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### WORKSHOP SUMMARY

#### **Groundwater in the Eel River Valley: Responding to the New State Groundwater Legislation**

Monday, April 27, 2015 10:00 am - Noon  
Humboldt County Agriculture Center (5630 S. Broadway, Eureka)

#### **Overview**

The workshop was convened by Humboldt County Public Works and UC-Cooperative Extension. 36 people signed the sign-in sheet. Supervisor Rex Bohn welcomed the workshop attendees on behalf of Humboldt County. Supervisor Bohn noted that the Rural County Representatives of California ([www.rcrcnet.org](http://www.rcrcnet.org)) has provided assistance by distributing information and convening workshops in response to the new legislation.

Hank Seemann (Humboldt County Public Works) provided an overview of the new state groundwater legislation and how it applies to the Eel River Valley. The legislation requires designation of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eel River Valley by 2017 and adoption of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan by 2022. The legislation authorizes the Groundwater Sustainability Agency to apply a variety of management tools (including requiring well meters and limiting extractions), however these tools are discretionary and not mandatory. Historical groundwater level data collected by the state Department of Water Resources (DWR) for wells located in Ferndale, Loleta, and Fortuna were presented. Historical groundwater levels in the wells monitored by DWR appear to be generally stable and do not indicate an overdraft condition. Key data and information gaps were identified: location of important recharge areas, details of groundwater and surface water interactions, groundwater levels along the Van Duzen River, aggregate pumping rates within the valley, and an overall water budget for the basin. The proposal for a stakeholder working group to help formulate a groundwater program in response to the legislation was presented.

Gary Simpson (SHN Consulting Engineers and Geologists, Inc.) provided an overview of the geologic setting for groundwater in the Eel River Valley. The valley contains three primary aquifers. The near-surface aquifer is alluvium (with thicknesses ranging from less than 100 feet to over 200 feet), underlain by units of the Carlotta or Hookton Formations. The aquifer system varies in configuration, size, and composition throughout the valley.

John Vevoda (Ferndale dairyman, California Farm Bureau) provided opening remarks from the agricultural producer perspective. Mr. Vevoda expressed a preference for local control and a concern about how the legislation addresses the concept of "beneficial use." Mr. Vevoda stated that future management decisions should account for the fact that not all extraction is pumping from the same source (different aquifers will have different yields and recharge rates).

Merritt Perry (City of Fortuna) expressed the City's interest in collaborating on regional groundwater issues. Fortuna depends on groundwater for its municipal water supply and is the largest municipal water user within the basin. The City has a network of five monitoring wells which have been monitored for over 15 years. Mr. Perry expressed preference for local control of groundwater management decisions.

Brad Job (Pacific Watershed Associates) discussed the role of groundwater within the hydrologic cycle and linkages between groundwater and surface water. Mr. Job emphasized the need for good data to support management decisions and encouraged proactive management to prevent irreversible impacts, which have occurred elsewhere.

David Spinosa (Humboldt County, Division of Environmental Health) provided an overview of the County's existing permitting program for the installation of groundwater wells. Construction standards are applied to prevent contamination from reaching the subsurface and impacting groundwater quality.

