MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Stakeholder Committee Meeting #10

DATE/TIME: March 25, 2019 at 9:30 AM

LOCATION: Castle Conference Center, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA

Stakeholder Committee Members In Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
☐	Alex McCabe	City of Livingston
☒	Arlan Thomas	Merced Irrigation District Advisory Committee (MIDAC), growers
☒	Ben Migliazzo	Live Oak Farms, growers
☒	Bill Spriggs	City of Merced, Merced Irrigation District
☒	Bob Salles	Leap Carpenter Kemps Insurance, insurance industry and natural resources
☒	Brad Robson	Buchanan Hollow Nut Co. Le Grand-Athlone Water District, growers
☒	Breanne Ramos	Merced County Farm Bureau
☒	Brian Carter	D&S Farms, growers
☐	Carol Bonin	Winton M.A.C.
☒	Daniel Machado	Machado Backhoe Inc., construction industry
☒	Darren Olguin	McSwain MAC
☐	Frenchy Meissonnier	Rice Farmer, rice growers
☒	Galen Miyamoto	Miyamoto Farms
☒	Gino Pedretti III	Sandy Mush Mutual Water Company
☐	Greg Olzack	City of Atwater resident
☐	James (Jim) Marshall	City of Merced
☒	Joe Scoto	Scoto Bros Farms / McSwain Union School District
☒	Ladi Asgill*	East Merced Resource Conservation District / Sustainable Conservation
☐	Maria Herrera	Self-Help Enterprises
☒	Mark Maxwell	University of California, Merced
☒	Maxwell Norton	Retired agricultural researcher
☒	Parry Klassen	East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, growers
☒	Rick Drayer	Drayer Ranch, Merced cattlemen
☐	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush Mutual Water Company, dairies
	*Jean Okuye attended as alternate for Ladi Asgill	

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review
    a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda items for the meeting.
2. Presentation by Woodard & Curran on GSP development
    a. Projects and Management Actions
        i. Alyson Watson (Woodard & Curran) provided a brief overview of the GSP Conceptual Timeline.
        ii. Tess Sprague (Woodard & Curran) gave description of the work to date on updating the Projects and Management Actions lists and reviewed the handout contents. Handouts contained the draft shortlist and running list of current potential projects for consideration in the GSP.
        iii. General input from Stakeholder Committee members and interested public:
            1. Water for habitat should be considered in the priorities for shortlisted projects.
            2. The importance of recharge and conveyance projects stressed, especially in the early phases of GSP implementation.
            3. Projects to be implemented in the first five years should include projects related to monitoring, reporting, data modeling, and studies that assist in gathering needed data.
            4. Priority should also be given for projects addressing subsidence.
            5. A “fatal flaw” filter should be applied, whereby a project should be removed from the list if the relevant implementing agency has already indicated it will not support the project.
            6. Drinking water should be a priority for shortlisted projects.
            7. Priority should also be given to projects that provide incentives to reduce pumping and to capture surface water, especially those that encourage capture of flood flows and purchasing of out of district water).
    b. Climate Change Analysis
        i. Alyson Watson (W&C) gave an introduction to the climate change analysis. Merced Subbasin GSA is using DWR provided climate change factors and is following the DWR approach.
        ii. Question: DWR has projected increase in evapotranspiration? Answer (W&C): Yes.
        iii. Question: Can you explain evapotranspiration? Answer (W&C): Evapotranspiration is essentially the water demand of the crop. This can also be influenced by precipitation.

iv. Question for follow up: Is DWR updating the climate change modeling? (Every 5 years?) Answer: We assume that this data is will not stay the same up until 2040. It is likely subject to change. There is a guidance document from DWR that provides further information. (Link to guidance document here)

v. Comment: With the 2020 deadline we should use the DWR data and hopefully get enough data after this point to make the output more locally relevant.

vi. Comment: There is no harm in including climate change in the GSP analyses, but there are more pressing issues until 2020.

vii. Question: What is the order of magnitude difference with the perturbation (change) factors? Answer: W&C to follow up and get this information from the analysis and DWR data.

c. Next Steps in GSP Development

i. Alyson Watson (W&C) reviewed the anticipated timeline and release of chapters for the Merced Subbasin GSP.

ii. Question: Where are the GSAs at with approving these parts? Answer (W&C): Major sections and particularly the water budget has been sent out to the GSA staff for review and comment as technical memos.

d. Other Updates

i. Alyson Watson (W&C) gave an overview of the preliminary work completed for Undesirable Results and addressed the Sustainability Goal. These will be revisited in the next meeting with greater focus on the Undesirable Results.

ii. Alyson explained what thresholds are in general and what does it mean to violate a threshold. Alyson gave a brief description for each sustainability indicator and what an Undesirable Result could be for each.

iii. Question: Are subsidence and loss storage the same thing? Answer (W&C): Storage is about whether there is sufficient storage to meet the needs of the users, whereas land subsidence is whether land subsidence is occurring because of a depleted aquifer and is causing changes to land elevation.

