



MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordinating Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: October 28, 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	Mike Gallo	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" 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.
 - b. Minutes from previous meeting were approved.
2. Stakeholder Committee update
 - a. Alyson (W&C) provided a summary from the October 28 Stakeholder Committee (SC) morning meeting. The meeting included discussion of the next steps in finalizing the GSP and the sustainable management criteria for water quality and subsidence. The SC also discussed the role of the SC during the implementation phase. The SC wants to continue to meet if their input will be used by the CC and suggested the schedule for future SC meetings be based on topics that need to be discussed. The group expressed an interest in potentially meeting jointly for some discussions or otherwise having an opportunity for direct input to the CC.
3. Finalizing Merced Subbasin GSP
 - a. Alyson (W&C) reviewed the timeline for finalizing the GSP. The draft response to comments is posted on the MercedSGMA.org website. It includes a redline of the GSP showing edits based on comments and a master response to comments organized by 20 topics (see slide for full list). Master response and comment letters will be included as an Appendix to the GSP.
 - b. Joint GSA Boards Meeting September 18, 2019



- i. Alyson noted that SGMA does not require GSAs hold a public comment period. The Merced GSAs decided to hold the 30-day public comment period as a good faith effort to gather additional public input. Comments were also received at the Joint GSA Boards Meeting on Sept. 18th. This is an addition to the 60-day public comment period that DWR will hold once the GSP is submitted.
- c. Concurrence with response to Public Comments Received on draft GSP
- i. The responses to comments on the draft GSP come in a couple of forms: There is a redline version of the GSP that contains all of the suggested changes in redline. There is also a master response to comments by topic. The GSP Appendix will include all of the letters that were received. There were comments received on a wide range of topics for the draft GSP. The Master Response to Comments is up on the website. Two topics are the focus of **today's meeting and discussion**: the sustainable management criteria for subsidence and water quality.
 - ii. Subsidence:
 1. Alyson provided some background information on subsidence in the basin: it is a gradual process that takes time to develop and time to halt. Subbasin may not be able to fully stop subsidence but can slow it and reduce impacts. She noted that despite wetter conditions 2017-2018, there was still between -0.17 ft/yr and -0.32 ft/yr observed in the portion of the subbasin.
 2. Alyson compared the sustainable management criteria that are included in the Merced GSP and in the neighboring basins of Chowchilla and Delta-Mendota.
 - a. Merced GSP management criteria based on historical subsidence rates observed.
 - b. Chowchilla is using GWLs as a proxy for subsidence in the lower aquifer only (they are using this for both MT and MO). They are using an adaptive management approach with a trigger of -0.25 ft/yr for 3 years in Eastern main aquifer.
 - c. In Delta-Mendota they have measurable objectives that vary by GSP and region, but most are between -0.01 to -0.1 ft/yr. For minimum threshold, they (again various by GSP) but have between -0.1 to -0.2 ft/yr. **San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors: The MT is narrative: "that which doesn't reduce SJREC's conveyance capacity without appropriate mitigation."**
 3. Alyson further described Merced GSP approach. MT and MO set based on historical subsidence rates. Some level of future subsidence, likely at similar rates, likely to be underway already and will not be able to be prevented. GSAs will continue coordinate efforts with Chowchilla & Delta-Mendota to develop regional and local solutions to regional subsidence
 4. The five-year update can look at options to utilize additional data sets including using **DWR's** Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR) data.
 5. Clarification (W&C): **We don't expect zero subsidence.** It may continue at rates **that we've seen. We also know** that we will have to continue coordination.
 6. Question from CC member: Have we asked the state about the different guidance given to Chowchilla from DWR? Answer (W&C): We found out Chowchilla received different guidance than the Merced Subbasin received in our conversations with



DWR only today. There is nothing in SGMA that says each neighboring basin must use the same measure for subsidence.

