



MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: April 25, 2022, 1:00 to 3:00 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

Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	MIDAC member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino	Stevinson/Merquin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Ramos	MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Darren Olguin	Resident of Merced County
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dave Serrano	Serrano Farms - Le Grand
<input type="checkbox"/>	David Belt	Foster Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emma Reyes	Martin Reyes Farm/Land Leveling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Greg Olzack	Atwater Resident
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Olivia Gomez	Community of Planada
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nataly Escobedo Garcia (alternate)	Leadership Counsel
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parry Klassen	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	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 type="checkbox"/>	Bill Spriggs (alternate)	Merced resident
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Thomas Dinwoodie	Master Gardener/McSwain
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trevor Hutton	Valley Land Alliance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wes Myers	Merced Grassland Coalition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lou Myers (alternate)	Benjamin Land LP

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order and Welcome
 - a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) welcomed the group.
2. Introductions and Roll Call
 - a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) reviewed the agenda and meeting guidelines, conducted roll call, and reminded attendees that past meeting materials are available online at mercedsgma.org.
 - b. Jim Blanke (W&C) reminded the group that we are meeting again in May and June to stay up to date on the GSP update in response to DWR comments.

3. Potential Revisions to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan

- a. DWR comments overview
 - i. 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. Groundwater levels minimum threshold
 - i. 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.
 1. Jim clarified that option 1 (2015 levels) is based on the year delineated by SGMA before which the basin is not responsible for responding to undesirable results (e.g. for conditions prior to 2015).
 - ii. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Do you have depths for each of these three choices? Want to be able to put numbers to each of the depths. A: It varies for ~30 representative wells; we have the information and can share it, but it's not easy to show visually because of the variability throughout the Subbasin.
 - iii. Q (Susan Walsh): Are the historical domestic well levels estimates? A: No, they are based on well permit records kept by Merced County.
 - iv. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): What do the colors on the map mean? A: The colors represent Above, Below, or Outside Corcoran Clay principal aquifer associated with each representative monitoring well.
 - v. Q (Lisa Kayser-Grant): If a well went dry in 2015, are you removing them from the dataset? A: Not directly, no, as we don't have access to that level of information. If regional groundwater levels declined below the shallowest domestic well in a particular area, there is an assumption that it has been dewatered and the destruction was not recorded. The assumption is that shallowest domestic well has been replaced.
 - vi. Comment (Lisa Kayser-Grant): If the GSP takes longer to finish updating and implement, does that mean groundwater levels can get deeper and the threshold can be deepened? That seems unreasonable as a process. For residential wells, it's not hard to figure out when they were replaced because they hook up to City water. Well destruction takes time but doesn't take time to have City water hookup and those records should be available.
 - vii. Q (Nav Athwal): When you say options, what do you mean? Would all of these options pass muster with DWR? Why not choose the one that gives most flexibility? A: Generally shallower levels are more likely to be accepted, but we'll get into this in a little more detail in the next steps.
 - viii. Q (Matt Beaman): Should we be comfortable with assigning a 5 mile radius laterally vs considering depth and location of principal aquifer? A: Shallow domestic wells completed within the Above Corcoran Clay tend to be located up



- in the northwest of the Subbasin where there are more Above Corcoran Clay principal aquifer representative monitoring wells. There just aren't a lot of shallow domestic wells in the southern portion of the Subbasin. This can be something we look into a little more.
- ix. Q (Kel Mitchel): For MT option 3's component of historical low, is it similar to the historical low used exclusively in option 2 where it could be a more recent Fall 2021 GWL? Would the measurable objective need to be revisited with MT options 1 and 2? A: It's the same historical low as option 2. The figure on the slide was just a schematic, but yes generally the MO would probably need to be revisited to make sure it's got some buffer above the MT.
 - x. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Would it be useful to share that domestic wells aren't located in the foothills in the GSP? A: Yes, that's a good idea to include percentage of map to confirm some numbers.
- 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. He also shared that the GSAs are working on filling data gaps to add new representative wells, particularly in Merced Subbasin GSA.
- i. Q (Arlan Thomas): Doesn't that make the representative wells more general with an expanded representative area? A: Yes, to some extent. It's a tradeoff between including consideration of more domestic wells within that radius to be protective vs having values that represent a larger area and could be a little less meaningful.
- 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 (Lisa Kayser-Grant): It sounds like instead of reducing groundwater lost, criteria are being added that average it out over an area so subsidence may occur? A: We'll still be looking at the representative monitoring wells in the subsidence area. There's some averaging across the subsidence region, but it helps to focus on this region separately from rest of the Subbasin.
 - ii. Q (Wes Myers): For the eastern side of Merced where there are data gaps, is there a grant program where there can be a cost-share for installing wells that can be used for both ranching and monitoring purposes? (e.g. solar pumps for cattle?) This is specifically for punching in new wells because there are old wells going dry. A: For existing wells, always open to folks who think they have a suitable well. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) clarified that pretty much all monitoring has been volunteering to date so the GSAs welcome additional volunteers. Jim clarified that grant funding usually requires the well to be fully dedicated to monitoring, but ranching usually has low volume usage so that is worth exploring further if there is interest in volunteering a well.
 - iii. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Thomas has seen good forecasts of climate data from a Nebraska data source. Has the GSP team looked at projections of hydrology and basin conditions under climate change? A: As part of the GSP, the GSP included an evaluation of climate change impacts on future conditions. Both higher evapotranspiration and changes in precipitation in the Central Valley, and also changes in snowpack in the mountains and associated impacts on reservoir systems. What we don't know (additional uncertainty), is when the droughts are going to occur and how frequent or how long.
- e. Jim Blanke (W&C) walked the group through the model results table.

