



MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordinating Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: July 22, 2019 at 1:30 PM

LOCATION: Castle Conference Center at Castle Airport, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA 95301

Coordinating Committee Members In Attendance:

	Representative	GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Dietz	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Justin Vinson	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Chavez	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ken Elwin (alternate)	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mike Gallo	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nic Marchini	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	George Park (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Larry Harris	Turner Island Water District GSA #1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scott Skinner (alternate)	Turner Island Water District GSA #1

Meeting Notes

1. Call to order
 - a. Alyson Watson (Woodard & Curran) called the meeting to order. Committee members introduced themselves.
2. Approval of minutes for June 24, 2019 meeting
 - a. Minutes from June 24th were approved.
3. Stakeholder Committee update
 - a. Alyson (W&C) provided an update from July 22 morning meeting. The agendas for the SC were similar to the CC and included review of public draft contents and highlights of key sections. There were comments regarding climate change and that we should have what we need to meet state requirements for now, but then refine this and plan for an increased level of potential cutback to accommodate future climate change. Received a comment that El Nido and Le Grand (dependent on groundwater (GW)) have issues with groundwater quality and there is a need to quickly get monitoring wells in these areas. There was a discussion on water quality: some folks would like to include more thresholds, while some folks think threshold should be kept to salinity. For plan implementation, costs were discussed with comments reiterating that all water users should contribute to costs.
4. Presentation by Woodard & Curran on GSP development



- a. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the GSP draft timeline and the availability of the public draft. The release of the Public Draft GSP was 19 July 2019. A Notice of Intent to Adopt is being sent to Cities and Counties on 22 July 2019.
- b. There are 30 days for public review. A list of public locations for hard copies provided was provided in the slide handout (and on the Merced SGMA website) and was sent out to the email distribution lists.
- c. Highlights of key sections for review
 - i. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the Sustainable Yield (SY), including the main components that went into calculating SY. The goal with Sustainable Yield is to have the net change in storage be zero on long term average basis. The draft GSP discusses SY at a subbasin level and indicates that allocation of SY is being discussed by GSAs. The SY includes projections of future land use changes and population growth. If recharge is implemented, this number goes up. Chart shown provides inflow and outflow components.
 - ii. Climate Change Uncertainty Analysis was reviewed. This analysis is required as part of the GSP. The SY water budget does not include climate change. Climate change was analyzed for 2070 conditions, consistent with DWR guidelines. The SC agreed and recommended to move forward with a plan for incorporating and managing to climate change conditions when the analysis is more refined for a local level.
 1. A change factor from DWR was applied to the Projected Data Baseline to simulate the impact of climate change. This creates the Climate Change Baseline, which is put into the Merced WR model. The output is the Climate Change Water Budget.
 2. Results are tied to the 2070 factors from DWR. Evapotranspiration (ET) is estimated to increase by 7% and surface water availability increase by 4%. These are based on high level perturbation factors on a regional level (high level assumptions based on state provided data). Merced Irrigation District (MID) has more local analysis, but this does not include entire basin, which is why the analysis used DWR approach. The recommendation from the consultant team is to build off work MID has done and continue local refinements in future iterations of the GSP.
 3. Clarification (W&C): The projected conditions do not bring the Subbasin into balance. The SY is the scenario where we balance out inflows and outflows by 2040. The climate change analysis uses the projected conditions baseline. The analysis helps us to get an order of magnitude understanding of what the potential impact of climate change might be.
 - iii. Sustainable Management Criteria:
 1. Alyson (W&C) reviewed what is in the plan and each of the sustainability indicators including how Minimum Thresholds are determined. A summary slide containing information for all indicators was provided.
 2. Comment:
 - a. MSGSA: There's a need for more GW water quality wells. Is this in the plan? Answer (W&C): There are some projects that get to specifics (e.g. El Nido well) that have where to install a well and how this is going to be funded. However, at the moment the plan identifies that there are data gaps, what these gaps are, and that a plan will be developed to address the data gaps.



3. Water Level and Protection of Domestic Wells

- a. Alyson (W&C) explained that groundwater level MTs are the depth of shallowest domestic well in a 2-mile radius of each representative well (24 representative wells), or the minimum level pre-January 2015 (1 representative well). There are 25 representative wells total. The domestic wells are usually shallower than agricultural wells and so setting MTs based on domestic wells is considered more protective.
- b. Important to note that one well becoming dewatered is not considered an Undesirable Result (UR). We observed when doing the modeling that some wells could become dewatered during dry conditions over the long term hydrology. Question for this group is what should be done if that occurs?
- c. Hydrographs of sustainable yield scenario for representative well monitoring locations were shown. The hydrographs indicated the MT and MO for each representative well and can be used to compare simulated water levels over a 50 year period to the minimum thresholds. No URs are projected under the SY scenario. Two out of 25 representative wells reach MT in simulated critically dry period – does not meet criterion for an UR. This occurs during part of critical dry period from 2059-2064 (6-year drought based on 1987-1992 hydrology).
 - i. CASGEM ID# 47546. Maximum drop in GWLs is 9 feet below the MT. 70 domestic wells within a 2-mile radius. Only 1 would be dewatered.
 - ii. CASGEM ID# 47565. Maximum drop in GWLs is 5 feet below the MT. There are 65 domestic wells within a 2-mile radius. Only 1 would be dewatered.
- d. Comment: Both wells discussed are in or near the City of Merced. Hard to say what to do before we have a monitoring network established. Issue could be happening within one GSA but not another. From planning perspective, if we have a situation with a dewatered domestic well, should have a thorough analysis done and then action determined by the GSAs collectively.
- e. Comment: There's concern about data gaps and need additional monitoring wells. The longer it takes to get those wells in, the more problematic this is from a management point of view. Installing wells is expensive. We could try using existing wells.
- f. Clarification (WC): We talked about needing a process for bringing on new wells. If there's no history and no domestic wells, an approach needs to be developed (the plan says this currently).
- g. Comment: The model will never be perfect. If we have data that passes CASGEM muster, then we can use this. This is a priority to address the gap areas.

4. Water Quality

- a. Alyson (W&C) explained the MT for water quality. Received guidance from Merced County Division of Environmental Health. Leadership Counsel provided a letter and follow up letter to the GSAs. This letter



communicated LC's desire to have the Plan monitor additional constituents.

- b. Comment: In previous drafts we were primarily looking the ESJWQC, which is more than just salts. We should have some thought given to the breadth of what this program is doing. Should consider desires expressed from the LC in seeing if there is additional information available going forward, especially for areas where we have high domestic use.

- i. Clarification (W&C): We will coordination with ESJWQC but not add additional parameters. This is separate from official reporting. There's a lot of work being done that we can review and make use of.

- c. Comment: Could we remove the bullet point that suggests inviting the RWQCB, as this would not be necessary.

- i. This is agreed by the other members of the CC.

- d. Comment: Need to consider how time consuming the reviewing of existing program data would be. Review of data submitted to the DPR, DDW, EnviroStor, and GeoTracker and check-ins with existing monitoring programs (such as CV-SALTS and ESJWQC GQTM) could be done annually.

- i. This is agreed by the other members of the CC.

- 5. A discussion was held on whether there are more steps GSAs should take if a well is dewatered:

- a. Comment: It is at the GSA level that we should look at the heart of the problem to see a bigger change is needed.
 - b. Comment: If these things (e.g. a well is dewatered) happen, even if it does not trigger an UR, this should be documented and show that it is being looked into.
 - c. There is also a DAC water needs assessment, but this is not yet available.

- iv. Projects and Management Actions

- 1. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the requirements from DWR for project information, the criteria used to filter and prioritize projects, and the list of 12 priority projects. 11 of these projects are scheduled to begin in the first five years. The first three projects are the SDAC projects funded through Prop 1 DWR funding. Project 10 is funded partially through private funds. Project 12 is based on Merced County funds. The goal of project 12 is to get a more streamlined process for permitting wells from below to above Corcoran Clay, which will benefit subsidence.

- a. The allocation framework would get the Subbasin to sustainable groundwater management, while implemented projects could increase a GSA's allocation amount.