7. Comment from CC member: We need to be coordinated with the neighboring basins. Different basins should not be taking different approaches. It appears we are allowing for more subsidence than D-M. In 2006, there was a very heavy flood year. In this year the lower SJ Flood District near highway 152 and north of this, **was within 6 inches of breaking. Since that time, we've lost 5 feet, maybe more.** With that levee system, if that fails, **we'd be hard pressed to build it again, let alone** the damage the water would do especially if it went out to the east sides (would decimate some of the earthen canal system in this location). Would like to see an arrest to subsidence as soon as possible. It is difficult to put a target minimal amount out there. However, we have to do something along those lines. What we would like to see is that there is a plan to get subsidence to a certain number.
8. Response from CC member: This means we would be watching levels below the Corcoran. We had a recommendation from a hydrogeologist for what they need to do to get an understanding of what is happening and is it stabilizing below the Corcoran. This might not be something we can put in the plan now but could be something for the plan update.
9. Alyson (W&C): The map provided on the slides shows the ranges of rates of subsidence. To give a little context, using data from USBR from 2011-2017 can see that Chowchilla has seen more subsidence. The MTs and MOs they have established are less than the historical subsidence shown on this map.
10. Input from member of Public: (Individual is involved with the Triangle T GSA in the Chowchilla Subbasin). There are two management areas in the Chowchilla Subbasin, including in Chowchilla Water District to the west. The way that it is being managed is above and below Corcoran. Above the Corcoran the MT is at the top of the Corcoran Clay. This is about managing the upper aquifer. The lower **aquifer uses GWL from 2012 as a proxy unless it's already below that. Water levels** cannot be taken any lower than they already are. There is going to quickly be an allocation system within that management area (within a year or two). In Chowchilla, Western below Corcoran areas will be managed via allocation. This involves the County GSA, and Triangle T GSA, and Clayton Water District (lattermost is not a GSA).
11. Alyson (W&C): Our options with respect to finalizing the GSP are to 1) leave SMC for subsidence as it is, 2) we could change the MT or MO if we thought there was a good reason to do this, or 3) we could follow the suggestion provided and focus on a management program without changing the numbers.
12. Feedback from CC members:
 - a. Comment: It makes sense to coordinate the effort.
 - b. Comment: For the GWLs to make sense for us, we need to tie it to our local issues. If we are doing what we are supposed to be doing, rather than pumping, the pumping below the Corcoran in some areas outside of the subsidence area will have less impact on areas where there is subsidence.
 - c. Comment: What is your suggestion (asking consulting team), about whether to have both GWLs and surface measures?



- i. Alyson (W&C): We are currently using both measures in the monitoring framework.
- d. Comment: **We as GSAs need to see what's happening around the subsidence area.**
- e. Alyson (W&C): In summary and in updating the draft GSP contents, we should at least update in the response to comments to be clearer that the GSAs intend to close the data gaps around subsidence and the subsidence area itself.
- f. Comment: **There's a need to coordinate.** Response (W&C): Exactly, we need to get the plans out and then continue coordination. Because of current timeframe, will need to do further coordination with the other GSAs who are also (at the same time) trying to get their plans out.
- g. Question: Did we have a buffer on the numbers used from historical data? Clarification from W&C: These numbers (for subsidence historical data) were rounded up slightly – no specific percentage buffer added.
- h. Comment: We want to make sure that GWLs are not dropping because of neighboring basins.
- i. Alyson (W&C): We can also note in the response to comments that the County has a project that would also streamline the process for environmental permitting to better enable conversion of wells from below to above Corcoran Clay.
- j. Comment from CC: If we do not fully understand the extent of subsidence, and we set too low a threshold, this will not help us. Should not lower this threshold.
- k. CC Recommendation: The CC recommended adding additional information about closing data gaps and the County project to the master response to comments and adding additional language around the GSAs intent to continue coordination with neighboring basins to the GSP. No change to the MTs or MOs.

13. Water Quality:

- a. Alyson provided an explanation of Merced GSP water quality sustainable management criteria. The MT is set at 1,000mg/L for TDS (Total Dissolved Solids, measurement of salinity). This is drinking water standard. There are numerous other authorities governing and monitoring drinking WQ and contaminants. There is a summary of the response to comments for WQ on the Merced SGMA website.
- b. Alyson provided summary of response to WQ comments. Salinity is selected as an indicator. GSAs recognize the importance of protecting drinking water quality. There is a desire to coordinate with agencies and their ongoing efforts to avoid duplication of efforts and efficiently use limited resources. Coordination activities include: (see list on PPT).
- c. Comment/input from CC member: A CC member expressed concern that some areas of the subbasin already exceed the MT in part due to salinity migrating from marine soils underlying portions of the subbasin and



wanted to ensure this would not cause a problem for these areas of the basin later.

- d. Alyson (W&C) reply: The CC has discussed that some areas have salinity greater than 1000 mg/l TDS currently, but that this is not an Undesirable Result (UR). It is not related to GW extraction and is an existing condition that has been adapted to by agricultural users by blending with higher quality water.
- e. Clarification from Alyson (W&C): The MTs are set for specific areas in the basin (not basinwide) and are well specific. Currently all wells with MTs are domestic wells.
- f. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst): The SC was generally comfortable with this. However, it is important to pay attention to domestic well users.
- g. CC Recommendation: No change to MTs or MOs for water quality.

d. Dates for Adoption Hearings for GSA Boards – still being scheduled. Tentative dates below:

- i. TIWD GSA-1 Nov. 19th
- ii. MSGSA is TBD
- iii. MIUGSA Dec. 11th

4. GSP Implementation Planning

a. Prop 68 funding opportunity (deadline Nov. 1, 2019)

- i. Alyson (W&C) described the Prop 68 grant application. DWR has made development a higher priority for funding over GSP implementation for this funding round. **DWR's** priority is funding activities that help develop GSPs, including data gathering and addressing data gaps. The grant application contains three components. The first is grant administration portion of work, the second is work to address data gaps. This is focused on developing a data gaps plan and figuring out how to address those gaps. The third is to develop a remote sensing decision support tool to estimate groundwater use.
- ii. Comment from CC member: **METRIC™** (evapotranspiration data) looks backwards – it looks at who is using water and understanding general use. Could use conventional processes to develop a tool to look to the future (there are other options and we may use different remote sensing methods to achieve our objectives).
- iii. Comment from CC member: It sounds like these are things we need to do anyway regardless of funding. We need them.
- iv. Comment from CC member: if we want to do GW credits, we need to have a good enough water budget and accounting system to do something like this.
- v. Comment from CC member: Please add that Lone Tree Mutual Water Co. has also provided a letter of support for the Prop 68 grant application.

b. Annual report preparation proposal from Woodard & Curran

- i. The first annual report is due to DWR on April 1st. At staff request, W&C prepared a proposal to prepare the first annual report. The proposal includes optional tasks for program management, preparing stakeholder engagement plan update, and evaluation of the GDE pulse tool.
- ii. Alyson (W&C) asked if there is any input on this and on the optional tasks:



1. Comment from CC member: MID is working on a Prop 218 process to fund GSP related costs.
 - iii. Recommendation to authorize funding for W&C to prepare GSP First Annual Report consistent with consultant proposal is approved by the CC.
 - c. Water Allocation Framework discussion
 - i. There is an ad hoc group working on this and this work will continue.
 1. Comment from CC member: The sustainable yield is the most important thing to come out of the GSP. Some items will have to be worked on at the GSA level.
5. Public Outreach update
 - a. Charles (Catalyst) reviewed input from the SC. The SC would like to have a roadmap of key implementation issues and get an understanding of the progress. We did not have the folks in the SC this morning who are normally more vocal about water quality issues. We received a suggestion from staff that a way to structure this is to organize topics as a workshop of the SC and CC together. That way we have everybody sitting around the table discussing the issues. The next step would be to flesh out the roadmap and the structure. We also have had a few resignations from the SC and we may want to re-evaluate the balance of interests we have represented on this committee. We may need to see if we need to replace some people. Any questions or comments?
 - b. Comment from CC member: Not sure about having workshops on regular basis, what is meant by this? Charles (Catalyst): This could be workshops on specific key topics – perhaps jointly at the beginning of a CC meeting with the SC and then after the joint discussion, the CC meeting would move onto its other business. We could also structure them as separate meetings as it is done now.
 - c. Comment from CC member: I think we are getting the information from the SC. Concern if this is too much.
 - d. Comment from CC member: For some of these topics, such as projects, this can be done in a workshop together. However, some issues that get very technical are not suited to a workshop format.
 - e. Comment from CC member: For certain issues, like subsidence, it will be important to have SC input.
6. Coordination with neighboring basins
 - a. The consulting team and GSA staff reached out to the three neighboring basins for letters of support for the Prop 68 grant application. All three basins provided letters of support to the Merced Subbasin Prop 68 application. The GSAs provided reciprocal letters of support to the neighboring basins in return.
 - b. Question from CC: Are we coordinating with all members of the GSAs in Delta-Mendota? Alyson (W&C): No, Delta-Mendota is coordinating with their members internally. We will be focused on working with Delta-Mendota GSAs on interbasin flows and subsidence.
 - c. Comment from CC member: We put together a plan and met with their consultants (from other **GSAs**). **With Turlock we've** had two big meetings and some small meetings.
 - i. Have not had a chance to do this in detail with Delta-Mendota **and Chowchilla**. **We've had** one call with Delta-Mendota, but not to the same level of formal review as with Turlock.
7. Public comment
 - a. None.
8. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Prop 68 due Nov. 1st
- b. GSA adoption hearings for the GSP are coming up. These will be published on website.
- c. Adjourned and date for next meeting to be decided at later time and published accordingly.



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.