

MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: October 19, 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 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 1:05 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 (Swenson), seconded (Gallo), and carried

4. Approval of June 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- a. Action: Motion made (Mitchel), seconded (Gallo), and carried

5. Public Comment

- a. None received.

6. Reports

a. GSA Reports

- i. *Merced Subbasin GSA*. Adriel Ramirez (MSGSA) shared that since the last 6/27 CC meeting, the GSA has:
 - Developed and established its phase 1 land repurposing program to reduce consumptive use of groundwater by 15,000 AFY no later than 2025. The application period closes 11/15 (recently extended by the GSA Board). 2 public workshops have been held about the program and mailers have been sent to all eligible landowners. Materials can be found on the GSA's website: <https://mercedsubbasingsa.org/>. Also, the GSA has approved new fees (through a Proposition 218 process) to fund programming.
 - The Board has also approved principles to support allocation and recharge credit frameworks, as well as other GSA activities.
 - The Strategic Planning Ad-Hoc Committee is preparing an allocation and recharge credit framework that will be presented in November to the GSA Board.
- ii. Q (Ken Elwin): What is the timespan for the 15,000 AF value? How will that be monitored? A: Resolution approved by Board is reduction of 15,000 AFY by water year (WY) 2025. It will be a recurring annual amount to be reached starting at the latest in WY 2025. Land repurposing program will be mechanism. ET will be used to help monitor. Requiring that any wells permitted under current executive order must be metered.
- iii. *MIUGSA*. Matt Beaman shared that:
 - MIUGSA Board adopted a groundwater allocation in May 2022 in line with the GSP's sustainable yield, in effect from Apr 2023 – Dec 2025, of an average 3.3 AF/ac. A newsletter was recently sent that summarizes this program.
 - At the last meeting, the Board adopted a well registration policy, with different deadlines by well type. Public wells need to be registered by end of 2022. Next, wells serving parcels > 10 ac need to register by April 1, 2023. Paper and electronic forms will be made available.
 - MID Board approved making developed supply available to its growers, so MIUGSA will be at 4 meetings with MID in mid-November to talk about SGMA and using developed supply as a SGMA compliance tool.
 - MIUGSA is evaluating creation of allocations for urban water agencies, about halfway through the process so far. Stakeholder Guidance Committee meetings are upcoming on this topic.
- iv. Q (Mike Gallo): Are there any plans to bring in rural communities that have wells into the urban systems? State seems to be pushing this idea more and more. A: This has been happening individually when small systems ask. Example, Franklin Beechwood study to potentially connect to City of Merced. Also a discussion about Black Rascal.
- v. Q (Mike Gallo): For property owners that don't have wells, will they be allowed to drill a well? From County standpoint, there's no problem as far as getting a permit to drill a new well? A: Yes, they are allowed. For MIUGSA, if new well owner sticks with allocation, then it should be OK.

- vi. Q (Eric Swenson): Where do new well permit applications go? A: They always start with the County, then get routed to the appropriate GSA.
- vii. Q (Eric Swenson): Is there a plan for monitoring extraction amounts in MIUGSA in line with the allocation? A: In the beginning, it'll be based on ET/remote sensing, and then meters will be installed (which will take time).
- viii. Q (Lacey McBride): MSGSA is working on a recharge framework that will track recharge into the basin and how much a project takes out. How is MIUGSA tracking recharge or extraction for developed supply? A (Hicham ElTal): In the case of developed water, there will be metering.
- ix. Q (Greg Young): Is there an accounting mechanism and where is this tracking information entered? How will pumping of native vs developed supply be determined? Desire to be consistent in tracking across subbasin. A (Hicham ElTal): It is going to take some time to develop and refine. There is a policy that will measure how water is measured and reported. There is a process for which developed water is tracked first. This will be described in detail at any of the planned mid-November MIUGSA/MID joint meetings.
- x. Q (Mike Gallo): When is the developed supply going to be available to the growers? A (Hicham ElTal): Board made it available to MID growers retroactive to 2015. From here on, anyone can come in and ask for water. Except that first 1-2 years starting now will be a bit of iterative testing out and MID anticipates additional rules to account for issues that arise.
- xi. *TIWD GSA #1*. Kel Mitchell updated that:
 1. GSA Board meeting recently discussed logistics for implementing projects funded by the grant funding that is approved.
 2. Briefly discussed allocations, but mostly about maintaining consistency with the other GSAs.