- i. Q (Matt Beaman): Does the sustainable yield scenario include developed supply as extractions? A: Yes, it does include it.
 - 1. In the GSP, there's a bucket of water called "developed supply" and the bulk sourced by Merced Irrigation District (MID), ~120,000 AF. The GSP describes that this isn't available for allocation to the GSAs. This volume needs to be subtracted from the sustainable yield number. Once you take that out, you end up with a larger magnitude pumping reduction number. This developed supply is reallocated back to the entity that brings in the supply.
- ii. Comment in chat (Nav Athwal): Downside of 2015 levels MT option is that it has a large negative impact on the economy and job market.
- iii. Q (Simon Vander Woude): Do you think the DWR will have a problem with option C and the single-year cumulative change in storage of -40,000 AF? As a farmer and considering economic sustainability of farming, that's our best option. A: Yes, the DWR would have an issue with -40,000 AF shown as-is for single-year cumulative storage change in the subsidence area, but it might be possible to craft a project or management action that can address it with some different actions.
 - 1. Has the model taken into account the Prop 68 funded supply-side projects? A: No, but these can fairly interchangeably be used with demand reductions (e.g. reduce the reported demand reductions in the table by the amount of supply side projects).
- iv. Comment (Arlan Thomas) – going to have to run closer to Option B, maybe starting with Option C. If stay at 70,000 AF pumping reduction, the basin condition will continue to worsen.
- v. Comment (Wes Myers): Seconded comments that support Option C. Projections won't be right in 50 years. Issues with Option C might be addressed with region-specific pumping.
- vi. Q (Nav Athwal): The sustainable yield scenario that we have is what DWR rejected and now we're coming up with a new threshold? Or how do these options correspond to the Sustainable Yield? A: Yes, but DWR rejected the GSP for several reasons besides just groundwater level minimum thresholds. The new pumping reduction scenario(s) take into account several additional factors beyond long-term basin-wide storage.
- vii. Q (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Where does the 2- vs 5-mile radius come into the modeling results? A: The domestic well depths are considered in Options "GSP", C, and D. Options A and B are based on groundwater levels only.
- viii. Q (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Highly concerned about happy-looking green colors in the table. 2015 groundwater level were a bad (dry) year. Given lack of snowpack and disappearance of glacial water sources, we would have to be extremely optimistic to expect developed supply numbers to continue as-is. To what extent is that factored in? A: Green colors are because groundwater levels today are well below 2015 levels. Future scenarios would have to involve dramatic reductions in pumping to return to previous conditions.
 - 1. Comment: 2015 levels aren't enough – can't wait longer to continue using 2015 dry year as a goal, especially when we know that the produced water supply is dwindling.
- ix. Q (Susan Walsh): Am I hearing this right, that the scenario we are discussing will have substantially altered numbers next time we see it because as it is, it will not pass DWR review?? A: If group wanted to pursue Option C, there might need to be a project or management action included to address single year cumulative negative storage, but otherwise the modeling results are probably similar.