- 2. Management Actions: There is a basin-wide allocation framework, and then the MSGSA allocation management action. MSGSA is moving forward to manage GW pumping in their GSA.



3. Comment/clarification: For the allocation text, we received comments from the GSAs and it became apparent that there were conflicting comments. This section has been scaled back for purpose of getting the draft GSP out. Further discussion is needed to reach agreement on allocation.

v. Plan Implementation

1. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the requirements and guidelines of what is included for plan implementation. She also reviewed the GSP implementation timeline. A list of key implementation tasks within the first 5 years was provided. This includes: finalize allocation framework, establish metering program, create a data gaps plan, develop methodology for establishing minimum thresholds at new wells, refine MercedWRM model calibration, refine climate change analysis for local surface water operations, identify possible mitigation for future domestic well dewatering, pursue funding opportunities.
2. Comment: It is ok if we are not done with refining the climate change analysis in the first five years. This might be a longer term item.
3. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the GSP governance. The SC and CC would continue to meet. Currently in the plan it is stated that these bodies meet quarterly, with staggered meeting dates to allow time for summarizing input.
4. Comment: We might want to have the SC and CC meeting together. There was a comment from this morning's SC meeting that the SC would not have the ability to make their own decisions. But from an efficiency perspective, it might make sense to have a meeting together.
5. Comment: It was also discussed previously to have a liaison from the SC to the CC. We would be open to what works best.
6. Agreement from the CC to ask the SC members what they think works best.
7. Alyson (W&C) reviewed plan implementation costs (see summary slide). She reviewed each of the line items costs.
8. Comment: The costs shown do not include additional infrastructure costs like installing meters, etc.
9. Alyson (W&C) reviewed potential funding sources including what GSAs are enabled to do to raise funds through SGMA. This included funding authority given for extraction fees. Information included a brief review of options and process, with examples given of extraction fee and acreage-based assessment and fees.
10. Comment/clarification: The budget for MSGSA does not include monitoring wells. There will have to be another Prop 218. We cannot collect more than a certain limit of funds for the current Prop 218 fee.
11. Prop 68 funding options
 - a. Question: Would a project have to be on GSP list to be eligible for Prop 68 funding? Answer (W&C): Yes, but most basins we have heard are targeting administration costs and not so much project costs for use of this funding.
 - b. Comment: Would be good to apply for this.
 - c. Question asked by Alyson (W&C): Do you want staff to look into creating a proposal to apply for Prop 68 funding to see if it's worth pursuing?

- i. Answer from CC: Yes, have staff look into seeing how much it would cost to put this together.

5. Water Allocation Framework



- a. Alyson reviewed how we have progressed through the discussion of the water framework allocation
 - i. Comment (MSGSA): It's good we are working through this. It has been a good, healthy collaboration of getting through this development of the GSP. We will need to explain the differences in a way that answers the concerns we have. There has been a development of mutual respect and respectful dialogue that has taken place and we can get through it. We need to continue to this and not kick down the road – not just allocation but the complexity of a water credit system and how we get to demonstration of additional surface water deep percolation. Need to come to understanding of how we are going to manage each of our GSAs. Will have cooperation within GSAs and across. MSGSA would like to communicate that we want to manage on a geographic basis. There's concern that if you consider both types of overlying rights that this could lend itself over to high use of groundwater and consumption. This is not what we want, we want to know what have and what we have to reduce to sustainably manage. We need to show documentation of usage and (and be transparent about this).
 - ii. Comment (MIUGSA): For this draft version of the plan, the framework does not have to resolve the minute details. But as much as we can, we should state what issues need to be resolved (need to include as much detail on this as we can). If there is an adjudication, we want to show that we have been fair with this plan as much as possible and transparent.
 - iii. Comment (MIUGSA): From the last meeting, the decision is to move forward with what is in the plan, and address gaps before establishing a credit system. It boils down to having more information.
- b. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the list of what is believed to be agreed upon:
 - i. Historical period for appropriative use (2006-2015).
 - 1. CC members agree.
 - ii. That water rights concepts should be considered.
 - 1. CC members agree.
 - iii. That appropriators should be allocated based on their historical use.
 - 1. CC members agree.
 - iv. That allocation to overlies should be based on acreage (AF/acre), not historical use.
 - 1. Agreed by CC members, but with accompanying comment/clarification: the allocation would be based on the above regardless of whether this is to an individual user or to the GSA. (setting appropriators aside)
 - v. That each GSA will get an allocation.
 - 1. Agreed, but the details of this have to be worked out.
- c. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the list of what still needs to be discussed:
 - i. Is allocation by GSA based on proportional land area?
 - 1. Comment: If we do allocation by GSA area after subtracting federal lands, there would be an inconsistent application of whether lands would stay in the GSA or not.