b. Current Basin Conditions

- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented three hydrographs from 2012 to present, one for each principal aquifer. He explained some of the challenges related to collection and interpretation of monthly data when studying trends (e.g. summer pumping impacts).
 1. Comment (Eric Swenson): Some high points in water level measurements could be reflective of falling water in the well.
 2. Q (Ken Elwin): Is there an SOP in place before taking the measurements? A: Definitely yes, but it can be hard to get accurate measurements when a regionally neighboring well is pumping.
 3. Comment (Eric Swenson): Recommends that manually sounded measurements and pressure transducers measurements may need to be colored differently in future graphs if they are to be included.

7. Recap of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan July 2022 Update

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared a summary of the edits to the revised GSP that was resubmitted to DWR in July 2022, including sustainable management criteria updates and new management actions.
- b. Comment (Eric Swenson): Note that MSGSA has a current funding allocation within the Prop 218 process for a domestic well mitigation program.

- c. Jim Blanke (W&C) summarized three comment letters that have been received in response to the resubmitted GSP. These letters are part of DWR's process for them to consider as part of their review of the revised GSP.
- d. Q (Ken Elwin): Are any letters a particular concern? A: Hard to say. NMFS and Leadership Counsel both provided letters previously on the original GSP submission, so theoretically would have been considered by DWR in their initial review and "incomplete" determination.

8. 5-Year GSP Evaluation Lookahead

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the requirements for completing a 5-year evaluation of the GSP, given that it was submitted 2.5 years ago.

9. Prop 68 Implementation Planning & Projects Grant Round 2 (due Nov 30, 2022)

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the recently released grant application.
- b. ***Note that the Merced Subbasin is eligible for up to \$20 million in grant funding, not the amount reduced by funding received in round 1, as described in the meeting.***
- c. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) shared some additional potential projects for grant application that are relatively inexpensive and could be combined and or regionalized:
 - i. Empower MID growers to use surface water rights to recharge and do their own budgeting. Example of piloting a 20 acre property with a 1 acre recharge basin.
 - ii. Another round of dry wells.
 - iii. For owners with flood irrigation facilities, still use drip or irrigation, but in wet year do flooding and some measurement.
 - iv. Those who rotate crops (typically sweet potato farmers), mostly sandy, do some other projects during fallow periods.
- d. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) described a metering project whereby well owners would install meters on wells. Project will also involve some standards development and piloting of telemetry (e.g. cellular or low frequency radio).
 - i. Q (Adriel Ramirez): Where will you house metered data? Asks because other applicants have included administrative projects, so might be potential for GSAs to collaborate on a portal tool with this grant. A (Hicham ElTal): Working through a separate grant to develop a water accounting platform. Kern County, Sacramento Valley, and others are involved in the development, including both surface water/groundwater and only groundwater users covering a variety of priorities/needs. Might be able to bring MSGSA onboard relatively soon once it's built out a little more. It's same platform as Rosedale/Rio Bravo's water banking system based on OpenET data.
 - ii. Comment (Eric Swenson): Might be good to obtain grant funding to study what would be the lowest cost radio network vs cellular to implement across a large area, e.g. a pilot program.
 - 1. Hicham ElTal: Matt is looking at both a local network and cellular or hybrid systems.
 - 2. Matt Beaman heard through East Turlock that DWR is encouraging applicants to apply for a full \$20M, but giving offramps later, which provides some flexibility for applicants in preparing their suite of grant request projects.
- e. Coordination Committee members confirmed they want to pursue this round 2 grant opportunity.

