



MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: April 25, 2022, 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM

LOCATION: Hybrid meeting with physical location at Merced Irrigation District, Franklin Yard Facility, 3321 North Franklin Road, Merced, CA 95348 and online via Zoom

Coordination Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hicham ElTal	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Dietz ¹	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 type="checkbox"/>	Ken Elwin (alternate)	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eric Swenson	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" 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"/>	Kel Mitchel	Turner Island Water District GSA #1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tim Allan (alternate)	Turner Island Water District GSA #1

1. Stephanie Dietz joined around item 7(e) in the minutes below.

Meeting Notes

1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran [W&C]) called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

- a. Coordination Committee members in attendance are shown in table above.

3. State of Emergency Teleconference Findings

- a. Motioned by Nic Marchini and seconded by Kel Mitchel. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of March 21, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- a. Motioned by Kel Mitchel and seconded by Mike Gallo. Minutes were approved unanimously.

5. Public Comment

- a. None received.

6. Reports

a. GSA Reports

- i. *Merced Subbasin GSA*. Adriel Ramirez shared that the MSGSA adopted 4/14/22 well consistency determination policy. Also contacted by Department of Conservation to interview for application for multibenefit land repurposing program.
 - ii. *MIUGSA*. Hicham ElTal shared that the GSA is working on comments to the County updated groundwater ordinance. Working on setting up for future management of the GSA, e.g. software for water trades which will include accounting for surface water. Monitoring SWRCB curtailments and potential impact on basin sustainability.
 - iii. *TIWD GSA #1*. Kel Mitchel working through well consistency determination comments with GSA board.
- b. Current Basin Conditions – Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented some figures showing groundwater levels recently recorded at monitoring wells, including some continuous pressure transducers at newer SGMA monitoring wells, others measured by QK, or others measured by City of Merced. He noted that not all wells are dedicated to monitoring and may be in use, or otherwise influenced by groundwater pumping by a nearby active well. Wells 53315 and 53316 have had some measurement challenges.
- i. Q (public): Is the El Nido Firehouse well a dry or monitoring well? A: Monitoring well.
 - ii. Q (Nic Marchini): Where are stations 53315 and 53316 located? A: Off of Buchanan Hollow Rd, they are private wells.

7. Potential Revisions to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) reviewed the three comments from DWR on the GSP which was determined "incomplete". He also refreshed the group on SGMA terminology related to sustainable management criteria.
- b. Jim Blanke (W&C) reminded the group about several options that have been evaluated for different minimum thresholds (MTs), including (1) 2015 levels, (2) historical low, (3) deeper of historical low or shallowest domestic well + 10 ft, or (4) a combination of #2 in the area of subsidence and #3 elsewhere in the Subbasin.
 - i. Q (Eric Swenson, MSGSA): How would we respond to someone who says their well has been dewatered going forward because we didn't have information on it or wasn't covered by a representative well? A: Mitigation component is not something being discussed today. The GSAs can decide if a mitigation program is needed and what that should look like.
 - ii. Q (Joseph Angulo): Are all domestic wells considered in the minimum threshold, regardless of date installed or quality of water withdrawn? A: The domestic well data source starts from mid-1990s based on electronic well permitting

database from Merced County. We've included nearly all domestic wells except statistically-defined outliers.

