



Agenda Item No.

File Code No.

# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

### ITEM 5B

**AGENDA DATE:** February 9, 2016

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

**SUBJECT:** Authorization To Submit A Request For A Groundwater Basin Boundary Modification

#### RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt a resolution authorizing the Public Works Director to submit a request to the California Department of Water Resources for a groundwater basin boundary modification for the Foothill Groundwater Basin, which is a sub-basin of the Santa Barbara Groundwater Basin.

#### DISCUSSION:

In accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) implemented a process by which local agencies may submit requests to DWR to modify existing groundwater basin boundaries as they are currently defined in DWR's report on their groundwater investigations, known as Bulletin 118 (update 2003). The boundaries were developed by DWR and not necessarily informed by the same breadth and depth of information local agencies have acquired of their own basins through years or decades of study and management. DWR's boundary modification process presents agencies with the opportunity to modify the state's recognized basin boundaries to better align with the boundaries recognized by local agencies, improving coordination and basin management. In order to submit a request for a groundwater basin boundary modification to the State, the Santa Barbara City Council must adopt a resolution authorizing staff to submit such a request.

The City has been working in partnership with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) on groundwater investigations for decades, and have produced multiple technical reports describing the basin characteristics. The Foothill basin boundary recognized by the City and is described in the 1989 USGS Report 89-4017, *Geohydrology of the Foothill Groundwater Basin near Santa Barbara, California*, prepared by John Freckleton (1989 Freckleton report).

In DWR's Bulletin 118 (update 2003), the written description of the basin is accurate and is consistent with the 1989 Freckleton report. However, the mapped boundaries

developed by DWR using Geographic Information System (GIS) software do not reflect those shown in the 1989 Freckleton report. The discrepancy is on the northern boundary of the Basin, as shown in Figure A. Staff has spoken with DWR about the discrepancy, and DWR has requested the City go through the basin boundary modification process for any adjustment to the GIS maps.

The proposed basin boundary modification, subject to DWR's approval, would align DWR's spatial depiction of the basin with the City's recognized basin boundary as defined in multiple USGS technical reports, mainly Freckleton's 1989 report. While the area omitted by DWR is relatively unpopulated and well pumping is not located in the vicinity, it has been documented as an area that significantly contributes to natural recharge of the basin. Therefore, management of this portion of the basin is important.

The Foothill basin does not border any groundwater basins to the north, so this request does not entail boundary modifications to any neighboring groundwater basins. As part of this process, neighboring water agencies will be provided notification of the City's intent to modify basin boundaries at least two weeks prior to submitting the request to DWR, through a public noticing process.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 has the potential to provide local agencies such as the City with more resources to better manage groundwater basins. The SGMA provides local agencies the authority to become a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for a DWR-recognized basin and develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) for that basin. However, a GSA's management authority only extends to the basin boundaries recognized by DWR, so accurate basin boundaries are integral to efficient management of the basin. Securing a basin boundary modification at this time would ensure the correct basin boundaries for the Foothill Basin would appear within the next Bulletin 118 update and allow all portions of the Foothill basin to be managed by a GSA should one form in the future.

**ATTACHMENTS:** 1) Figure A. Groundwater Basin Boundaries

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**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office