iv. For depletions of interconnected surface water, potential Undesirable Results may include effects on operations of upstream reservoirs and or reduction in viability of agriculture, fishery production, riparian habitat, and recreation usage.

v. Alyson provided an example of the approach that is in progress for next steps: To generate analysis under the sustainable yield scenario and consider groundwater elevations to set Minimum Thresholds.

vi. Question: Is this analysis done by your (W&C) modelers? Answer: Yes, we took the cumulative storage run, pulled the well data, and conducted the modelling analysis.

vii. Question: Are we confident that the Minimum Thresholds aren't too low? Answer: No, and this is the purpose of the continuing the analysis to get clarity on appropriate threshold levels.

viii. Question and clarification on what is in the example shown on slide 25: The example shows whether the well would be dewatered (a potential Undesirable Result) over time. It shows historical data, depth to ground water, and the projected levels with the Sustainable Yield scenario.

ix. The analysis helps determine what is an Undesirable Result, and where the Minimum Threshold should be. For example, a threshold can be set to the level at which you are up to the point of not dewatering the wells. The next step is to analyze how this works with sustainable yield and see if Undesirable Results still occur with Minimum Thresholds.

x. Question: Will there be a model run completed that includes projects? Answer (W&C): There are a few ways to do this. This is a later step in the analysis process.

xi. Question: What is the policy background for the Minimum Thresholds? Answer (W&C): The policy pursued is to take the historical variation, doubled this and check if dewatered wells occur within a three-mile radius of the CASGEM monitoring wells. We have to determine minimum thresholds and how these are violated.

xii. Question: Are there conceptual monitoring wells? Answer (W&C): CASGEM wells are used for monitoring and compliance. Wells outside of the CASGEM network generally do not have adequate historical data. If outside wells are used, it is important to consider wells that have sufficient data because these can be used for a regulatory trigger if their Minimum Thresholds are exceeded. Thresholds have to be representative of basin conditions.

xiii. Comment: What about the subsidence area? Do we have wells in these areas? Answer (W&C and MID): Additional monitoring wells will likely be needed for these areas.

xiv. Comment: Could the El Nido monitoring wells be used to address this issue? Answer (MID): This could be an option.

xv. Question: How do we deal with thresholds for wells above and below the Corcoran Clay? Answer (W&C): We need to look at Undesirable Results for the above, below and beside the Corcoran Clay layer. How this relates to the subsidence area is a complex issue.

xvi. Comment: Chowilla is having the same issue in the Triangle T area. They are paying, and their neighbors are pumping from the deep aquifer. They are basically already trading credits above and below within a water district.

xvii. Comment: In the example chart provided for Undesirable Results and Minimum Thresholds, it would be helpful to flip the left and right axis.

3. Public Outreach Update

    a. The February public workshop summary is available on the website. The next public workshop is anticipated to take place in May.

4. Interbasin Coordination Update

    a. The W&C team has been coordinating with the Chowchilla Madera and Turlock teams. Calls took place to exchange and coordinate on technical data needs. Additional meetings are planned in the next two months.

5. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

a. Comment: The policy in setting Minimum Thresholds is very interesting. What about the level of communication between consultants throughout the valley for different subbasins? The observation of the commentator is that policy approaches are very consultant driven. At the consultant level, to what extent is the Merced team coordinating with others. Kern and others seem to be setting very low thresholds that are likely not ever going to be exceeded.

b. Answer (W&C): The Merced team is following the BMPs from DWR. The folks at DWR who wrote the BMPs will be the people evaluating whether these have been followed and whether requirements have been met. Ethically, we would not support setting thresholds as low as we can go, but the threshold level is up to the basin. Interbasin flows are important, SGMA states you cannot impact interbasin flows. The challenge is that we are all on the same schedule. All basins are having to set up processes.

c. Comment: DWR should have a closed door, very highly recommended workshop on approach and methods for minimum thresholds with all of the hydrogeologists. It is not fair to have stakeholders sort this out.

d. Question: Have we looked at other places in the county, e.g. the Ogallala Aquifer area and see what they are doing? Answer: No, but we are modeling outside of the basin.

e. The W&C team is also reaching out to DWR to set up a discussion on Minimum Thresholds and Undesirable Result methods.

f. Question: Interbasin flows are taken into consideration in our analysis? Answer (W&C): Yes.

6. Next Steps and Next Meeting

a. The focus of the next meeting will be primarily on Undesirable Results and Minimum Thresholds.

b. W&C will send out a Doodle poll to find an alternate date for the May Stakeholder and Coordinating Committee meetings. These meetings are currently scheduled to take place on Memorial Day.

Next Regular Meeting
April 22, 2019 at **9:30 a.m.**
Castle Conference Center, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA
Information also available online at mercedsgma.org

Note: If you need disability-related modification or accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact Merced County, Community and Economic Development staff at 209-385-7654 at least 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting.