



## MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: November 8, 2021 at 1:00 PM

LOCATION: Zoom Virtual Meeting

### Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Ramos	MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Darren Olguin	Resident of Merced County
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dave Serrano	Serrano Farms - Le Grand
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	David Belt	Foster Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Emma Reyes	Martin Reyes Farm/Land Leveling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Greg Olzack	Atwater Resident
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jean Okuye	E Merced RCD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Sansoni	Sansoni Farms/MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joe Scoto	Scoto Brothers/McSwain School Dist.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jose Moran	Livingston City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lacy Carothers	Cal Am Water
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Baker	Clayton Water District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Kayser-Grant	Sierra Club
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Maxwell	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maxwell Norton	Unincorporated area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Olivia Gomez	Community of Planada
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amanda Monaco (alternate)	Leadership Counsel
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parry Klassen	ESJWQC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<del>Reyn Akino</del> Darcy Brown	River Partners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rick Drayer	Merced/Mariposa Cattlemen
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Weimer	Weimer Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush MWC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Susan Walsh	City of Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bill Spriggs (alternate)	Merced resident
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thomas Dinwoodie	Master Gardener/McSwain
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Trevor Hutton	Valley Land Alliance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wes Myers	Merced Grassland Coalition

## Meeting Minutes



1. Call to Order and Welcome
  - a. Charles Gardiners (Catalyst) welcomed the group.
2. Roll Call
  - a. Stakeholder Advisory Representatives for the Merced Subbasin GSP introduced themselves (see attendance record above).
3. GSA Reports
  - a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided a brief overview of the 10/25/21 Coordination Committee (CC) meeting:
    - i. Discussion items covered at both CC and today's SAC meeting: GSA updates, data gaps plan, new grant funding, and insights from DWR on other GSPs.
    - ii. Interbasin coordination is ongoing with the Chowchilla and Delta-Mendota Subbasins, with focused discussions around subsidence and developing a uniform method to understand pumping by the various subbasins (e.g., water budgets) and impacts on subsidence.
    - iii. The CC discussed options for coordinating on a Well Consistency Policy. Currently the County's Environmental Health Department intakes and reviews all new well permits but wants to shift determination of whether a well application is consistent with the GSP to the various GSAs. Domestic wells would still be exempt and the County would review & approve those permits. Discussions on this are ongoing.
    - iv. The Committee discussed the draft Turlock Subbasin GSP and options for commenting on it – they agreed to continue using informal comment mechanisms like existing participation on a technical advisory committee, and wait to submit formal comments until DWR comments are received on the Merced GSP in order to be more comprehensive.
  - b. Lacey McBride provided an update for the Merced Subbasin GSA:
    - i. Over the past few months, the GSA Board has worked through a two-phased approach to GSP implementation.
      1. Phase 1 – now through end of WY2025 – focused on meeting the target of reducing groundwater consumption by 15,000 AF annually through land repurposing and fallowing, importing surface water, and capturing flood waters. Other Phase 1 work will include the development of parcel-level water year budgets for growers, Prop 218 process for funding, and initiating discussions with stakeholders and the public regarding allocations (which are not anticipated to be adopted until Phase 2).
      2. Phase 2 – WY2026 through 2040 – includes adopting and implementing an allocation plan with continued land repurposing, fallowing, and securing surface supplies.
      3. The GSA Board is going to consider a resolution to adopt the above phased approach at a meeting on 11/12 at 10AM.
      4. A public workshop is planned for 11/18 at 6PM in Merced College Business Resource Center (630 W 19<sup>th</sup> St in Merced) for landowners, growers, and the public in the GSA to kick off Phase 1 of the implementation approach.
  - c. Matt Beaman provided an update for the Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA:
    - i. The GSA has been holding several stakeholder guidance committee meetings that include representatives from agricultural, municipal, environmental, and DAC sectors – discussions have been focused on agricultural reductions. Have found that growers supplementing groundwater use with surface water are using about 1 AF/ac – but there are significant users relying only on groundwater.
    - ii. Input from stakeholders about how the allocation method should work indicated interest in “high certainty” of what the allocation was going to be ahead of time with moderate flexibility in how to operate the allocation program; this would mean a relatively low initial



allocation (to prevent State intervention) but some flexibility in pooling water, longer allocation period, and potential for trading.

