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Modesto Subbasin Stakeholder Assessment Results Summary

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Discussion Topics

1. Assessment Approach
2. Assessment Participants
3. Assessment Findings
4. Key Takeaways and
Recommendations

Assessment Approach

Assessment Purpose

- Identify overarching perspectives and expectations from stakeholders on the GSP development and implementation process and regional groundwater management scenarios and the.
- Gather information on current and historic groundwater conditions in the subbasin.
- Assess level of knowledge about SGMA and groundwater management practices.
- Establish goals and strategies for public outreach, communication, and engagement for SGMA compliance.

Assessment Approach



Online Stakeholder
Survey



Pre-Interview
Questionnaire



Focus Group
Interviews

Assessment Topics

- Water use in the Modesto Subbasin
- Methods for public engagement and participation
- Knowledge of SGMA
- Goals for the SGMA process
- Barriers to development of the GSP
- Groundwater management scenarios
- Funding for GSP implementation

Assessment Participation At-a-Glance



161 survey results



27 stakeholders
invited to focus
group interviews



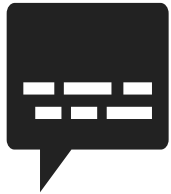
5 focus group
interviews



15 stakeholders
interviewed

Assessment Findings

Notes on Icons



= Findings Primarily from Stakeholder Survey



= Findings Primarily from Focus Groups



= Findings Primarily from Mix of Stakeholder Survey and Focus Groups

Assessment Findings
Public Outreach and Engagement



Interest in Participating in GSP Development Process

- Agricultural water users are more knowledgeable about SGMA than municipal water users.
- There is low interest in participating from urban water users.
- There is medium-to-high level interest in participating from agricultural water users, especially in the eastern part of the subbasin.
- Agricultural water users are interested in how SGMA is going to affect their operations.

“Agricultural water users are already aware is what is going on. Beyond that, **we need to engage environmental and municipal users.**”



Communication Channels

- Participants primarily get information about their water supply from **their local water provider, water quality reports, and regional industry association.**
- Other trusted messengers in the community include county farm bureaus and local newspapers.

Trusted Messengers in the Region

- Manufacturers Council of the San Joaquin Valley
- Almond Alliance
- Western United Dairies
- Stanislaus County Farm Bureau



Key Takeaways on Public Outreach and Engagement

- There is a low level of interest in SGMA from the general public, especially in urban areas.
- People will care most about how this may financially impact them.
- Many agricultural water users are distrustful of state agencies and regulations.
 - Agricultural water users feel that they are being overregulated.

“One of the problems we have is that **many of the farmers in the Subbasin don’t understand the impact of SGMA**...It’s going to be a reach to convince them to show up and make them think there is going to be an impact to their water supply. You will get more people to show up for the financial impact. “

Assessment Findings
Water Use in the Region



Priorities for Water Use in the Region

- Both agricultural and municipal water users both felt that water for “health and human safety” is the top priority for water use in the region.
- Water for “preserving the economy” was ranked last overall.
- Several focus group participants felt that “growing food” and “preserving the economy” were synonymous.

“I’m encouraged and surprised that agricultural and municipal survey respondents had similar top interests. I think there is a perception that farmers only care about growing food and the economy, but this survey shows that agricultural water users think health and human safety is a top concern for water use.



Top Water Supply Challenges the Region is Facing

- Both agricultural and municipal water users both felt that the top water supply challenge facing the region was the **State Water Resources Control Board Bay-Delta Plan**.
- Survey respondents felt **groundwater contamination** was also a top challenge, while focus group participants did not.
- Other top challenges included lack of groundwater recharge projects, overdraft by agriculture, and government regulation.

Assessment Findings
GSP Development



Goals for a Successful GSP

- Includes a framework for creating better water management practices.
- Includes some sort of incentive to help ensure that this new framework is adopted and adhered to.
- Balances diverse water needs.
- Ensures long-term reliability of the region's groundwater resources.



Goals for a Successful GSP (con.)

- Meets legal requirements and is approved by DWR.
- Identifies and described the needs of each stakeholder/beneficial user group.
- Quantifies how much groundwater extraction is happening and how much recharge is needed.



Barriers to Development of a Successful GSP

The top barriers identified by assessment participants were:

- Lack of funding and lack of consensus on who should pay for the projects/actions identified in the GSP.
- Government “red tape,” particularly from state agencies, potentially hindering project construction and implementation.
- Opposition from environmental groups.

“Lack of defined funding to accomplish all the projects and fear of unknown of what’s is going to cost to get stakeholders to engage and buy-off in projects.”

Assessment Findings
Management Scenarios



Groundwater Management Activities

- Both agricultural and municipal water users wanted to see more **groundwater recharge and water storage projects.**
- Municipal water users also suggested water conservation and water recycling.

“Groundwater recharge should be an important part of the plan.”

“The only way to ensure the subbasin is sustainable is increasing surface water storage.”



Funding for Groundwater Management Activities

- Both survey respondents and focus group participants felt that activities should be paid for using **state/federal grants** and **existing fees and taxes**.
- Survey respondents felt that fees should be levied on groundwater users more than all water users.
- Interview participants felt that fees should be levied on all water users.
 - Everyone eats the food grown by groundwater.
 - Groundwater is needed to supporting agriculture which is a vital part of the local economy.

“I think fees or rates should be levied equally across all water users.

Everyone should pay equally for new projects.”

Assessment Findings
Key Takeaways and Recommendations



Key Takeaways

- There is divide between agricultural and municipal waters users in the subbasin.
- There is low interest in SGMA from the general public.
- SGMA is not perceived to be a broad threat to water use in the Subbasin.
- Stakeholders are most concerned about the costs and potential financial burden of implementing SGMA.

“There is a large divide between municipal users and agricultural users. Municipal water users are less engaged because they don’t think SGMA is going to affect them. Agricultural users are more engaged because it directly affects us.”

Communication Recommendations

Bridge the Urban/Ag Divide

- Educate stakeholders in urban areas about SGMA and groundwater use in the Modesto Subbasin.
 - Present at local civic and community groups.
 - Incorporate messaging on SGMA in existing communication channels.
- Educate the public about common irrigation methods used in the subbasin and how these methods affect groundwater recharge.
- Incorporate key messages about the relationship between agriculture and the local economy in SGMA materials.

Communication Recommendations

Identify Low-Effort Ways for Stakeholders to Stay Informed About GSP Development

- Encourage stakeholders to sign-up for the interested parties database.
- Implement SGMA “office hours” for stakeholders to ask questions and provide comments on draft GSP chapters.
- Develop fact sheets on key SGMA topics.
 - Suggested Topics: Groundwater conditions (groundwater quality), water budget, sustainable management criteria, GSP overview

Communication Recommendations

Solicit Input from Stakeholders on Potential Groundwater Recharge Projects

- Educate stakeholders on regulations and physical constraints governing groundwater recharge.
- Work with trusted community messengers and industry organizations to identify potential partnerships for on-farm recharge projects.
- Develop an interactive platform or online form to gather input on potential projects and management actions.

Next Steps

- Incorporate recommendations into a communication & engagement plan for the Modesto Subbasin.
- Continue regular newsletter.
- Identify topics for fact sheets and other educational materials.
- Update website.
- Plan for next public workshop.

