Tips and Talking Points for Community Participation

Each stakeholder has unique perspectives, priorities, constraints, and resources related to groundwater. This creates both challenges and opportunities when defining and quantifying sustainability. For this reason, community participation is important to ensure that the thresholds are protective of your interests and inclusive of community priorities. In other words, that the thresholds prioritize access to safe water and equitable supply and are protective of domestic wells and small water systems.

Tips for Participating in Defining Sustainability

- Tell your story/share your knowledge
- Describe why your priorities are important to you and/or other communities
- Partner with other communities
- Identify common ground
- Ask questions
- Request supporting documents or additional information
- Ask for more time to review materials and consider options
- Offer recommendations
- Seek technical assistance

Talking Points to Share your Vision for Sustainability

When telling your story, remember that you are the expert about your community. It is important for all groundwater users to talk about their groundwater needs, goals and priorities. You can share your community's water challenges and your desired results for the area's water supply.

In a setting with multiple visions for sustainability, it can be challenging to create a shared vision. Here are some ways you can describe why your priorities are important to you and/or other communities.

- My community has lacked safe drinking water for many years. Many other communities are experiencing similar challenges. I would like to address the problem/prevent more communities from losing their sources of clean drinking water.
- Preserving our groundwater levels is important to me because our community is relying on a single well.
- SGMA creates an opportunity to protect/improve community water sources – let's not miss our opportunity.

When engaging with multiple stakeholders, it is important to identify common ground. Here's how you can start the conversation:

- Everyone wants healthy and thriving communities.
- Preserving/improving community water supplies is equally important to maintaining a healthy economy.
- There are several benefits to GSAs if they chose to play a more active role in addressing water quality (increase of funding opportunities, data sharing and more multi-benefit solutions).

Critical Questions for Defining Sustainability Goals

- How will we know if undesirable results are occurring now and in the future?
- How is the GSA addressing data gaps?
- Does the minimum threshold exceed an existing federal, state, or local standard?
- Was the threshold developed through a transparent public process?
- Does the threshold violate the threshold of neighboring basins?
- Does the threshold allow negative impacts to continue or worsen?
- Does a given threshold conflict with the thresholds for other undesirable results?
- How will we know when we have crossed a minimum threshold?
- Will the water allocations take into account current drinking water supplies/need for additional and/or new sources?
- How will we check our progress towards sustainability?
- How will we know if we have reached the basin's sustainability goal?

Examples of Sustainability Indicators and Sustainability Goals

Groundwater Levels	
Limit Groundwater Extraction	Reduce groundwater extractions by 150,000 acre feet (AF) per year.
Limit the decline in groundwater elevation to provide for sustainable yield	Average decline in groundwater levels must not exceed 30 feet over the next 50 years.
Degraded Quality	
Maintain high-quality groundwater by limiting contaminant concentrations	Nitrate concentration should not exceed 10 mg/L.

The examples above were published in the Measuring What Matters report developed by the Union of Concerned Scientists. To access the full report, visit: http://bit.ly/MeauringWhatMatters.

Technical Assistance

Self-Help Enterprises
Maria Herrera, (559) 802-1676, MariaH@selfhelpenterprises.org

- Outreach and Education
- Direct Community Assistance (e.g. coordination, facilitation, and translation services)
- GSP Development Assistance, including Planning and Project Development

Community Water Center
Adriana Renteria, (559) 733-0219, Adriana.Renteria@communitywatercenter.org

- Outreach and Education
- GSP Development Assistance
- DAC Vulnerability Tool

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Amanda Monaco, (559) 369-2788 ext. 1003, amonaco@leadershipcounsel.org

- Outreach and Education
- GSP Development Assistance
- Identification of Community Water Projects
- Procurement of Professional Services (analysis)

Working Towards Thresholds that are Protective of Community Water Supplies

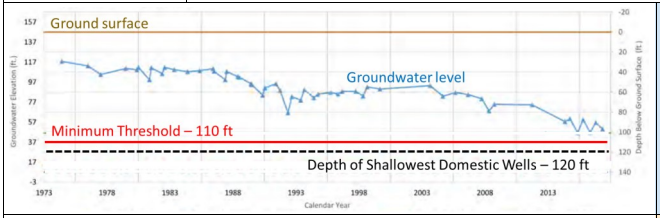
The examples and potential questions below for two undesirable results — **lowering of groundwater levels** and **degraded water quality** — can help you navigate conversations about undesirable results. Avoiding these two undesirable results are particularly important to those who rely on shallower wells, a single source of water and/or those who want to avoid zones with contaminated water (i.e. small water systems, private well owners, and small farms).

