

MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: June 1, 2022, 1:00 PM 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

Coordination Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hicham ElTal	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Dietz	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Justin Vinson	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Chavez	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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

Meeting Notes

1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran [W&C]) called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

2. Roll Call

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

3. State of Emergency Teleconference Findings

- a. The Coordination Committee considered the circumstances of the State of Emergency and determine whether to make the findings that any of the circumstances exist per AB 361: that the State of Emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person and/or State or Local Officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing.
- b. Action: Motion made, seconded, and carried

4. Approval of April 25, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- a. Action: Motion made, seconded, and carried

5. Public Comment

- a. None received.

6. Reports

a. GSA Reports

- i. *Merced Subbasin GSA*. Adriel Ramirez shared that MSGSA applied for a multibenefit land repurposing grant program, but was unsuccessful in this funding round. As an additional \$60 million may be added as a part of the Governor's proposed budget, the GSA is working to strengthen the application. Holding a public meeting on July 19 that, if successful, will fund their land repurposing program and fund the GSA executive director and domestic well mitigation program.
- ii. *MIUGSA*. Hicham EITal shared that MIUGSA approved 3.3 AF per acre for the period of April 1, 2023 through December 31, 2025 (equivalent to 1.1 AF/Ac annually) as sustainable native number for pumping allocations. MIUGSA is currently working through details of monitoring and enforcement and their Board will be approving certain numbers for recharge on a farm-by-farm basis. Matt Beaman shared that MIUGSA received the draft Grant Agreement with DWR for the SGM Implementation grant of \$7.6 million; Mr. Beaman anticipates sending data requests to the respective project proponents to finalize the work plan, schedule, and budget. Hicham EITal and Matt Beaman shared a presentation regarding an analysis of groundwater levels and pumping from 2016 to 2021 assuming pumping allocations at 1.1 AF per developed acre. Results show differences in the groundwater storage balance among the three GSAs. MIUGSA has a positive groundwater balance, even as groundwater levels have declined. Further, Mr. EITal stated that MIUGSA believes that setting the minimum thresholds lower than 2015 levels may expose the GSAs to additional liability for impacts that may occur. Mr. EITal stated that MIUGSA believes it should not bear mitigation or liability for setting minimum thresholds at historical lows and language in the GSP will need to reflect this.

1. Q: MSGSA has allocated funds for a domestic well mitigation program. What other mitigation measures may be included?
 - a. Mr. EITal responded that mitigation and liability are the two different issues. MIUGSA desires language broad enough to protect themselves at levels below 2015 levels, as all cities are in their GSA area. If the GSAs move forward with MTs set at 2015 levels, then MIUGSA does not require this language.
 - b. Jim Blanke (W&C) added that the average pumping reduction between minimum thresholds set at historical lows (115 TAF) and those set at 2015 levels (175 TAF).
2. A question was raised about whether mitigation is required. Jim Blanke (W&C) clarified that the GSP must provide transparency around the impacts anticipated at minimum thresholds. Potential for state intervention could be triggered by missing an interim milestone.
3. MSGSA and MIUGSA discussed potential impacts of SWRCB intervention if consensus regarding mitigation/responsibility language could not be reached before the GSP revision deadline.
4. MSGSA requested MIUGSA provide the minimum thresholds options and related language for sharing liability for the MSGSA Board to consider.

MIUGSA committed to drafting language to provide to MSGSA and TIWD GSA #1 for review prior to next MSGSA Board meeting.

5. Jim Blanke (W&C) clarified that the GSAs will need to set measurable objectives and interim milestones based on a similar methodology of the selected minimum threshold.

iii. *TIWD GSA #1*. No update provided.

7. Potential Revisions to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan

a. Groundwater levels

- i. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared progress on revising groundwater level minimum thresholds. GSAs have decided to pursue historical lows as the minimum threshold approach. Once pumping reductions are implemented through projects and management actions (ramping up after 2025), groundwater levels are projected to increase. Measurable objectives will be developed to provide operational flexibility (approach being evaluated at this time is to use fall 2011 groundwater levels) and interim milestones will be defined by anticipated GSP implementation and model simulated response. Meeting discussion included incorporating a domestic well mitigation program, with primary financial responsibility with MSGSA, and a management action to explore different levels above Corcoran in the subsidence area for more flexibility in responding to subsidence issues.
- ii. Q (Kel Mitchel): Can interim milestones go below minimum thresholds?
 1. A (Jim Blanke): Based on BMPs from DWR, yes, this is allowed.

b. Subsidence

- i. Jim Blanke (W&C) presented the subsidence minimum threshold (and measurable objective) option under consideration by the GSAs: 0 feet per year, with condition of uncertainty. Other options include total subsidence (rather than rate) or the stipulation of a 5-year rolling average. USBR measurement issue is approximately +/- 1 inch and will be discussed with DWR. The final option is to set groundwater levels as a proxy for subsidence, which would involve extensive rework of the subsidence section. Interim milestones will assume some level of subsidence through 2040, both residual and new.
- ii. Jim Blanke (W&C) introduced the proposed management action for the subsidence area: goal is to target pumping reduction (or recharge activities) within Subsidence Focus Area (defined by region with 2015-2021 average less than -0.15 ft/yr) to achieve positive annual storage change. Noted that exact details will be developed as part of the management action determined after GSP is updated.
- iii. Comment (Hicham ElTal): Believes that the GSAs should accept DWR's position of 0 ft/yr for minimum threshold at this point and perform studies prior to 2040 to demonstrate that subsidence occurs in neighboring subbasins and argue that this is not a Merced Subbasin-specific problem.
- iv. Comment (Kel Mitchel): Could be explicit in the GSP that the MTs for GWLs are protective of subsidence, since set at historical lows.

c. Domestic well mitigation

- i. Jim Blanke (W&C) explained that, while identification of the need for a domestic well mitigation program will occur during GSP implementation, it is envisioned that a board or committee will review claims (which would need to be tied to

- regional groundwater conditions), with the primary financial responsibility coming from MSGSA, through negotiations.
- ii. Mr. ElTal reiterated that MIUGSA should not be responsible for mitigation for minimum thresholds set lower than 2015, and restated the commitment to prepare options and language for other GSAs to review.
- d. Adoption / public input opportunities
- i. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared that, by next Coordination Committee meeting in late June, consensus on the minimum thresholds, measurable objectives, and interim milestones should be reached and the redline GSP should be drafted for Board review and adoption.
 - ii. Comment (Hicham ElTal): Propose to combine committee meetings in late June to incorporate revisions from Stakeholder Advisory Committee members live and reduce need to respond to comments multiple times.

8. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) shared an update from the SAC meeting that most of group was content with the GSAs direction to select historical lows as minimum threshold, but some wanted to see 2015 levels as the minimum threshold.
- b. Greg Young (MSGSA) requested MIUGSA to share analysis details from their table of estimated groundwater use and allocations included in their presentation under Item 6(ii).
 - i. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) agreed to share the analysis.
- c. Meeting adjourned at 2:49 pm.

Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for a joint meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the Coordination Committee on June 27, 2022, 1pm

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org