Appendix Slides

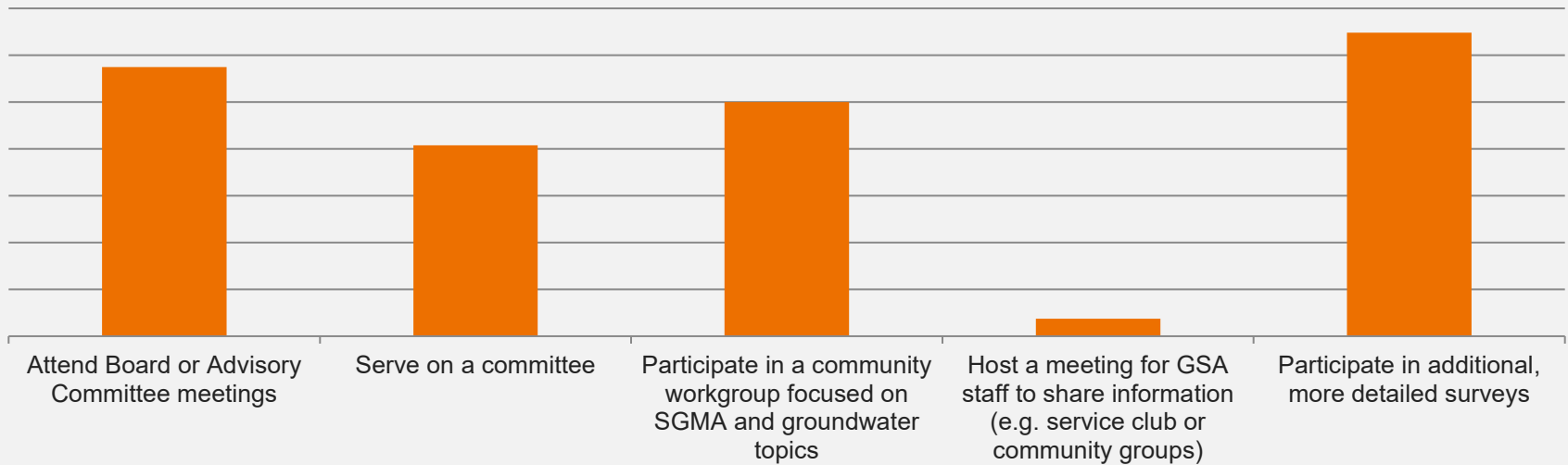
Appendix Slides
Key Survey Results

Survey Participants

- 35 agricultural water users
- 73 municipal water users
- 26 private well users
- 9 government agencies
- 5 NGOs
- 2 academia
- 6 other interested parties

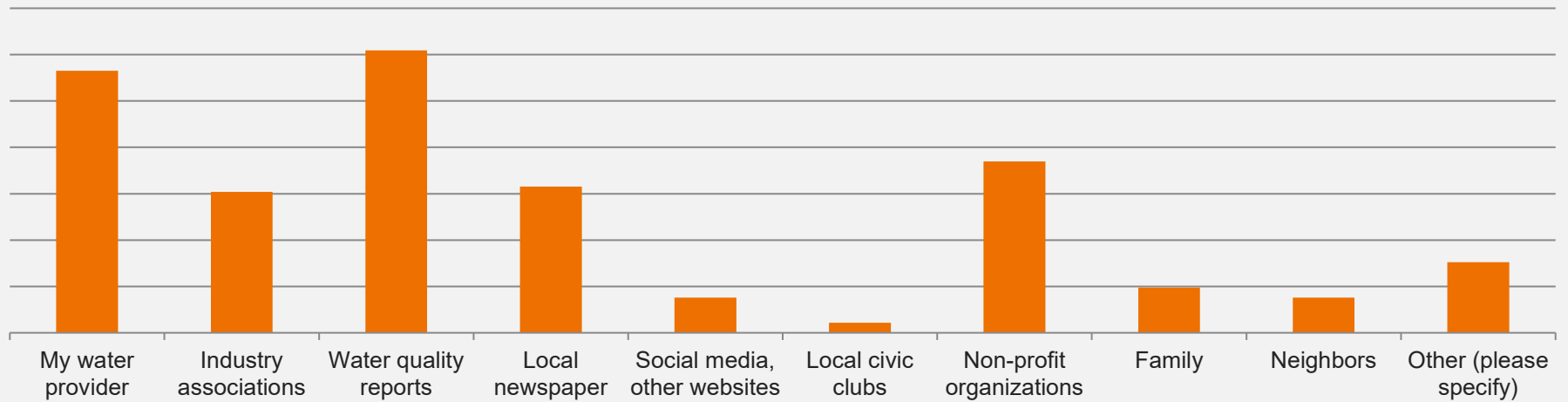


Would you be interested in participating in any of the following GSA activities?