2. Comment: The question is about parity, are we subtracting out the land for the cities and for the federal lands?
 3. Agreement from CC: Yes, cities would be removed and so would federal lands.
 4. Comment MSGSA: On proportional land area, if we slice off portions that are appropriators and areas for federal lands, the idea is that the three GSAs manage this proportionally, and this impacts the rest of the bullets that follow. This is still something we are trying to resolve. Manage per acre is different than giving the GSAs a bucket and saying manage within this.
 5. Comment MSGSA: For the second bullet point on slide with questions to be resolved that reads “Can GSAs reallocate from undeveloped to developed within their GSA once they get their allocation?”, we would to include a “e.g. if undeveloped ground is going to go through the process of getting a well”.
 6. Question (public): If we are south of highway 99, we have to install mains and infrastructure if the wells out there go dry. Is it possible to do this and get water?
Answer (CC member): This sounds similar to an annexation, that would be part of your use within the GSA. This is a question that would need to be resolved.
 7. Alyson (W&C): The biggest question now is how will the allocation be determined? And additionally, then how do we address if the numbers are not correct.
 8. Question from public that should be added to the list: How will livestock wells be treated? (they are not *de minimus* wells)
- d. Other questions posed by the consulting team:
- i. Can GSAs reallocate from undeveloped to developed within their GSA once they get their allocation?
 1. Comment from CC members: Will need to discuss prior to updated GSP text.
 - ii. Is the demand reduction needed to be shared equally by overlies and prescriptive users?
 1. Comment from CC member: This is a GSA issue.
 - iii. What will the process be for bringing new groundwater users on board?
 1. Comment from CC member: This is a GSA issue.
- e. Other questions to add:
- i. How to refine seepage and deep percolation of applied surface water?
6. Public Outreach update
- a. Charles explained the public review process. There is a 30-day public comment period, ending August 19th.
 - b. Public can provide comments also via Merced SGMA email address (see Contact Us page on Merced SGMA website).
 - c. A Joint GSA Board Public meeting to take place in September to review comments received.
 - d. Adoption hearings to be held in Fall 2019.
7. Coordination with neighboring basins



- a. Meeting set up with Delta Mendota team to review overview of Draft GSP contents with focus on interbasin flows. Delta Mendota has indicated they would like to consider and start developing an interbasin coordination agreement. The goal is to continue interbasin coordination and identify any upcoming issues of differences in technical approach
8. Public comment
 - a. Comment from the SC member: Would like to have SC and CC meet together. There's a lot of information that is discussed in the CC that the SC is not a part of. For water quality, we don't need to be involved. We're highly regulated already. If we have to have water quality as part of what we're trying to fund, cost per acre will go from \$4AF to \$30AF. Allocation and other discussions would be good to discuss with both committees together.
 9. Next steps and adjourn
 - a. Comment MIUGSA: Would like to have conference calls to continue discussion on the water allocation framework. These would be subject to Brown Act.
 - b. Comment: We should have meeting minutes, have these available for the public, and provide a listen in option. Response (W&C): Per Brown Act would have a public listening in option, and will have meeting minutes taken and made available.
 - c. Clarification: The Prop 218 is on a GSA area basis. Other GSAs could be doing this.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD at 1:30 p.m.

Atwater, CA – Castle Conference Center at Castle Airport (subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org

Action may be taken on any item

Note: If you need disability-related modification or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting, please contact Merced County, Community and Economic Development staff at 209-385-7654 at least 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting.