



MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: April 12, 2021 at 1:00 PM

LOCATION: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Stakeholder Committee Members In Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	Live Oak Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Ramos	MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Darren Olguin	Resident of Merced County
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dave Serrano	Serrano Farms - Le Grand
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	David Belt	Foster Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Emma Reyes	Martin Reyes Farm/Land Leveling
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gil Cardon	Merced Co. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
<input type="checkbox"/>	Greg Olzack	Atwater Resident
<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"/>	Jose Moran	Livingston City Council
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lacy Carothers	Cal Am Water
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Baker	Clayton Water District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Kayser-Grant	Sierra Club
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Maxwell	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maxwell Norton	Unincorporated area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Olivia Gomez	Community of Planada
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parry Klassen	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reyn Akinoa	River Partners
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rick Drayer	Merced/Mariposa Cattlemen
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Weimer	Weimer Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush MWC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Susan Walsh	City of Merced
<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

Meeting Minutes



1. Call to Order and Welcome
 - a. Charles Gardiners (Catalyst) welcomed the group.
2. Introductions and Roll Call
 - a. Stakeholder Advisory Representatives for the Merced Subbasin GSP introduced themselves (see attendance record above).
 - b. Representatives from the three GSAs introduced themselves (Lacey McBride with Merced Subbasin GSA, Larry Harris with Turner Island Water District GSA-#1, and Matt Beaman for Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA [MIUGSA]) as well as the consultant team from Woodard & Curran (Samantha Salvia, Chris Hewes, and Ali Taghavi).
3. Merced GSP Overview
 - a. GSP Highlights/Commitments
 - i. Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) provided an overview of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the development of the GSP and two annual reports, and key elements of the GSP.
 - ii. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided an update on the status of priority projects identified in the GSP.
 - iii. Q: Why did the initial Planada recharge project not work out? A: The grant application identified two potential areas to construct a recharge basin based on some preliminary studies looking at soils and available well completion reports. At both sites, there are shallow clay layers (~10 feet) that impede infiltration. The dry wells are the next alternative.
 - iv. Q: Historically, what percentage is the volume of overdraft compared to current pumping? (or what is the volume of annual sustainable yield relative to water pumped historically) A: It's not a simple answer as pumping can change annually and the solution is not going to be as simple as an across the board cut to pumping. The long-term change in storage published in the Water Year 2020 Annual Report shows an average reduction of 132,000 Acre-feet per year (based on 2006-2020).
 - v. Q: Did DWR have any noteworthy comments on the GSP? A: DWR has provided no feedback on any GSP thus far. The regulations provide DWR two years to review GSPs.
 - vi. Q: In making projection for sustainable yield in the future, did the model include the likelihood of precipitation/runoff being less in the future than in last 100 years due to drought or climate change? A: The GSP includes model sensitivity runs for the effect of climate change which was identified and acknowledged as an uncertainty.
 - vii. Public Question: Why hasn't green water infrastructure been mentioned in the sustainability plan? The cost and overall benefit seems like a win-win proposition. e.g. rainwater harvesting. What are the barriers to getting a discussion about green water infrastructure? Not just Flood-MAR which is one tool in the toolbox – there are other tools under the umbrella of green infrastructure that benefit communities. Many micro-projects can help enhance the water table. A: While the GSP does not use the term “green infrastructure,” much of the analysis of how to reach sustainability has focused on capturing stormwater for recharge purposes. This is a component of several priority GSP projects. Our website has a place (on the Contact Us page) to submit ideas for additional projects.
 - viii. Public Question: Does it make it any more urgent to have demand reduction be a focus rather than supply augmentation given that we potentially may not have surface water supplies that the GSP relies on, and recharge projects? A: The GSAs are currently evaluating 5-year objectives to move toward to the sustainability goal. The Merced Subbasin GSA already has a demand reduction management action from the GSP and is



thinking about this as well – it will be balanced between both demand reduction and supply augmentation.