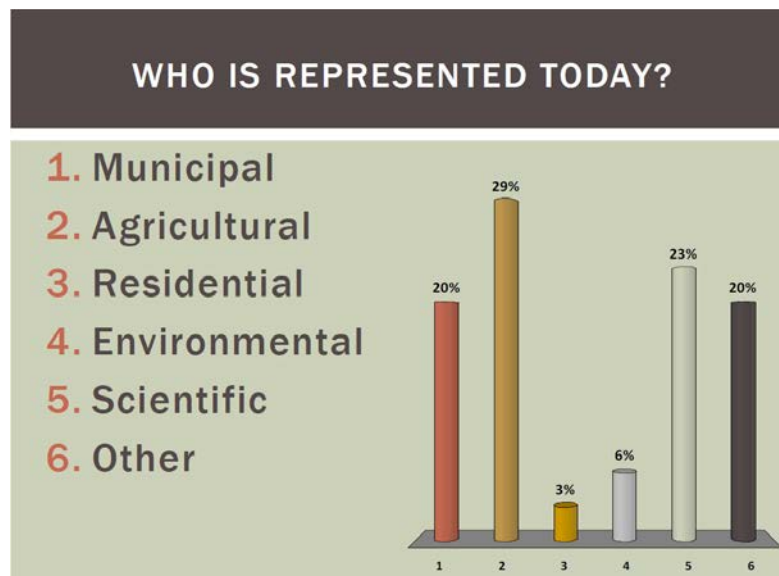
### Comments

Comments raised by workshop attendees included the following:

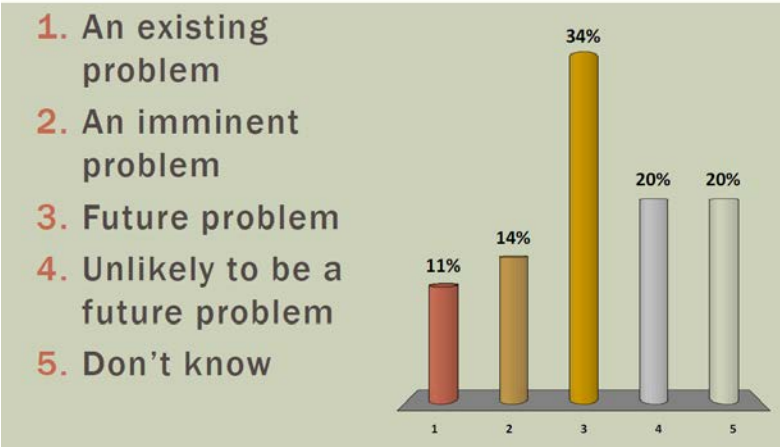
- There is a rapid increase in the number of groundwater wells and the amount of groundwater pumping throughout the County, while this process is only focusing on the Eel River Valley groundwater basin. The rest of the County should not be overlooked.
- Understanding the basic size and parameters of the aquifers within the basin is necessary for adequate management.
- The approach should aim to meet the minimum requirements while acknowledging that we are not reacting to a crisis.
- The basin boundaries are too small and should be expanded to include recharge areas and the effects of upstream users.
- The ranking criteria used by DWR to designate the Eel River Valley basin as medium priority is questionable and should be reviewed to verify that the ranking is warranted.
- More data will lead to better decisions.
- The City of Rio Dell's primary water supply source is the Eel River but the City will need to rely on groundwater resources during droughts and other emergencies.
- There is a need to quantify existing conditions and project future demands.
- More information is needed on groundwater and surface water connections.
- The approach should address the mandatory requirements with a minimum of regulation and fees.
- The approach should be based on equitable use and shared responsibility for management.
- Less governance and incentive-based approaches are desired.
- Agricultural producers have a need to continue to efficiently irrigate pastures.

### Feedback

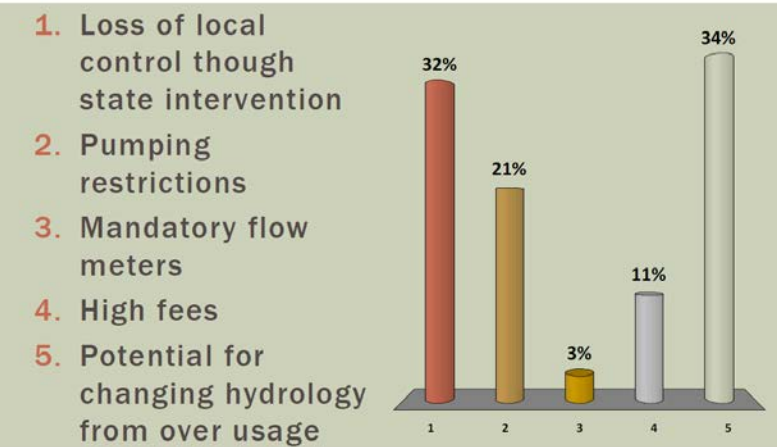
At the end of the workshop, a series of seven questions was presented to the audience for feedback. The questions and responses are summarized below:



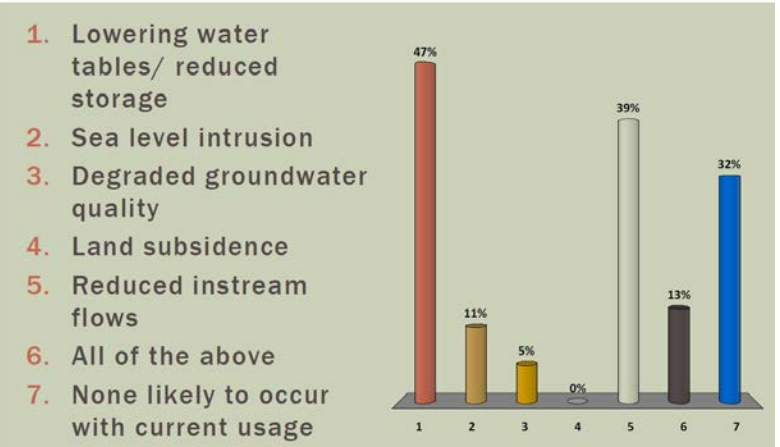
### IN YOUR OPINION, THE STATE OF GROUND WATER FOR THE EEL RIVER BASIN IS?



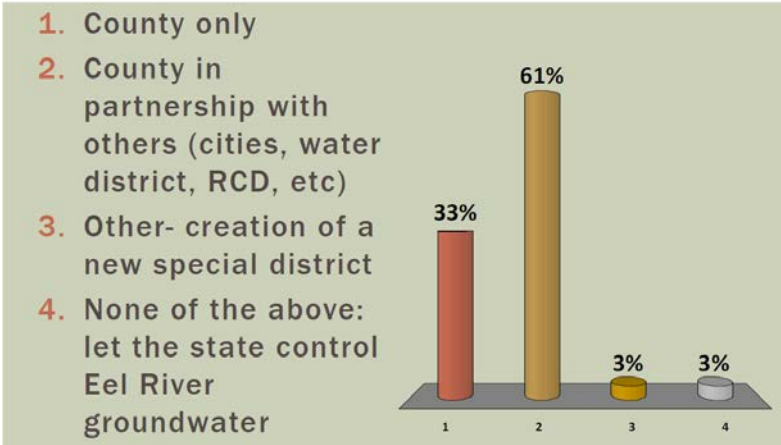
### WHICH ISSUES ARE MOST IMPORTANT?



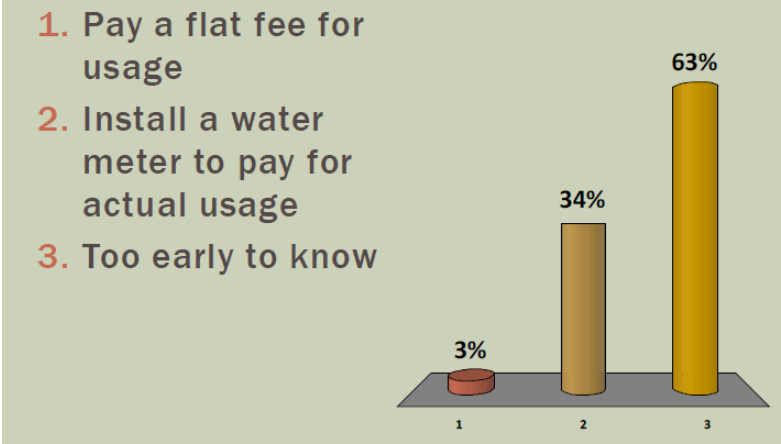
### ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT? (PICK TOP TWO ITEMS)



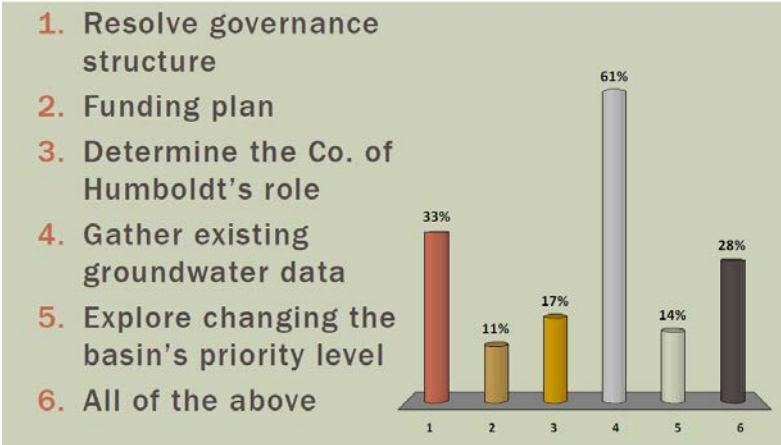
### WHAT SHOULD GROUND WATER AGENCY GOVERNANCE BE?



### IF FEES ARE NECESSARY, WOULD YOU PREFER TO?



### WHAT SHOULD BE THE PRIORITIES FOR THE WORKING GROUP? (PICK TOP TWO)



**List of Attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Interested in Participating in Working Group</b>
Ben Dolf	Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	Yes
Brad Job	Pacific Watershed Associates	Yes
Carolyn Hawkins	Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	
Cheryl Laffranchi	Northcoast Pumphouse	Maybe
Chris Howard	Alexandre EcoDairy Farms	
Clif Clendenen	Clendenen's Cider Works, Humboldt County Farm Bureau	Yes
David Manthorne	Cal. Department of Fish & Wildlife	
David Spinosa	Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health	
Denver Nelson	Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Committee, dairy owner	Yes
Doreen Hansen	Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	
Estelle Fennel	Humboldt County Board of Supervisors	
Frances Tjarnstrom	Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	Yes
Gary Markegard	Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	
Gary Simpson	SHN Consulting Engineers and Geologists	
Hank Seemann	Humboldt County Public Works Department	
Jay Russ	Humboldt County Farm Bureau, cattle rancher	Yes
Jeffrey Stackhouse	University of California Cooperative Extension	
Johanna Rodoni	Buckeye Conservancy, Humboldt County Farm Bureau	
John Vevoda	California Farm Bureau, Humboldt County Farm Bureau, dairyman	Yes
Jon Shultz	USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service	Yes
Julie Houtby	American AgCredit	
Justin Ebrahemi	HSU graduate student	
Katherine Zeimer	Humboldt County Farm Bureau	
Kyle Knopp	City of Rio Dell	Yes
Lee Mora	Humboldt Grassfed Beef	Yes
Marcus Drumm	Loleta Community Services District	Yes
Mark Smelser	California Department of Fish & Wildlife	
Melissa Lema	Western United Dairymen	Yes
Merritt Perry	City of Fortuna	
Nancy Trujillo	Riverside Community Services District	Yes
Nick Angeloff	Rio Dell Planning Commission, Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce	
Pat Higgins	Eel River Recovery Project	
Patrick Sullivan	GHD, Inc.	Yes
Randy Hooper	Del Norte County	
Rex Bohn	Humboldt County Board of Supervisors	
Robert Vogt	Humboldt County Public Works Department	
Russ Forsburg	American AgCredit	
Scott Greacon	Friends of the Eel River	Yes
Tom Gast	Fisheries consultant	Yes
Troy Hubner	Del Oro Water Company	
Vivian Helliwell	Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations	Yes
Yana Valachovic	University of California Cooperative Extension	