- f. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared that project proponents need to provide scope, budget, schedule for each project as part of the application.
- g. The Coordination Committee decided that representatives from each GSA will compile potential projects by end of day Tuesday 10/25; each GSA should compile these lists and send them to Woodard & Curran.
- h. Comment (Mike Gallo): Money for La Paloma received in Round 1 is short of the total need, could be part of Round 2. Hicham was in support of including this.
- i. Comment (Lacey McBride): Lone Tree MWC is very interested in revisiting the Deadman Creek Canal project initially cut from Round 1 application.
- j. Comment (Kel Mitchel): The TIWD GSA-#1 Board discussed potential projects to include in Round 2 application, but not positive as of today what that would be; interested in supporting unfunded projects from other GSAs in Round 1 first.

10. Contract Amendment with W&C for Preparation of WY 2022 Annual Report, Meeting Support, and an Optional Task for Preparation of the Prop 68 Implementation Planning & Projects Grant Round 2 Application

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) briefly described a proposal for additional support from Woodard & Curran over the next year.
- b. Q (Eric Swenson): If there are more than 6 projects for Round 2 application, how does the cost change? A: Depends on the level of coordination needed (e.g. support in preparing additional materials vs having them fully compiled by project proponent)
- c. Hicham ElTal: Request that W&C look at other venues for grants, e.g. NRCS for dry wells for growers. Might want to invite Scott from NRCS to talk about grant programs at next meeting. Look at project scoring criteria for 2023.
- d. Q (Eric Swenson): When does this scope of work need to be approved? A: Ideally as soon as possible. MIUGSA can ask for a resolution via a special board meeting. Regular meeting is 11/9. Other GSAs would need to approve as well.

11. Ongoing and Upcoming Activities

- a. Grant Updates - Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) shared that:
 - i. MIUGSA signed the grant agreement last week for Prop 68 Implementation Planning & Projects Grant Round 1 (Jun 2022 – Jun 2025)
 - ii. For the SDAC Grant, water was put into the dry wells in Planada recently. Data is being collected.
- b. Evapotranspiration tools & methodologies update – Jim Blanke (W&C) provided a brief update on goals for collaboration of evapotranspiration tools within the subbasin.
- c. Lessons learned from Madera and Chowchilla Subbasins – Greg Young (MSGSA) shared about ongoing activities and coordination in these two subbasins.
 - i. Q (Hicham ElTal) For satellite imagery related to ET analysis – what is the next step? A: Only entity using any remote sensing is Madera County GSA in both subbasins. Other GSAs do not have any remote sensing tools employed. Example item currently being looked into is irrigation after harvest and impacts on ET signatures in Nov/Dec. IrriWatch is doing some refinement to their process to address questions that are coming up. Madera County GSA recognizes importance of remote sensing as a tool moving forward, and is working to move forward toward wider acceptance as a tool.

- ii. Q (Hicham ElTal): Are they going to continue with using IrriWatch? A: There's still 3 years on the existing contract, lots of ongoing discussion, might bring in another third party as a comparison.
 - iii. Comment (Hicham ElTal): As we move forward, will share with CC what MIUGSA learns (moving forward with ET tools with consultant Olsson).
- d. Water quality data sampling coordination
 - i. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared an update on anticipated ongoing coordination with ESJWQC on water quality data, including potential use of annual EC measurements to estimate TDS in future years.
- e. DWR Flood-MAR Project
 - i. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) shared about a push from Governor's office to DWR to demonstrate streamlined Flood-MAR permitting and implementation process via example; DWR selected Merced to be this demonstration. MID has selected Mariposa & Owens Creeks watersheds for this work as opposed to some other options. The MID El Nido canal can also take water and release it to Deadman Creek or deliver directly to irrigators.
 - 1. Has been difficult to coordinate locally, but benefited by DWR oversight and funding.
 - 2. Latest plan with DWR is to try to get permit in November and start diversions if there are any storms starting in December. Lots of coordination happening in very short time (e.g. new meters in key spots).
 - ii. Q (Mike Gallo): How do you determine if allowed to take water out of not? A: Have historical trend by day for comparison to real-time measurements.
 - iii. Q (Eric Swenson): Who will the water master overseer? A: Not sure, won't be MID. Leaning on the local agencies.

12. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Meeting adjourned at 3:02 pm.

Next Regular Meeting
TBD – expected January 2023
Information also available online at mercedsgma.org