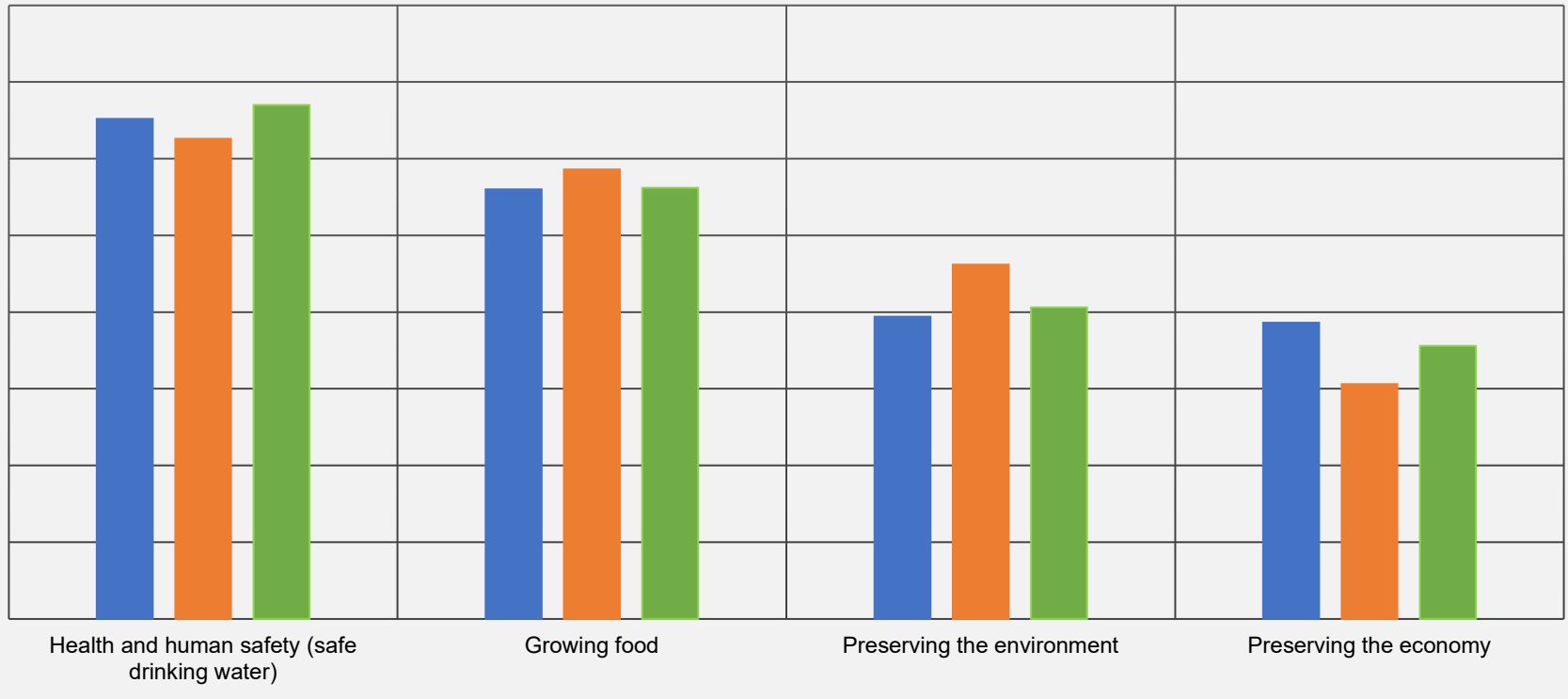
Which of these sources do you trust for reliable information about your water supply? (Check all that apply)





