

MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Joint Coordination Committee & Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: May 24, 2023, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

LOCATION: 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

Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	MIDAC member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino (alternate)	Stevinson/Merquin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Vandenberg	MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Darren Olguin	Resident of Merced County
<input 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Kayser-Grant	Sierra Club

<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Maxwell	UC Merced
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maxwell Norton	Unincorporated area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Olivia Gomez	Community of Planada
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nataly Escobedo Garcia (alternate)	Leadership Counsel
<input type="checkbox"/>	Caitie Diemel	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Darcy Brown	River Partners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rick Drayer	Merced/Mariposa Cattlemen
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush MWC
<input 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 checked="" 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 Notes

1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

2. Roll Call

- a. Coordination Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above.
- b. Stakeholder Advisory Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above.

3. Approval of February 27, 2023 Coordination Committee Meeting Minutes

- a. Motioned (Gallo), seconded (EITal), passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment

- a. Arturo Martinez from Senator Caballero's office: Is there an opportunity to formally join the Stakeholder Advisory Committee? A (Charles Gardiner): The membership of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee is selected by GSAs via an application process and was most recently updated in early 2021 to support GSP implementation. Anyone is welcome to join meetings in general.

5. Reports

- a. GSA Reports
 - i. Merced Subbasin GSA (MSGSA) – Lacey McBride provided several updates:
 1. The GSA is continuing to work on developing an allocation policy. An ad-hoc committee of the GSA Board is making periodic recommendations to the full Board and currently working through issues around spatial variance around the Subbasin. The committee is collecting some additional local monitoring data from growers.
 2. The second round of application for the land repurposing program is getting ready to kick off, likely to be open June 15 – July 31.

3. MSGSA is participating in the water accounting platform being developed by the Water Data Consortium and EDF, also used by MIUGSA. Testing will take place this summer with a full roll-out planned for next year.
 4. MSGSA's technical consultant, EKI, is working on study to identify and instrument existing wells. EKI is working on scheduling field visits soon. This will inform future data gap projects when looking to install new wells.
 5. Eric Swenson (MSGSA) added that, on 5/11/23, the MSGSA Board voted to authorize a contract with EKI to complete all tasks in 5 months. The tasks call for preliminary presentation of groundwater pumping allocations by sustainability zone in October 2023 and potential adoption by the GSA Board in December 2023.
 6. Q (Hicham ElTal): Can you explain the sustainability zones? Is the intent that different zones would have different allocations? A (Eric Swenson): These are available on the MSGSA website, areas that have been identified with distinctly different hydrogeology. Second task for EKI is to refine and adjust current boundaries. Those zones already at 2015 groundwater elevations would likely have different pumping allocations than others.
- ii. Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA (MIUGSA)
 1. Matt Beaman first shared some DWR slides from a recent ACWA conference with an overview about SGMA/GSPs status, as well as other upcoming/ongoing activities that DWR is working on.
 2. Q (Kel Mitchel): Approval of GSP for Merced came with "strings attached", what does that mean? A: DWR has a series of guidance documents they're preparing for GSAs. Likely won't see the Merced-specific letter until the guidance documents are finished.
 3. MIUGSA is continuing to work on developing a comprehensive rulebook for implementing an allocation program within the GSA. A lot of this will be presented at the next MIUGSA Board meeting on June 14.
 4. Hicham ElTal: MIUGSA's policy about groundwater allocation may seem aggressive, but it is being developed in a way to be flexible, given some unknowns about allocations in neighboring MSGSA. Hicham stressed that sooner would be better for MSGSA to decide on implementation of an allocation. While MSGSA's land repurposing program is a worthwhile effort, he thinks it will not be enough to reach sustainability without implementation of an allocation program.
 - iii. Turner Island Water District GSA-#1 (TIWD GSA-#1): Kel Mitchel provided two updates:
 1. As a result of Round 1 grant funding, TIWD GSA-#1 is working on capture/storage of water, starting with planning activities.
 2. Started discussing a recharge policy for landowners to develop private recharge projects, and plan to coordinate with the other two GSAs on that.
 3. Q (Hicham ElTal): any updates on allocation development? A: Not yet. Focus is on shifting location of pumping from below to above the Corcoran Clay and also overall conservation/demand reduction.
- b. Current Basin Conditions and Data Collection Update
 - i. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared three slides (one per Principal Aquifer), each with numerous hydrographs with groundwater elevations from January 2020 through April 2023, highlighting that we do see general increases in elevations in most wells during the wetter conditions this past winter.

