SGMA Through a Planning Lens

- A look inside the mind of a planner
  - What does SGMA look like to a planner?
  - What is a planner’s job?
- Where does water flow into planning practice?
- Practice tips for SGMA implementation
SGMA Requirements Are Deceptively Simple

GSAs must:
- “Take into account” general plan assumptions” in GSP
- Be consistent with general plan if adopting extraction limits
- Report on the anticipated effect of general plan amendments on GSP implementation

Planning Agencies must:
- Review & consider GSP when amending general plan
- Refer “substantial” general plan changes to GSAs
A Familiar Process for Planners

- Preserve local land use authority for cities and counties
- General Plans should be foundational and stable
  - Don’t reinvent the planning wheel for every project
  - General Plan is the starting point: GSPs must “account for” general plan assumptions
- But … every project is different, so implementation is challenging
  - SGMA doesn’t speak to general plan implementation
What Is Planning In This Context?

• A plan for physical development that reflects a community’s shared social values
  • Helps residents & developers build the kind of community they envision for themselves
• Community values are embedded in the plan whether they are explicitly stated or not
• Social values are complex and highly subjective, and variable over time
Core Planning Principles: The 3 Es

Three Es: Economy, environment and equity

• Process is full of trade-offs and the need to balance among competing and/or conflicting values & outcomes

• Planners must strive to serve the “public interest” that is a function of all these variables and values

• Not zero-sum!
Where Does Water Flow Into Planning Practice?
Land Development Drives Water Demand

- Land use type
- Land use design & intensity
- Density
- Location in relation to water sources
Land use → water demand → demand management

- On-site conservation and water use efficiency
- State mandated landscape water efficiency
- On-site non-potable water reuse
- Zero net water use – NetBlue
Water Resource Protection

- Location and design of new development
- Storm water management
- Protection/enhancement of recharge areas
- Wetlands & riparian protection
- Water related ecosystem services
- Water-dependent ecosystems
Water Infrastructure & Public Safety

- Storage
- Conveyance (including recycled water)
- Water management (especially recharge and storm water)
- Flooding and other hazard mitigation
- Protecting water quality
- Assessing vulnerability and risk
- Climate change
Equity and Environmental Justice

- Safe, reliable water supply
- Environmental Health, including wastewater disposal
- Socially disproportionate impacts
- Disadvantaged communities
It All Happens In A Political Context

- Land use decisions made by local elected or appointed officials
- CA still values home rule, mostly; one reason that SGMA focuses on local management of groundwater
- Values vary by locality and over time
- Land use decisions are based on political geography, not groundwater basins, watersheds or other natural system boundaries
Summary: How to Think About Planning

- Values-driven
- Multi-dimensional; water is everywhere in planning
- It’s political
- It happens on a public stage
- Process is an essential component
Back to SGMA Mandates

• Planning agencies must review, consider and refer
• GSAs must account for the general plan and report on anticipated effects

This means that …
• Planning agencies need not do anything until they “substantially amend” their general plan
• No express requirement for consistency between general plan & GSP

Plenty of opportunities to stay in our silos!
Practice Tips from a Planner

• Planners need water managers on their team, and visa versa
  • Planning is by nature inter-disciplinary, not multi-disciplinary
  • Leadership is key
• Successful community planning is based on relationships
  • Start early and work your relationships to avoid surprises
• Have a *plan for planning*; know the process and plan for managing public engagement
• Understand that planning has traditional limits (rural residential & ag land uses)
Practice Tips from a Planner

GSP adoption is only the beginning
• How can the general plan and the planning process support GSP implementation and groundwater sustainability?
  • Not just a matter of consistency
  • Groundwater sustainability should be a general plan goal too
  • Does the general plan need updating to fully reflect GSP implementation?
• GSP will be the new CEQA baseline for groundwater impacts
  • Planning agencies and planners will need training & orientation
  • GSAs can help with implementation
Thank You!

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