Priority for Water Use in the Area

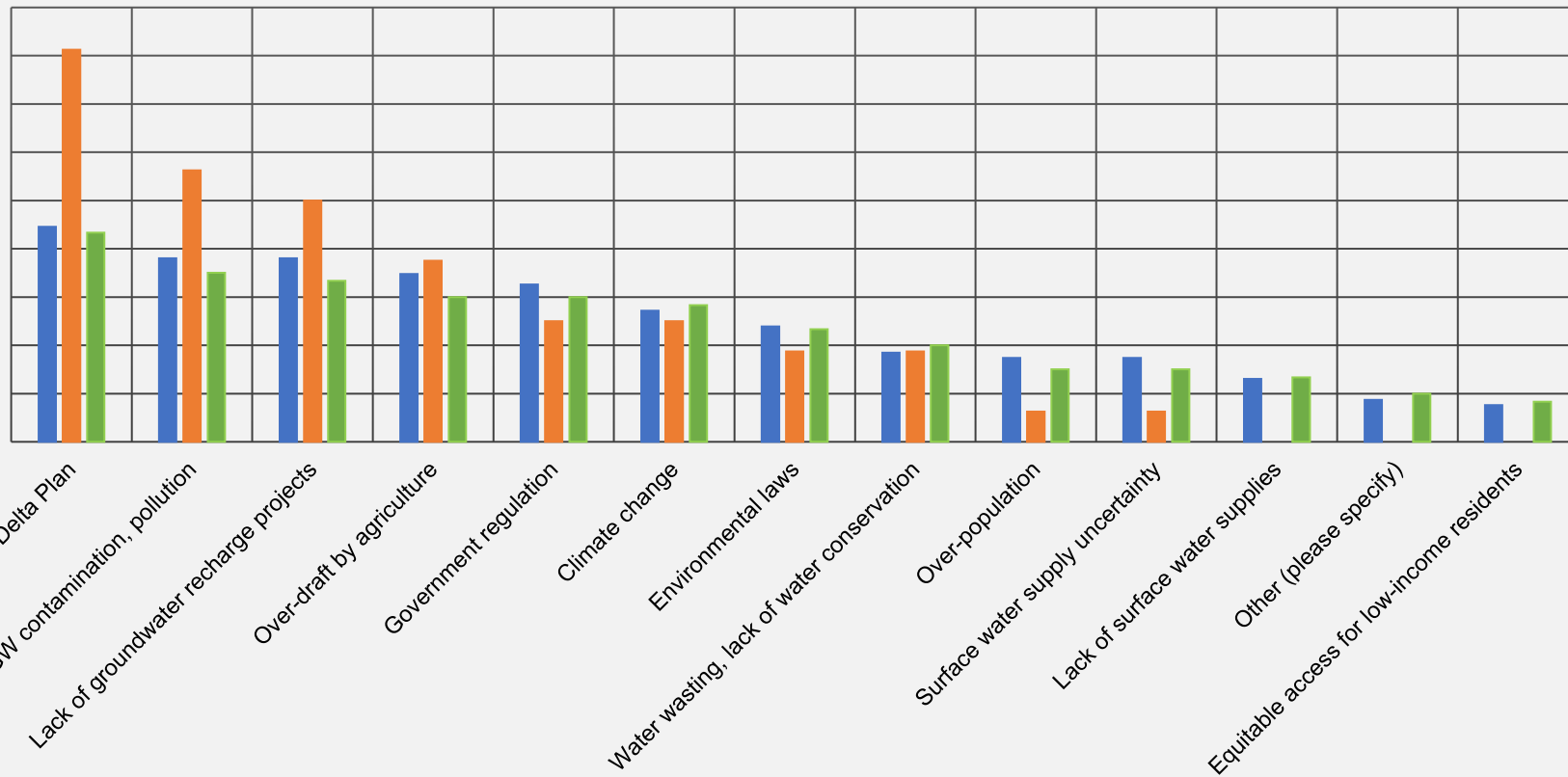
■ All Survey Participants ■ Agricultural Water Users ■ Municipal Water Users