- c. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared that we've expanded the domestic well search radius from 2 miles to 5 miles and included public water supply wells.
- d. Jim Blanke (W&C) expanded on some additional considerations incorporated into the latest round of modeling for ongoing/future subsidence, including no cumulative change in storage (to avoid additional subsidence) over the long term, as well as no cumulatively negative storage in any year (e.g. dry years). These criteria are generally more protective than the MTs that take into consideration groundwater levels only.
 - i. Q (Kel Mitchel, TIWD GSA-#1): How does the subsidence map look for 2015-2021 instead of 2012-2021? Should we consider expanding the "subsidence area" to the whole Below Corcoran Clay area because it could occur elsewhere in the future? A: W&C has not looked at that specifically and could consider expanding the region.
- e. Jim Blanke (W&C) walked the group through the model results table.
 - i. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Does the pumping reduction column include developed supply? A: Yes.
 - ii. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Between modeling scenarios A, B, and C, could you add the stream depletions from the Merced River? A: Yes, W&C can do that.
 - iii. Comment (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): From MIUGSA perspective, if the updated GSP uses any scenario that isn't 2015 groundwater levels, MIUGSA doesn't want to be responsible for mitigation. But, if using 2015 levels, then can look at scale of depletions between GSAs to share cost of mitigation that might occur.
 - 1. MIUGSA has comments to share later on expanded 5-mile radius used for domestic wells and for comparison to historical lows.
 - iv. Q (Eric Swenson, MSGSA): What is the baseline gross extraction that the groundwater reductions are starting from? A: Around 620,000 AF.
 - v. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared highlights of comments on the results table from the Stakeholder Advisory Committee earlier on 4/25. They ranged from support for 2015 levels and higher groundwater levels vs others concerned about economic impacts on the County with support for scenario C, potentially with projects or management actions to address dry year negative cumulative storage change.
 - 1. Kel Mitchel (TIWD GSA-#1) shared that he thought he heard that there was more interest in having a strong response (over-response) early on and then readjust later (rather than the opposite of not going far enough now and needing to be reactive later on).
 - vi. Q (Kel Mitchel, TIWD GSA-#1): Where are the reductions occurring geographically? A: Modeling was based on reduced crop acreage. In the subsidence area, pumping reductions were focused primarily in the Below Corcoran, with less reductions in the Above Corcoran. Note that planned

- supply side projects will reduce what is needed for magnitude of demand reductions, but not enough to fully offset.
- vii. Public comment (from chat): It would be helpful to see what the specifics of the mitigation strategy to get the -40,000 [AF shown in modeling scenario C] to positive.
 - 1. Response: Likely, the strategy would primarily include land fallowing because there are limited water supplies to bring in those very dry conditions.
 - viii. Q (Kel Mitchel, TIWD GSA-#1): DWR’s letter was specific about evaluating subsidence impacts on beneficial uses and users in the subbasin – anything we can do to think about that or address is more directly? A: W&C contacted USBR and reviewed some of their published Channel Capacity reports to see how subsidence would impact the Middle Eastside Bypass and its ability to convey flood flows. For instance, USBR Channel Capacity Report (2019, Appendix B) suggested impacts by 2031 for ability to meet goals for flood flow conveyance. We also know Delta-Mendota has had issues with conveyance through infrastructure.
 - ix. Jim (W&C) clarified that modeling scenario C involves historical low in Below Corcoran Clay in subsidence area, but shallowest domestic well (+10ft) everywhere else (including the Above Corcoran Clay aquifer in the subsidence area).
 - x. Q (Stephanie Dietz, MIUGSA): What are the impacts of pumping reductions on municipal wells? A: Hard to answer directly, but all these reductions will need to go through a process of allocation between the GSAs and then within each individual GSAs before it gets to individual wells.
 - xi. Q (Adriel Ramirez, MSGSA): What if we choose 2015 levels and don’t get there at 2040? Can we address in a 5-year update to be less restrictive? A: The GSP is a living document and can be updated through a stakeholder process and with DWR approval.
 - xii. Public Question (in chat): Can you explain why the GSP scenario which reduces pumping 66,000 AFY has a -36,000 AF Minimum Annual change in storage below Corcoran and Scenario C which reduces pumping more at 70,000 AFY results in -40,000. What is going on in the model to make this result? A: There a few factors: the pumping reductions are not uniform throughout the Subbasin but also there are a series of revisions since the GSP model version was developed, so there are some model behavior differences.
 - xiii. Comment (Adriel Ramirez, MSGSA): Majority of pumping reductions are in MSGSA. They might be able to meet pumping reductions, but if can’t get to 2015 levels, there’s concern about negative impacts on the economy and not meeting goal. Might be too restrictive, too fast.
 - xiv. Comment (Kel Mitchel, TIWD GSA-#1): In comparing modeling scenarios B and C, there is a 45,000 AFY difference in pumping reductions. If an additional 45,000 AFY would need to be reduced from just the Below Corcoran aquifer, that’s a huge volume of water for that area.
 - xv. Comment (Greg Young, MSGSA): If we go to 2015 levels, sounds like it would remove mitigation challenges, but there’s a chance that 2015 levels might not be achievable by 2040 even if demand reductions are achieved. MSGSA is open to taking on some of the responsibility of mitigation (especially domestic wells) so MIUGSA isn’t burdened for something that is not MIUGSA’s responsibility.