- b. GSP Implementation Progress
 - i. Lacey McBride (Merced Subbasin GSA) provided an updated on GSP implementation since the GSP was submitted in January 2020, including Proposition 68 grant funded projects.
- c. WY2020 Annual Report Summary
 - i. Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) provided an overview of the Water Year 2020 Annual Report, including sustainable management criteria, groundwater level changes, and groundwater storage change.
- d. Comments and questions
 - i. Comment (Susan Walsh): As someone who has lived in Merced and has paid attention to growth in the valley in the last 30 years, feeling some cognitive dissonance in talking about limiting pumping yet City of Merced is about to annex a large acreage of land for new development. At what point is growth in the valley going to be collapsed into planning with groundwater? At meetings about safety, housing, etc., rarely do people mention the fact that groundwater is such an important and scarce commodity.
 - ii. Comment (Maxwell Norton): The Monterey/Salinas area has some of the most expensive urban water in North America. There seems to be a lot of planning efforts and documents in San Joaquin Valley, but long-term water security doesn't seem to be merged with long-term growth projections.
 - iii. Comment (Susan Walsh): Cities and suburban areas in Merced County have made efforts to reduce impacts on water systems, e.g. turf replacement/removal. Have we ever measured that or quantified how different landscapes look between 1980 and now? (some has been mandated for new development requirements). It would be helpful to measure what has been done in the past to apply to the future.
 - 1. Answer from Leah Brown (City of Merced): Every urban supplier has different information about what's happened in their area. The City of Merced doesn't have tracking of turf conversion projects. But it does have all kinds of data from the metering system. In 2015, a large scale metering project resulted in more complete metering in the City. Between July 2013 drought and July 2018, there was a 39% reduction in use. This urban water use reduction has maintained since then and is a cumulative 28% reduction as of the current Urban Water Management Plan effort.
 - iv. Comment (David Serrano): Concerned that foothills in Madera and Merced have been developed from previously native pasture. Impact of reduced natural foothill recharge and increased draw on groundwater resources. With surface water prices increasing, concerned about being priced out of agricultural livelihood/legacy.
 - v. Comment (Olivia Gomez): Hearing that California is going into drought again. There was a lot of education in the previous drought but it has stopped. This education is important to keep up because everyone's in it together – it's important to share perspectives. Going to start metering which will help conservation efforts. Education about conservation and preservation is key.
 - vi. Comment (Gil Cardon): How have the wildfires affected soil conditions? A: We are not sure – it has not come up in GSA discussions. But we know that UC Merced faculty have been doing research in this area.
 - vii. Comment (Joe Sansoni): As family farmers with small operations, water issues and availability are critical. We understand overdraft is an issue that needs solutions. Have spent a lot of effort to be more efficient already. Yields per acre and AF pumped are significantly more efficient than in the past and continuing to improve. This stands for most growers regardless of crop type and growers don't always get a lot of public credit for that.



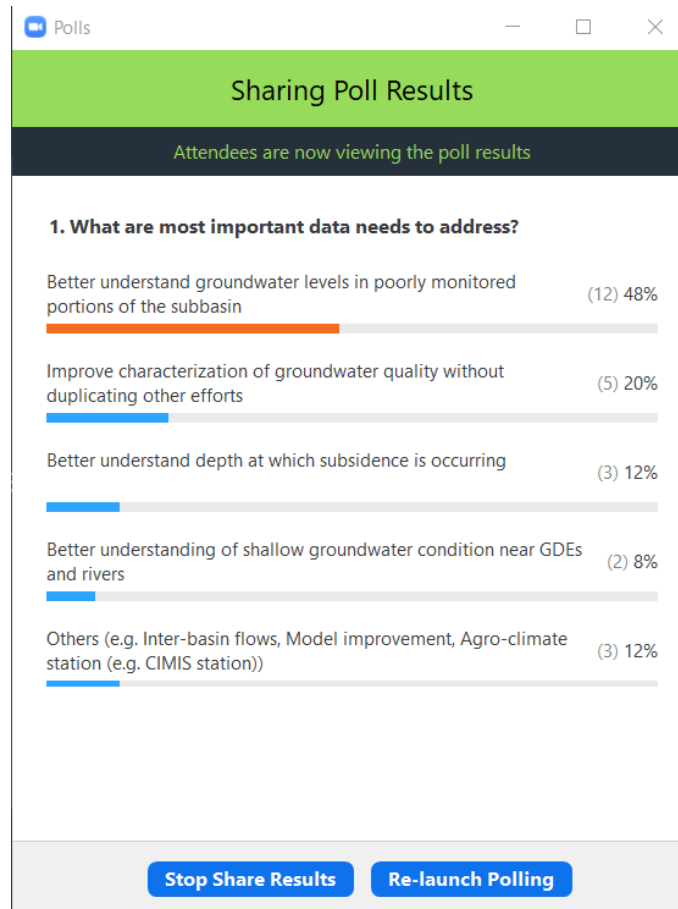
This is also costly to implement. Something that has become an unfortunate reality in agriculture is big production investment agriculture – for instance, almond industry had several good years, thus thousands of acres were installed in last decade. If there's a downturn, investment agriculture can take a multi-year hit which would hurt smaller farmers. It feels like the large drawdowns are driven by investment agriculture.