Top Water Supply Challenges Facing the Region

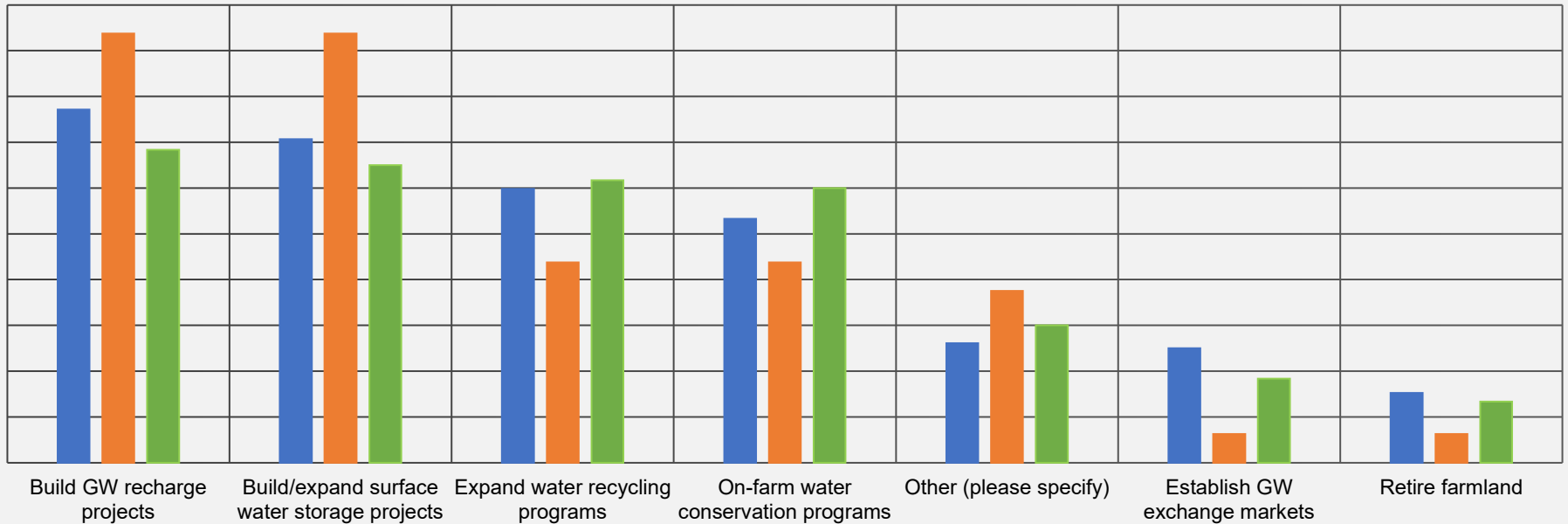
■ All Survey Participants ■ Agricultural Water Users ■ Municipal Water Users





