



## MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: March 20, 2024, 10 am – 12pm

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

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### Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<del>Adam Malisch</del> Alvaro Arias	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bill Eisenstein	River Partners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Vandenberg	MCFB
<input type="checkbox"/>	Caitie Diemel	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Melendrez	City of Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Danielle Serrano	Serrano Farms - Le Grand
<input type="checkbox"/>	David Belt	Foster Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eddie Rojas	E&J Gallo Winery
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emma Reyes	Martin Reyes Farm/Land Leveling
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jean Okuye	E Merced RCD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joe Sansoni	Sansoni Farms/MCFB
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Scoto	Scoto Brothers/McSwain School Dist.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Baker	Clayton Water District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Kayser-Grant	Sierra Club
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maxwell Norton	Unincorporated area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush MWC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Susan Walsh	City of Merced
<input 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"/>	Zachary Hamman	Cal Am Water
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phillip Woods (alternate)	UC Merced
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	Live Oak Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino (alternate)	Stevinson/Merquin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scott Menefee (alternate)	Clayton Water District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill Spriggs (alternate)	Resident City of Merced
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lou Myers (alternate)	Benjamin Land LP
<input 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, conducted roll call, and reminded attendees that past meeting materials are available online at [mercedsgma.org](https://mercedsgma.org).

### 3. Questions/Comments from the Public

- a. No questions/comments.

### 4. Reports

#### a. GSA Reports

##### i. Ashlee Chang-Gonzalez (MSGSA) shared the following updates:

1. MSGSA recently adopted an allocation framework that reflects the spatial variability and existing conditions of the sustainability zones. Sustainable yield (SY) plus an allowable pumping allowance (APA). Framework is available on the MSGSA website: <https://mercedsubbasingsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MSGSA-Board-Native-Groundwater-Allocation-Policy-Framework-closed-ses-edits-02.01.24Clean.pdf>.

Workshops are planned to get input on the SY and APA in the near future.

2. Initial meetings planned soon to discuss the GSA split.
3. Q (Jean Okuye): What do you mean by "other GSAs" will be consulted on the process of establishing a new GSA? A: MIUGSA and TIWD-GSA#1 in addition to MSGSA.
4. Q (Susan Walsh): Does the MSGSA have to give permission for this to occur? Why is it going through discussions? A: DWR approves the boundaries of the GSAs, so the discussions are primarily focused on the existing and new GSA coming to agreement, but the other GSAs are invited to be involved since there's one GSP and this is an overall complex issue to figure out.
5. Q (Eddie Rojas): Could the new revised GSA boundary go past Stevenson? Concerned about property being in two GSAs. A: It depends. Coordination between the GSAs will need to address this to prevent overlapping jurisdictions.
6. Q (Nav Athwal): Does this impact all the work done previously? (e.g. the allocation framework development). A (Matt Beaman): Speaking on behalf of MIUGSA, it's happening outside of MIUGSA and shouldn't have an impact on MIUGSA. MSGSA would need to speak more directly to the future potential impacts.

##### ii. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) shared the following updates:

1. MIUGSA continues to work on the agricultural well registration program. The GSAs has registered 1,400 wells out of ~1,500 total expected. Penalty invoices have been sent to owners who didn't respond. Usage statements will be sent out soon, based on the GSA putting together groundwater use accounts for each well.

##### iii. Kel Mitchell (TIWD GSA-#1) was not available to present.

#### b. Groundwater Export Policy

- i. Comment (Susan Walsh): This was a surprise at January's SAC meeting and it would be worth presenting on and discussing this in the future. Would like it to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

- ii. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented some slides that summarize what has occurred as well as an approach for next steps.
  - iii. Comments (Susan Walsh): Susan remembers being part of several discussions previously that resulted in consensus that groundwater should not be exported from the basin. Very surprised to not be involved in the planning process for the revision.
  - iv. Q (Maxwell Norton): Are principles listed on the slide from the Board of Supervisors? A: No, they are principles for the GSAs to start considering in future discussions.
  - v. Q (Trevor Hutton): There are 2 ideas of export being presented. Are we talking about export from the subbasin or the County? A: The existing ordinance does not allow water to leave originating subbasin (nor County). The proposed amendment would allow groundwater to leave an originating subbasin but still not leave the County (with a few exceptions).
  - vi. Comment (Joe Sansoni): The Merced County Farm Bureau executive team met with staff from the Merced County. His understanding is that the goal of the amendment specifically was to take decision making off the County itself and put it on the GSAs. Does not think it was a path to sell water outside of the County.
  - vii. Q (Nav Athwal): Why is this a County decision and not a GSA decision? A: Current ordinance allows exports if they go through CEQA. MIUGSA provided comment letters that included requests for protective safeguards.
  - viii. Q (Wes Myers): Assuming the intent of this policy, after SGMA, is for current operators/landowners that straddle GSAs to have flexibility? A (Matt Beaman): Under existing export policy, contiguous parcel(s) split between GSAs can export back and forth.
- c. Potential Creation of New GSA
- i. Covered earlier and discussed in the MSGSA report.
- d. CIMIS Station Report
- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided a refresher of the California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) and an update on the last remaining site in Merced County. Merced site 148 is effectively decommissioned due to land use changes being made by the landowner. The equipment itself is functional, but the data it collects is not usable with the land use changes.
  - ii. Comment (Maxwell Norton): Used to have 3 stations (including a third in Gustine). The data from the stations was used for a lot of things.
  - iii. Joe Sansoni and Eddie Rojas requested copies of the site requirements. Charles suggested Breanne as well. Available here: [https://cimis.water.ca.gov/Content/pdf/CIMIS\\_Station\\_Siting.pdf](https://cimis.water.ca.gov/Content/pdf/CIMIS_Station_Siting.pdf)
  - iv. Q: are you considering compensating the site operators? A: Haven't thought about it to date, but think that could be an option in the future based on the high level of need.
  - v. Q (Jean Okuye): Are you considering how many areas or where? A: More than one would be nice, but one at a minimum. Historically have looked at the center of the basin, but recognize that microclimates exist throughout. If are limited to one, then would likely be center of the basin.
  - vi. Q (Joe Sansoni): Does soil type matter? A: No, just the land use around it.
  - vii. Q (Simon Vander Woude): Would alfalfa work? More flexibility in site selection there. Can these stations move if needed? A: 10 years would be nice for commitment, but 20 years more ideal. DWR typically does not want a site with rotating crops.
- e. Filling Data Gaps/Monitoring Wells

- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided an update on efforts to fill data gaps in the groundwater level monitoring network, including pointing out wells that have been removed, new wells that have been installed, and locations where there are plans to drill new wells or instrument existing wells.
  - ii. There have been challenges in the past installing wells on private property, so recent focus for new wells has been on County-owned property.
- f. Well consistency determination for wells at Multiple GSAs
- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided a brief update on the process for making a well consistency determination. MIUGSA's rules generally don't allow new pumping, but do allow for replacement wells. A particular situation has arisen with a well located within MIUGSA that will serve outside of MIUGSA and the GSA is considering how to address.
  - ii. Q (Nav Athwal): Recap, there's a divergence on new well policies between in and out of MIUGSA – the consistency is supposed to address what? A: There is a MIUGSA policy that was intended to address wells within MIUGSA that serve within MIUGSA. The divergence is that now there's a well installed in MIUGSA but serves outside the MIUGSA.
  - iii. Q (Nav Athwal): Doesn't the well export policy address this? Wouldn't the MIUGSA allocation apply? (based on location of the pumping) A: The Export policy is for groundwater leaving the subbasin. This is an intra-GSA situation which is different. Regarding the allocation, there is a component to consider where the water is applied in addition to where it's pumped.
  - iv. Comment (Joe Sansoni): Whatever you decide will set precedent, so consider your decision carefully.
  - v. Q (Nav Athwal): Where is the policy that would allow folks in adjacent GSAs to transact water? A: MIUGSA's policies allow some flexibility there. More details are described in the allocation policy. There are challenges because MSGSA doesn't have an adopted allocation policy to date.

## **5. Water Year 2023 Annual Report Overview**

- a. Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) provided a presentation on the water year 2023 annual report.
- b. Q (Susan Walsh): Asked for explanation of the Undesirable Results (UR) column and the status column. A: The UR column is the definition of UR, not an indication that we are exceeding those URs. The current status is shown in the rightmost column.
- c. Q (Nav Athwal): What's missing in that area, monitoring wells? (referring to the outside Corcoran map in the eastern corner). A: Correct, missing monitoring wells.
- d. Q (Maxwell Norton) on 2023 vertical bar it shows change in storage in the negative, but the storage is going up? A: It's there to balance – a little counterintuitive – and demonstrate a positive change in storage.
- e. The Committee requested that the Annual Report be sent out when it's been finalized.

## **6. Inelastic Land Subsidence Discussion**

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided an update on current/recent conditions of subsidence as well as the recommended corrective actions provided by DWR and some potential approaches to respond.
- b. Q (Maxwell Norton): Is it presumed that the Below Corcoran Clay Aquifer is continuous throughout the County/San Joaquin Valley? A: Yes.
- c. Q (Maxwell Norton): What technology is used to measure subsidence? A: GPS stations/control points.
- d. Comment (Maxwell Norton): Kern County is involved in legal challenges due to damage to expensive infrastructure from subsidence. Fortunately the infrastructure in the Merced Subbasin is not as critical/expensive, but still a potential concern.



- e. Q (Nav Athwal): Given the MT is 0 ft/yr, is there any level of GW pumping that would allow maintenance of that objective, especially time lag between declines and subsidence? A: There is still a lot that's not understood. Theoretically there should be some kind of equilibrium that's reached through time that would allow some ongoing pumping at a controlled rate, but we don't have quantified values for that. DWR has expressed interest in halting pumping completely in areas impacted by subsidence.
- f. Q (Maxwell Norton): Do you think these are justified comments from DWR or more like busy work? The comments seem very nit-picky. A: Hard to say. Different areas of the Valley are experiencing different issues and rates. The State is generally heavily focused on subsidence in general.
- g. Comment (Joe Sansoni): Give the relatively small scale and scope of these comments/requests, Joe sees this as a success for the GSP.

## 7. Next steps

- a. Charles Gardiner requested input on potential public meeting locations
  - i. Merced County Agricultural Center (cooperative extension meeting room) was raised as an idea.
  - ii. Merced County Farm Bureau has a substantially sized meeting room with hybrid setup.
- b. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided a preview of some components of the groundwater model scenario updates that are upcoming.
- c. Q (Nav Athwal): Can we provide input on the allocation framework? A: The allocations are performed at the GSA level, not in this GSP-wide committee.

## 8. Adjourn

- a. Meeting was adjourned at 11:57pm.

### **Next Regular Meeting Proposed for May 22, 2024 at 10am**

Meeting to be conducted as an in-person meeting with opportunity to participate virtually (subject to change)  
Information also available online at [mercedsgma.org](https://mercedsgma.org)