – Chico Area October 2, 2024

Public Attendees – 15

GSA-affiliated attendees

- Anne Dawson – SHAC, Domestic Well Representative
- Claudia Rawlins – Board of Directors, Domestic Well Owner Representative
- Michael Parker – Department of Water Resources

Workshop Topics and Presenters:

- About the GSA – Kamie Loeser
- Well Monitoring Program – Kamie Loeser and Becky Fairbanks
- Butte County Drought Resiliency Plan – Kamie Loeser and Becky Fairbanks
- 2024/2025 Fee Study – Catherine Hansford, HEC and Schaelene Rollins, RPRC

Note: Well Monitoring Program and Butte County Drought Resiliency Plan questions not captured.

General Comments

Water table “acceptable limits” in the GSP could be concerning for domestic wells and have negative environmental impacts.

Fee Related Comments/Questions:

Concern was expressed about the impact of Tuscan Water District and that it could create an unfair advantage for agricultural wells over domestic wells. Even without a drought, TWD could still impact domestic wells. Top concerns with TWD are well impacts, cost and loss of control for domestic well owners.

The \$2.53 cost per acre is not a concern for those with small parcels. In fact, the cost should be more.

The fee based on acreage with no clear understanding of the property type is flawed. An example given was: My 2-acre parcel can be fully watered. Another parcel with 25 acres located on a cliff that cannot use water is charged more yet uses less water. Some get a better deal.

Even if rangeland claims the ranch doesn't water, it does need water to grow feed and provide water for cattle. But, that source of water has been springs, not wells.

What is the current fee?

The Board adopted a fee at a maximum of \$3.09 per acre. The 2023/2024 fee was \$1.54 per acre and the 2024/2025 fee is \$2.53 per acre.

Are only well owners charged?

No, all property owners that pay a property tax bill within the GSA boundaries are charged.

Is the current fee a use fee or admin fee?

The current fee is for GSA operations and management. It is a set fee charged per acre of a parcel. The amount of water used on a parcel is not part of the equation, only the acreage.

Voting Exercise Tally

The Domestic Well Owners Workshops included a voting exercise on six questions with a yes or no explanation. The results are below:

Base Fee: Should properties pay a base fee for the management of groundwater as prescribed by the State?

	Durham	Chico	Total
Yes	10	8	18
No	5	1	6
Undecided	0	3	3

If there is a Base Fee: Should the Base Fee apply to ALL parcels in the Vina GSA boundary?

	Durham	Chico	Total
Yes	11	8	19
No	3	4	7
Undecided	0	1	1

Minimum Parcel Fee: Is a minimum parcel fee preferred? Example of a minimum fee –

A base fee is set at \$1.00 per acre. A 5,000 square foot lot (0.115 acres) with a 2-bedroom home on it would NOT pay a fee because the fee amount is \$0.11 (too low for the County to include on the property tax bill). A minimum fee would be applied to this parcel.

	Durham	Chico	Total
Yes	16	1	17
No	1	9	10
Undecided	0	1	1

Differentiating by Purpose of Water Use: Should the fee structure account for differences in water use by Agriculture and Municipal users?

	Durham	Chico	Total
Yes	12	11	23
No	2	0	2
Undecided	0	2	2

Domestic Water Consumption: Should the fee for domestic water users – including private well owners - differentiate for quantity of water used by Residential, Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional users?

	Durham	Chico	Total
Yes	7	10	17
No	6	2	8
Undecided	0	1	1

Agricultural Water Consumption: Should the fee for agricultural water users differentiate for quantity of water used by different crops?

	Durham	Chico	Total
Yes	11	12	23
No	4	1	5
Undecided	0	1	1

Note: Not all attendees voted or voted on all boards. The “Undecided” was initiated by a participant at the Chico meeting by voting on the center line between the Yes and No columns; nobody voted this way at the Durham workshop.