For more information about setting thresholds or other undesirable results please reference the Best Management Practices developed by the Department of Water Resources for the Sustainable Management Criteria: http://bit.ly/SustainableManagementCriteria and the Measuring What Matters report developed by the Union of Concerned Scientists: http://bit.ly/UCSMeasuringWhatMatters.

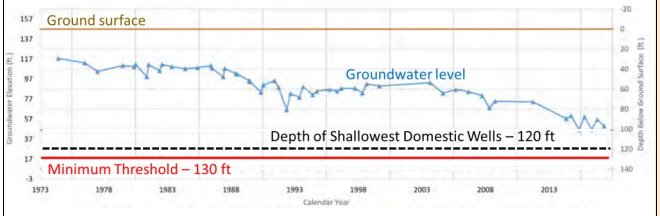
Lowering of Groundwater (GW) Levels

In general, shallower wells (small water systems and domestic wells) are less than 200 feet deep in the Central Valley, but deeper wells (major irrigation, dairy, and urban wells) can be as deep as 3,500 feet. Important questions to ask are:

- What is the average elevation/depth of the shallowest domestic wells in the region? Is the proposed MT lower or higher than the average elevation/depth of shallowest domestic wells?
- Do the thresholds (MT and MO) for groundwater levels take into account the potential impacts to small systems and households relying on shallower wells?



Example: As you can see in the figure, the MT is **protective of domestic** wells as it is set above the depth of shallowest domestic wells. A MT set at that level will more likely not result in dry wells and other problems associated with lowering of groundwater levels.



Example: As you can see in the figure, the MT is **not protective of domestic** wells as it is set below the depth of shallowest wells. A MT set at that level will more likely result in dry wells. In such cases, important questions to ask of your GSA are:

- How many wells will run dry with the MT set at that level?
- What actions are proposed to mitigate and help those that rely on shallower wells who will most likely be impacted if the MT is set at that level?

Degraded Quality

Based on the assessment of groundwater basin conditions, GSAs will have to determine which of the contaminants (e.g. nitrates, arsenic, TDS, DBCP, TTHM, uranium) will be included to measure **sustainability** in the region. In general, communities served by small water systems and private well owners are the ones who struggle the most if the groundwater is contaminated. This is due to the implementation, operation and maintenance of treatment systems which can be very expensive and generally require technical expertise. Important questions to ask of your GSA are:

- What water contaminants will our Groundwater Sustainability Plan focus on? Why?
- Do the proposed thresholds (MT and MO) defer to existing local, state or federal regulations? If not, why?

Existing Water Quality Standards	What is your GSA recommending?
⇒ MCL Nitrate (N) = 10 mg/L ⇒ MCL Arsenic = 0.01 mg/L ⇒ MCL TDS = 500 mg/L ⇒ MCL DBCP = 0.0002 mg/L ⇒ MCL Uranium = 20 pCi/L ⇒ MCL 1, 2, 3 TCP = 5 PPT ⇒ MCL Manganese =0.05 mg/L ⇒ MCL Iron = 0.3 mg/L	Example: MTs equal or lower than the MCLs in existing regulations and protective of safe drinking water supply.
	Example: MTs higher than the MCLs differ from existing regulations and are not protective of safe drinking water supply. In such cases, important questions to ask are: • Why does the MT differ from existing regulations? • How many wells can be considered contaminated (i.e. nitrates, arsenic, etc.) if the MT is set at that level? • What actions are proposed to mitigate and help those who will most likely be impacted if the MT is set at that level?