- viii. Q (Wes Myers): Some monitoring data is iffy, e.g. hatched areas. What opportunities or mechanisms exist to audit the model? GSPs are moving forward based on one assumption, but how do we know that it's correct? Does the state audit or a third party consultant come in and do this? A: Most Annual Report figures are based on actual monitoring data, not modeled data. The model is also informed by historical data. The model has been calibrated based on monthly records from 20-30 years. During the development and calibration process, there was an involved technical advisory panel including UC Merced, USGS, and DWR representation. The GSP includes some writeup about model uncertainty as well.
- ix. Comment (Nav Athwal): One way to reduce overdraft is potentially the use of more efficient technology when it comes to irrigation of crops. Many folks have moved to drip irrigation and it's very efficient. But wondering if as a group and GSAs, has there been work in adopting better irrigation technology as a way to reduce demand without requiring fallowing and other negative consequences that come with that? In addition, thoughts about how to use water from parcels that would rather not irrigate (e.g. commodities with less demand) vs those who need the water to meet minimum ET – like a groundwater credits market to meet irrigation demand. Is there thought to fund resource conservation projects at a grower level?
 - 1. Lacey McBride (Merced Subbasin GSA): The GSA is looking at and considering many different tools in the toolbox as options outside of fallowing land. One challenge is that you need to consider that efficiency should reduce overall groundwater use and not end up increasing it beyond historical due to more efficient use and less percolation. The Merced Subbasin GSA doesn't have a program (or funding now) to do something like funding a resource conservation project. Another future discussion will be how will the GSA generate revenue to pay for these types of programs.
- x. Comment (Jean Okuye): With less than 20 years before we are to have balance and sustainable management it seems we need to address the demand. Are we looking at Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation? Award those doing the right thing, keep our water in our county, be sure we don't take from Peter to pay Paul, be sure the small farmers and communities can afford water? Who owns the water? Look at what Madera County is doing as they have received grant to help them manage water.
- xi. Comment (Maxwell Norton): There's been a wide assortment of cost-sharing and straight funding through NRCS and others. Programs come and go based on the latest Farm Bill. Most improvements that are possible in production agriculture have been achieved.

4. What's Next?

a. Data Gaps Plan

- i. Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) provided an overview of the Data Gaps Plan effort and encouraged stakeholders to explore the slides in detail after the meeting as time was running short at this point in the meeting.
- ii. Poll results:



- iii.
 - iv. Amanda Monaco: Are the GSAs going to use the data gaps grant to fill in missing info about the location and vulnerability of domestic wells, so we can better understand potential impacts on their drinking water supply? A: Ongoing Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) work funded by DWR is evaluating locations and depths of domestic wells in key areas of the Subbasin.
 - 1. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA): Report will be presented to Merced IRWM region likely in May and made public later.
 - b. Future Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings
 - i. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) talked through options for the next meeting, likely July 6 or 12. A poll will go out to committee members to schedule this.
5. Public Comment
- a. No comments.
6. Next steps and adjourn

**Next Regular Meeting
July 12, 2021 from 1-3pm**

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.