- iii. Next steps: MIUGSA is drafting policies and intends to come back to their stakeholder committee next spring 2022 to review draft policies for implementing the GSP within its boundaries. At this point, no allocation volume has been set but MIUGSA's stakeholder committee is expressing a desire for high certainty (e.g., low allocation) while still providing some flexibility.
- iv. Question (in chat): How can we find out about MIUGSA meetings to participate in discussions about projects and management actions? We would like to attend and participate in those stakeholder committee meetings. Answer: Meetings have been posted on [www.mercedgroundwater.org](http://www.mercedgroundwater.org) and <https://www.miuksa.org/> – projects page has the past presentations and minutes.
- d. Kel Mitchel provided an update for the Turner Island Water District GSA #1:
  - i. Previously had shared a soft target of 1.5 AF/ac – despite the difficulties with meeting irrigation demands in the last dry year, they were able to meet and exceed that (averaged around 1 AF/ac of use).
  - ii. Kel provided some background about the May 2021 Renewable Resources Group acquisition of about 7,000 acres in TIWD; two out of five GSA board members stepped down and were replaced with Kel Mitchell and Tim Allen. Kel shared that Renewable Resources Group does not intend to operate the public agency (TIWD) as if it was an extension of the private firm.
  - iii. To help operate TIWD, the board has retained an outside accounting service and hired a manager for the district, among other efforts, to maintain the public agency as a distinct entity, without co-mingled operations from a private firm.
- e. SAC questions and discussion
  - i. None.

#### 4. DWR GSP Review

- a. Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) provided an update on DWR review of other GSPs.
  - i. DWR has reviewed and approved 2 GSPs (Santa Cruz and Salinas) and has communicated that they plan to complete reviews for others submitted in 2020 by January 2022. She shared some potential comments that Merced might expect based on what was observed in the two existing letters.
    - 1. Amanda Peisch-Derby (DWR) shared that DWR has hired a lot of new staff and Craig Altare (lead of GSP review) is following a plan to meet the deadline for providing comments. Amanda encouraged interested parties to sign up for the SGM newsletter to keep up to date with DWR news:
      - a. [https://listservice.cnra.ca.gov/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=DWR\\_SGMP&A=1](https://listservice.cnra.ca.gov/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=DWR_SGMP&A=1)
- b. Samantha also shared news about upcoming DWR grant funding, \$152 million of which is designated for critically overdrafted basins like Merced.
  - i. Jim Blanke added that DWR is expected to perform a relatively coarse scale airborne electromagnetic (AEM) survey of the Merced Subbasin in spring of 2022, as part of a statewide effort. There is opportunity to coordinate a local geophysical survey effort under the grant with the statewide AEM survey.
  - ii. Question: What is AEM? Answer: It stands for Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) and provides additional information about soils and groundwater. More information is available at: <https://water.ca.gov/programs/SGMA/AEM>.

#### 5. Data Gaps Plan

- a. Review of results and status, Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) provided a brief overview of the first phase of the Data Gaps Plan effort and reviewed the results and latest status.
  - i. The Data Gaps Plan was published in July 2021 (<http://mercedsgma.org/resources#data-gaps-plan>).



- ii. Appendix B has detailed maps showing recommended monitoring sites for each principal aquifer, along with known existing wells within the Subbasin that aren't already part of the monitoring network: [https://www.mercedsgma.org/assets/pdf/reports/Data-Gaps-Plan\\_Appendix-B\\_Results-of-groundwater-Monitoring-Network-Analysis-Tools.pdf](https://www.mercedsgma.org/assets/pdf/reports/Data-Gaps-Plan_Appendix-B_Results-of-groundwater-Monitoring-Network-Analysis-Tools.pdf). Additions to the monitoring network should be focused in or near those recommended areas.
  - iii. Phase 2 of the data gaps plan includes using approximately \$270,000 of remaining grant funding to upgrade and incorporate existing wells into network as well as install new wells in critical locations.
  - b. Lacey McBride (Merced Subbasin GSA) pointed out that many of the identified data gaps and recommended new monitoring locations are within the Merced Subbasin GSA.
    - i. She made a request to the SAC to help identify additional wells in these areas.
    - ii. SAC committee members are encouraged to reach out to Lacey ([Lacey.McBride@countyofmerced.com](mailto:Lacey.McBride@countyofmerced.com)). If there's a potential monitoring site in the MIUGSA area, stakeholders can reach out to Matt Beaman ([mbeaman@mercedid.org](mailto:mbeaman@mercedid.org)).
    - iii. Maps showing the locations of recommended new monitoring sites can be found here: [https://www.mercedsgma.org/assets/pdf/reports/Data-Gaps-Plan\\_Appendix-B\\_Results-of-groundwater-Monitoring-Network-Analysis-Tools.pdf](https://www.mercedsgma.org/assets/pdf/reports/Data-Gaps-Plan_Appendix-B_Results-of-groundwater-Monitoring-Network-Analysis-Tools.pdf)
  - c. SAC discussion
    - i. Question: What are the advantages to participating in the monitoring program? Answer: None of the wells in the monitoring program are being used in any way to penalize or target landowners for specific areas. The Subbasin has very diverse groundwater conditions - by building up the monitoring network, this builds a better understanding of the Subbasin and informs management actions that reflect the existing conditions rather than a guess. Data collected at the well can be shared with the well owner.
    - ii. Jim Blanke added that this is intended to be a cost-efficient effort to avoid costly spending by the GSAs. He further noted that efficiencies of using existing wells can only happen with volunteers.
    - iii. Question (in chat): What is the pipeline when integrating data from these new wells for the whole GSA (e.g., following current pipeline, new ones, etc.) or are these new wells just to help refine management locally/near to the new wells? Answer: Groundwater level data feeds into many different aspects of GSP management both local and regional, including Annual Reports where hydrographs and groundwater elevation maps are generated every year, Subbasin modeling, water budgets, calculation of Subbasin change in storage, etc.
    - iv. Question: What are the criteria for using an existing well as monitoring well? Answer: MSGSA has generally been looking to identify wells that are not continuous production wells (or don't run for multiple months of the year). For the first pass, it would be ideal to know which aquifer the well is completed in (e.g., what depth and what screened interval depths) but there is funding to potentially video that well and determine that information if a well construction log is not available.
      - 1. Maxwell Norton added that irrigation wells are on a use program with PG&E or MID which means they're not being used during peak power periods each day.
      - 2. Jim Blanke added that there needs to be an access port for measuring groundwater levels and also would be ideal to avoid excessive oil – both of these items can be checked if well owner is not sure.
      - 3. Well owners were further encouraged to reach out to the GSAs if interested.
6. Drought Update
- a. Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) provided an update on regional and statewide drought conditions. Precipitation is not the only component of drought – the state has seen some of the hottest temperatures this last water year, which further exacerbated conditions. Even a year of above average precipitation may not be enough to resolve the situation.



- i. The latest state reservoir conditions were shared and can be found here: <https://cdec.water.ca.gov/resapp/RescondMain>
    - ii. Link to DWR's September drought presentation: [https://cwc.ca.gov/-/media/CWC-Website/Files/Documents/2021/09\\_September/September2021\\_Item\\_9\\_Attach\\_1\\_DroughtPowerPoint\\_Final.pdf](https://cwc.ca.gov/-/media/CWC-Website/Files/Documents/2021/09_September/September2021_Item_9_Attach_1_DroughtPowerPoint_Final.pdf)
  - b. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) shared more information about local actions being taken, including 9 tanked water supplies installed by Self-Help Enterprises (Jul-Oct 2021) and 33 "out of water" domestic well permits issued in the Merced Subbasin (Apr-Oct 2021). She also shared a list of emergency water resources in Merced County.
    - i. Question (in chat): How do these numbers compare with earlier years? Answer: Merced County 2015 drought saw more like 100 tanked water locations county-wide, which covered a larger area and longer time period.
  - c. SAC discussion
    - i. Joe Scoto: Without surface water, next year is going to be a challenge. Already trying to factor in what crops can be planted where there are known good wells.
    - ii. Wes Myers: Less impact on grazing lands, but still a tough year.
    - iii. Simon Vander Woude: Surface water helped this year; different ranches, especially in Le Grand it was tougher. In Merced area, Above Corcoran Clay wells are doing better – but without use of surface water in the winter, it will be a different story next year.
    - iv. Bob Kelly: Echoes what the panelists have said.
    - v. Amanda Monaco: Most folks she works with are on community water systems – more specifics may be available from the Merced representative of Leadership Counsel.
    - vi. Dave Serrano: Heard that someone drilled a 21" well (full perforation) and going into bypassed strata and picking up shallower water in the El Nido area. This is making it more difficult for surrounding wells to access groundwater.
7. Public Comment
  - a. Susan Walsh shared a thank you to Lacey McBride and City of Merced Leah Brown who gave an excellent presentation to the League of Women Voters and Sierra Club about SGMA and the GSP. Often, Susan hears that people don't understand the issues, but Lacey and Leah did a great job of describing groundwater issues and next steps.
8. Next steps and adjourn
  - a. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) shared that the 11/16 County Board of Supervisors will be hearing a public presentation on the proposed changes to the groundwater ordinance which may be of interest to stakeholders.
  - b. Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) requested that the stakeholders provide feedback as desired on content for future meetings (this can be done by emailing Chris Hewes at [cjhewes@woodardcurran.com](mailto:cjhewes@woodardcurran.com) or Charles Gardiner at [Charles@catalystgroupca.com](mailto:Charles@catalystgroupca.com)).
  - c. Meeting was adjourned at 2:32 PM.

**Next Regular Meeting  
TBD January 2022**

Information also available online at [mercedsgma.org](http://mercedsgma.org)