Thinks modeling scenarios B or C are more implementable if we tie with another solution (e.g. mitigation program to be designed and shared).

1. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) replied:
 - a. MIUGSA technically not looking at reduced pumping today, but it could happen in future because of SED and Bay Delta Plan.
 - b. Concerned that groundwater levels below 2015 levels could be a slippery slope, even with consideration for mitigation responsibility by MSGSA. But willing to consider modeling scenario B or C if other GSAs serious about taking on mitigation responsibility (would need to be better defined).
 - c. Concerned about recent observed declines in groundwater in MIUGSA's west side, which historically has been more resilient .
- xvi. Kel Mitchel (TIWD GSA-#1) confirmed that in the case of 2015 groundwater levels goal, these don't need to be achieved in 2023 – the goal is 2040.
- xvii. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) would like MSGSA to share more information on how they'll commit to 100% mitigation responsibility for domestic wells (if want to deviate from 2015 groundwater levels).
- xviii. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared another option where 2015 levels could be the new measurable objective (MO), but set the MTs lower to reduce risk of violation. MIUGSA shared they're open to this and other creative solutions.
- xix. Q (Adriel Ramirez, MSGSA): What happens to wells that go dry during implementation as we ramp down pumping to go for 2015 levels? A from Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA): Willing to do a proportional cost share based on the percentage of pumping percentage over the native yield.
- xx. Q (Kel Mitchel, TIWD GSA-#1): How should we think about a goal for 2015 levels in Above Corcoran considering it was pretty high in 2015 and not pumped heavily? A: It would have a benefit to subsidence. However, we would need to look to impacts on groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs) and stream depletions due to increased pumping likely to occur in Above Corcoran.
 1. Kel suggested that we would need a Below Corcoran Clay MT which would be 2015 or historical low. Then Above Corcoran Clay can't be tied to 2015.
 - a. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) agreed with this.
 - b. One additional suggestion could be 2015 levels minus some buffer. Hicham requested that Woodard & Curran look into this.
- xxi. Comment (Eric Swenson, MSGSA): Has designed pumps for Above Corcoran wells in previous work; pumping rate for above wells is much smaller than Below Corcoran. Might need twice as many wells to meet same pumping volume. This could be complicated under well permitting, but addressable.
- xxii. Adriel Ramirez (MSGSA) confirmed that they need direction from the MSGSA Board as next step on mitigation program responsibility; the next meeting will occur in the second week of May.
- xxiii. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Are there any scenarios that are protective of domestic wells and address the other categories? A: Option C is lowest pumping value that is still protective in terms of domestic wells (meets minimum threshold definition, though may still allow some dewatering). But Option C doesn't address subsidence.
- xxiv. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Would replacement of a very shallow well be part of a mitigation program? A: It will be up to the Committee and GSAs to put



together a mitigation program, e.g. how to determine whether dewatering is due to GSP vs other conditions.

xxv. Q (Eric Swenson, MSGSA): How much detail would the updated GSP need to have about mitigation? A: Need to include an open and transparent impact of MTs on beneficial uses and users of groundwater in the Subbasin. Up to the GSAs to include or not include a mitigation program, but not necessarily required. For example, several other GSPs included a plan for how to consider development of a mitigation program. There's some flexibility.

f. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the schedule for incorporating edits into the GSP by end of July to address DWR's comments.

8. Next steps and adjourn

a. Meeting adjourned 4:45 pm.

Next Regular Meeting
TBD, but expected to be late May 2022
Information also available online at mercedsgma.org