- ii. Q (Eric Swenson): Is it possible for wells with 2015 targets to show a historical trend for groundwater elevations back to 2015? A: Yes, we can add another graph or update in the next meeting. Might need to go back to 2014 in some cases.
- iii. Public Q: Do you have reference data for ground surface elevation for these wells? It would be helpful to show these graphs in units of depth below ground surface. A: Yes, we have that information and could present it that way.
- iv. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA): The GSAs committed to monitoring on a monthly basis in the GSP. Those measurements are being collected. Data QA/QC that was intended for the hired consultant has been shouldered by the GSAs and other consultants. Want to let the committees know that that GSA staff are collaborating on a plan on how to restructure the monitoring data contract moving forward to improve the follow-up steps after data are collected in the field.
- v. Q (Nic Marchini): Where are we short in terms of the monitoring process? A: There are two pieces. (1) Collecting monthly measurements, especially in summer, is a little messy/inconsistent because wells are interfering. Schedule coordination for onsite visits is also a challenge on a monthly basis. (2) Some of the data collection is messier than you would expect in the field itself – so a quality control process is needed to make sure measurements are recorded properly and consistently.
- vi. Comment (Nic Marchini): Maybe we need a small committee to help plan this out. Would be nice to get data presented to each GSA board meeting monthly or several times per year.
- vii. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA): We may need to find a new partner to help develop the monitoring program. As-is, not getting all the tasks completed.

6. Flood-MAR Pilot Project Presentation

- a. Jim Wieking (DWR, Division of Planning) kicked off a presentation on the “Merced River Flood-MAR Reconnaissance Study”, introducing a definition of what FloodMAR is, the long-term goals of this study and beyond, as well as some definitions of what the study looked at.
- b. David Arrate (DWR) shared the study purpose & goals, an overview of the 8 integrated models, and a description of the variety of scenarios considered as part of the study. Continued work is planned to fine-tune the benefits across the various scenarios.
- c. Daniel Mountjoy (Sustainable Conservation) presented on recharge optimization.
- d. David Arrate presented key conclusions for the study specific to climate change scenarios, related to flood risk impacts, watershed changes, and management/operation impacts.
- e. Daniel Mountjoy presented conclusions related to ecosystem benefits and overall recharge volume potential across time of year and location in the subbasin.
- f. Ali Taghavi (Woodard & Curran) shared conclusions specific to the groundwater system and groundwater supply.
- g. Jim Wieking provided some closing remarks to the presentation around a pathway to expanding use of FloodMAR to achieve increasing benefits, as well as specific next steps.
- h. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) thanked the team for the presentation and expressed additional thoughts on potential for FloodMAR.
- i. Q (Eric Swenson): Is there a step coming to do a model validation based on actual flows and recharge and monitoring of where water is going based on the actual application of FloodMAR by MID this last winter? A (Daniel Mountjoy): Groundwater Recharge Assessment Tool (GRAT) has been used with Madera Irrigation District and found that they were able to recharge more than GRAT predicted (the model is designed conservatively). A (Ali Taghavi): No verification plan has been presented for the

groundwater modeling, but Merced GSAs could use their MercedWRM tool to simulate what occurred and see the benefits.

- j. Q (Simon Vander Woude): What about FloodMAR outside the MID boundary? DairyMAR issue to deal with – how will we work through that? A (Jim Wieking): The pilot study focused on MID's service area but the watershed studies are looking more broadly. A (Daniel Mountjoy): Just starting to collect information on the unincorporated area of the Merced Subbasin to be able to account for this and update the study.
 - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA): Under "Grant Updates" item on the agenda, there's already a project to expand GRAT to the entire Subbasin.

7. Grant Updates

- a. Update on SGMA Implementation, Round 2 Draft Awards
 - i. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared the status update of the Round 2 application, including draft award of \$3.4 million for 2 projects to Merced as the only critically overdrafted subbasin to receive funding.
 - 1. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): What is La Paloma Mutual Water Company? A (Lacey McBride): Provided information on La Paloma and its location in the Subbasin.
- b. Filling Data Gaps (Current and Potential Future Funding Opportunities)
 - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided an overview of several ongoing efforts that the GSAs are trying to coordinate around filling data gaps, as well as next steps for those efforts.
 - ii. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the DWR Technical Support Services (TSS) funding program and encouraged the Subbasin to continue planning to be in the queue for when additional funding becomes available in the future.
- c. Merced Subbasin Integrated Managed Aquifer Recharge Evaluation Tool (MercedMAR)
 - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) described the MercedMAR project that was funded by SGMA Implementation & Planning Grant Round 1 that is kicking off soon.
- d. Public question: Is there a way to have access to what qualified the Round 2 funded projects for grant funding? A (Jim Blanke): This is a good question that the GSAs would like to understand as well. The draft award just came out last week and we anticipate additional coordination with DWR on their decision process. The solicitation package for the grant has specific criteria for projects to be considered, but we still need to get more information from DWR on the rationale for the specific draft results.

8. GSP 5-Year Update Preview

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) presented a refresher on what's required for the GSP's 5-year update, as well as potential considerations for the update.
- b. Hicham ElTal would like to add to the list of considerations to the plan: moving from once per month groundwater monitoring to quarterly. Also, he doesn't expect to see DWR's recommendation letter for some time.
- c. Public Q: Did DWR say why they didn't complete the letter by March 30? A: They're working on it, it's not a regulatory deadline, just a goal that the DWR initially provided.

9. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared a list of next steps for the next several months.
- b. Hicham ElTal: MID has worked on an amendment to the SB 23 flood bill from Senator Caballero to allow for things like the water right application for the Subbasin. Would be a huge win for the Subbasin.

c. Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD

Meeting to be conducted as an in-person meeting (subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org