- x. Comment in chat (Nav Athwal): Agreed... The cost of putting up a little fight with DWR will be a fraction of the economic cost to the region if we limit more pumping than we have to. Filling data gaps in the next few years will paint a much different picture.
- xi. Comment (Susan Walsh): DWR has accessed past reports and discussions – can't do "just" anything. Has to be based on something solid. Has similar concerns that we can't wait to get to a bad year; have to talk about finding a place between 11% and 28% reductions.
- xii. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Will DWR take into account that we will have good or bad 5-year reports in the GSP Updates? A: Based on today's information, in order to have a complete GSP, we shouldn't have a GSP that includes a negative single-year cumulative storage change below zero. DWR is flexible and amendable to management strategies that are backed up to address actions that would be taken to avoid this situation.
- xiii. Q (Joe Scoto): Stakeholders are working now to install recharge basins that use floodwaters. Are these taken into account in the modeling? A: They're not directly included in the model, but you can put them into place instead of the demand reductions (e.g. supply-side efforts offset pumping reduction).
- xiv. Comment (Arlan Thomas): Suggestion to modify between modeled scenarios B & C – probably not optimistic to get all the demand reductions offset by recharge projects.
- xv. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Is there a short-term forecast (like 5- to 10-year projection in the modeling) instead of 50 years? e.g. restructure GSP to be just a 5-year plan. A: It is a 5-year plan to some extent in that there are 5-year evaluations, and it is a living document open to changes. But it has to focus on the long-term goal of sustainable conditions by 2040.
- xvi. Comment (Susan Walsh): If DWR is open to adaptive management caveats in the plan, including the supply side efforts currently underway, that may be the way to go.
- xvii. Comment (Jean Okuye): We have 18 years until 2040. We have developed supply. Climate change is real. We've really got to address demand reductions. Need to choose A or B. Concerned because supply won't be enough.
- xviii. Q (Wes Myers): Is there anywhere in the model where all four categories are green? Until we have data gaps figured out, we don't have the hydrology of the area. Assuming there's certain geology in areas without eyes on it. So can we say we want to move for Option C and we'll fill in data down the road in a few years? e.g. model shows green conditions through 2026 and then re-evaluate. Thinks too much too early in earlier options. A: Model scenario B is the one where everything is green. Option C is likely green until there's a drought. Likely would need reduced pumping or temporary following after some kind of drought trigger.
- xix. Comment (Arlan Thomas): Problem with modeling scenario C is that if there's extreme drought weather, then pumping reductions would need to be reduced significantly. Moderate years can be increased pumping.
- xx. Comment (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Adjustments to the baseline period for groundwater levels or pumping reductions are not ideal.
- xxi. Comment (Ben Migliazzo): Economically in the area, drastically stopping pumping right now would be very negative. Need to ramp up to reductions. Lots of impacts on employment.
- xxii. Q (Jean Okuye): Do we know how much reduction has occurred (maybe in other counties) because they don't have the water? Following that has occurred more frequently elsewhere.

1. Because of surface water, several farming folks confirmed they have been following this year.
- xxiii. Comment from chat (Susan Walsh): I agree we need to be more aggressive that 11% but there is room to discuss middle options. the ramp up should be steeper as time goes on and data looks worse. This may support economic issues today but the speed at which we get to the cliff's edge is much faster.
 - xxiv. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): When do the pumping reductions for the modeling scenarios go into place? A: 2025-2035 as a 10-year implementation/rampdown period.
 1. Jim clarified that the basin-wide pumping reduction doesn't necessarily translate directly to individual farms – there are a lot of intervening factors like allocation between and within the GSAs and consideration of developed supply, etc.
 2. Jim also clarified that the model is extended hydrologically through 2021 per the last Annual Report, but then starts on a 50-year projected hydrology because we don't know what's going to happen next year.
 - xxv. Comment from chat (Nav Athwal): I think a vote is in order so we can see where folks stand. We're almost at 11:30. Maybe a follow up survey so we can get responses in writing.
 - xxvi. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA): Mitigation for domestic well impacts (lowered groundwater levels, but maybe also electrical costs) is a concern. MIUGSA supports the modeling scenario A (2015 groundwater levels), primarily to avoid domestic well mitigation and water quality impacts.
 - xxvii. Comment (Thomas Dinwoodie): By the time we get to 2025, scenario A may be the only option because we're continuing to experience and contribute to subsidence.
 - xxviii. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Does the state have the ability to come in immediately and make changes? A (Matt Beaman, MIUGSA): Yes if the plan is not accepted, and also in the future if an initially-accepted plan violates minimum thresholds.
 - xxix. Comment (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Recommendation to make clear in future presentations/plans that the ramp-down occurs over 10 years (2025-2035) and that these percentage reductions shown in the model results table are not immediate reductions in 2025 (less of a shock to stakeholders).
 - xxx. Comment (Craig Arnold): Bounce between model scenarios C and A. Tends to be a little more cautious.
 - xxxi. Comment (Lisa Baker): Farmer in El Nido area, and would lean towards modeling scenario C.
 - xxxii. Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): If the delay in 3-4 years is for agencies to get plans together, could you in 2025 look at what's happened and make adjustments immediately between C and A? A: 2025 is first GSP update and is a first chance to course-correct.
 - xxxiii. Q (Ben Migliazzo): When the is the next plan update due? A: We'll have to check, either Jan 2025 or Jan 2026.
- f. Schedule
 - i. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the schedule for incorporating edits into the GSP by end of July to address DWR's comments.

4. GSA Reports

- a. Adriel Ramirez provided an update for the Merced Subbasin GSA: Department of Conservation invited MSGSA to interview for land repurposing grant application (long-term program), along with several partners on application. This is separate and in addition to the shorter-term Prop 218 land repurposing effort.



- b. Matt Beaman provided an update for the Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA: Stakeholder Guidance Committee on May 4 from 1-3pm at MID Franklin Yard (specific to MIUGSA policies and the County's amended well ordinance impacts). Will be posted to the MIUGSA website.
- c. Kel Mitchel provided an update for Turner Island Water District GSA #1: Recent Board meeting was held to discuss ongoing groundwater sustainability issues similar to what was discussed today.

5. Public Comment

- a. None.

6. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Meeting was adjourned at 11:49am.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD in late May 2022

Meeting to be conducted hybrid (physical + virtual; subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org