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?
- If negative impacts are allowed to continue or worsen, who or what is affected, and what is the planned course of action to remediate damage?
- 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 are the effects of climate change being incorporated into setting the sustainability goal?
- 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/UCSMeasuringWhatMatters.

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)

Union of Concerned Scientists
Coreen Weintraub, (510) 809-1566, cweintraub@ucsusa.org

- Access to Volunteer Scientists and Experts in Water and Related Fields
- Groundwater Technical Assistance Tool: http://bit.ly/GWTechnicalAssistanceTool