Projects to Restore Sustainability to the Modesto Subbasin

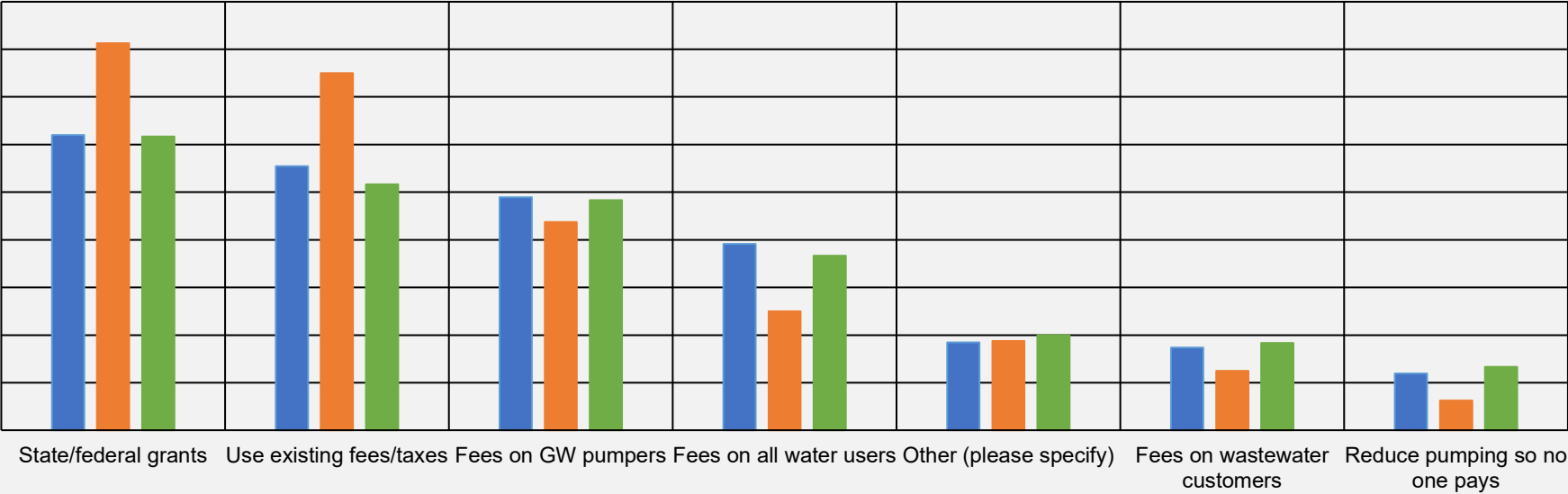
■ All Survey Participants ■ Agricultural Water Users ■ Municipal Water Users





How Should Activities to Restore the Sustainability of the Subbasin Be Paid For

■ All Survey Participants ■ Agricultural Water Users ■ Municipal Water Users



Appendix Slides

Additional Input from Assessment Participants



Key Messages

- How the SGMA process is going to affect individual water users, especially those in urban areas.
- The role and authorities of the GSA.
- The importance of groundwater to the local economy.



Methods for Public Outreach

- “Coffee shop” or “open house” style public meetings.
- Presentations at meetings for existing organizations or community groups.
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- Notices in local newspapers (Modesto Bee).
- Direct mailings.



Goals for a Successful Planning Process

- Ensures transparency throughout the entirety of the planning process.
- Educates the public on what is being done and why.
- Everyone has an equal seat at the table.

“ Increase education about why we are doing this and make this a collaborative planning process so if there has be cuts to pumping made people have a better understanding of why this is happening.”



Barriers to Development of a Successful GSP

Other barriers identified by assessment participants included:

- Distrust of the government
- Breaking old habits
- Lack of data
- Stakeholder consensus on the plan elements
- Lack of surface water storage
- Groundwater recharge opportunities that aren't being capitalized on
- Unchecked expansions of the cities into rural areas which results in agricultural and municipal water users competing for resources



Suggested Activities to Restore Sustainability to the Modesto Subbasin

Activity Type	Project/Action
Surface Water Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use lateral canals for storage during winter• Raise New Don Pedro Dam to increase capacity in Don Pedro Reservoir• New dams
Groundwater Recharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On-farm groundwater recharge• Increased flood irrigation• Recharge ponds
Water Conservation/Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water meters• Increased education on water conservation/efficiency practices
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interconnection tunnel between Don Pedro Reservoir and New Melones Reservoir• Increased tertiary water treatment• Restrictions on groundwater pumping/penalties for “excessive” pumping• Engage water users outside the region with interest in the watershed (e.g. SFPUC)



Potential Funding Challenges

- Justifying new costs as part of the Proposition 218 process.
- “Hidden cost” associated with grants and loans.
- Receiving grants and loans in a timely manner.
- Differing “ability to pay” throughout the subbasin.