

Groundwater Management Plan Committee

August 10, 2017

12pm – 2pm @ Festival Hall Room #2

Committee Members

Joe Melling	Brent Hunter	Spencer Jones	Paul Bittmenn
Paul Cozzens	Paul Nelson	Ramon Prestwich	Rob Dotson
Reed Erickson	Paul Monroe		

Other Attendees:

Senator Evan Vickers

Representative John Westwood

Roice Nelson

Minutes

Items of Discussion

1. Review Minutes
 - Motion to approve by Erickson, Second by Dotson

2. Conservation

Brent Hunter – 80% of the water in the State is used by agriculture and there is continual pressure for agriculture to conserve. New technologies and options are coming and they include: drip irrigation, and for pivots bubbling and drag behind systems.

The drip irrigation systems save lots of water and get higher production in alfalfa because they never have to turn them off. We are not aware of any of these in the State of Utah but they are proving high yield crops elsewhere. One known issue is you must replace the drip system if you plan on plowing to rotate a crop.

USU has installed the bubbling system at three different pivots in Iron County. One of those is at Brent Hunter's farm. It will be quite expensive to increase the number of bubblers that will need to be installed. Brent said in comparison to his other farms the bubbling system yield is as good or better.

The drip drag system is being used in Texas on a 270-acre pivot using only 500 gpm. We would have to use 2000 gpm in this valley.

Currently the power companies are incentivizing farmers to become more efficient and will pay a portion of the cost for farmers to replace nozzles, install variable frequency drives and a list of other products to help reduce power. This conservation in power usually relates to a conservation in water as well. Farmers can also save by going off peak power. The power rate is 3x higher during the day vs night/off peak, said Hunter.

We could save 1/3 of the water we use through pivots by installing these systems, said Hunter. Hunter Proposed to Westwood and Vickers that if the State of Utah could help incentivize the farmers to convert their pivots over to these more efficient sprinklers, the power company could pitch in and the remaining could be picked up through the State Agriculture Resource Development Loans (ARDL) then farmers could make the feasible switch. The farmer he would make the saving up in power utility savings. Agriculture uses 80% of the water in Utah and a savings of 1/3 of that would make a huge impact.

John Westwood was not sure is the State would fund it, but said we could try.

Reed – There is a need to set the duty to adjust for the savings.

Vickers –There needs to be a record of how many acres are in pivots and what type of appropriation the State would need to come up with.

Evan Vickers said he would talk to Commissioner Adams and the State Engineer and test the water on running a bill. The state needs to take a lead on these basins that are over-appropriated.

Rob Dotson said the State needs to do a better job of educating the public on non-use. People use water to prove up on their water even if it's not beneficial.

3. Financial responsibility of the State of Utah for administrative action leading to over drafting the valley aquifer

Melling – Administrative changes – the State has changed policies which introduced groundwater withdrawals into areas of concern. The decline started in 1930's after the 1980's we were brought back to equilibrium. Does the State have skin in the game for making these erroneous changes? We need technical skills to determine these questions.

Erickson – Mike Styler at the Southern Utah Summit said we need additional funding to Adjudicate or it will take us 300+ years at current staff levels to pull it off.

Melling – We are not going to run out of water, but can we afford to get water from those depths?

4. Ideas and language to draft the GMP plan and direction.

Ideas and suggestions were added to the draft plan

5. Public Comment (Limit to 3 minutes each)

Roice Nelson – It is uneconomic to build a pipeline from the West Desert – There are three aquifers untapped in our basin. What is new water? – if it is not taking away from old water. There is an aquifer up the canyon 40% porosity of rocks up the canyon and that is an untapped aquifer. There is an aquifer in the Quartz Monzonite west of Cedar and another along the eastern bench of the basin.

6. Next Meeting Date

- a. September 14, 2017 Cedar City Council Chambers