



## MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: July 26, 2021 at 1:15 – 3:15 PM

LOCATION: Online – Zoom Meeting

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### 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	George Park (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kel Mitchel	Turner Island Water District GSA #1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tim Allan (alternate)	Turner Island Water District GSA #1

### Meeting Notes

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

- a. Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) called the meeting to order.

#### 2. ROLL CALL

- a. Coordination Committee members in attendance are shown in table above. The Committee had a quorum.

#### 3. CONSENT CALENDAR

- a. Meeting notes from previous meeting (April 26, 2021) were approved. (Mike Gallo motioned, Tim Allan seconded, all voted in favor.)

#### 4. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. No public comment. (comments and questions from the public were accepted during the meeting on agenda items)

#### 5. REPORTS

- a. Current basin conditions



- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented hydrographs for each principal aquifer to highlight recent new monthly groundwater measurements recorded since the last review of data collected in March 2021.
  - ii. Public Q: Is there anything in that data that is a reason for concern? A: Nothing concerning at this point. It's typical to see during summer irrigation season that levels trend lower and recover into the fall and winter.
- b. Coordination with neighboring basins
- i. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) provided updates:
    1. Chowchilla, Delta-Mendota, Merced, and Turlock subbasins have held several coordination meetings on subsidence over the last few months. The agencies are sharing information on impacts and also defining the region of subsidence.
    2. Hicham noted that it will be important for the State to recognize that subsidence is chronic and was a problem before SGMA. He noted the Merced started coordinating with Chowchilla subbasin as early as 2015.
- c. GSA Reports - Representatives from each GSA provided updates on activities they are undertaking in their own jurisdiction:
- i. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) provided updates:
    1. At the MSGSA July 2021 meeting, the GSA adopted a Water Year 2025 target of 15,000 AFY reduction in groundwater use. The GSA Board wanted to formalize a target to help communicate to stakeholders that actions need to start soon.
    2. MSGSA formed an ad-hoc committee on demand reductions and has been meeting regularly and reporting to the GSA Board.
    3. MSGSA has a Technical Advisory Committee meeting on 7/29 to start discussing strategies for land repurposing.
    4. Public Q: MSGSA is 330,000 acres total, correct? A: About 337,000 ac.
    5. Public Q: Are the Merced Subbasin GSA meetings public? A: Yes (meeting in person but also remote Zoom access is available).
  - ii. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) provided updates:
    1. A Stakeholder Guidance Committee meeting for MIUGSA is coming up to discuss policies for implementation of the GSP.
    2. MIUGSA is evaluating financing options, whether basin-wide or GSA-wide projects.
    3. MIUGSA expressed interest in Merced County providing a workshop to key staff of different GSAs in the County to discuss transferring of groundwater well permitting process oversight to the GSAs within their respective boundaries.
      - a. Lacey McBride clarified that the proposal to the County for this process has no hard implementation deadline at this point. The County is also planning on offering such a workshop for GSAs possibly in August.
  - iii. Tim Allan (TIWD GSA-#1) Tim Allan introduced himself and was welcomed by the group to the Coordination Committee.

## 6. ACTION ITEMS

### a. GSP Well Monitoring

- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided background on the contract for technical support related to monitoring and presented main elements of the proposed full contract for the next 12 months.
- ii. Q: Is the current cover crop around the existing CIMIS station compliant with DWR guidance? A from MIUGSA: No – MIUGSA plans to work with DWR to identify locations and get recommendation for an additional site.
- iii. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) clarified that today's action is for the Coordination Committee to agree to recommend to their respective GSA Boards to approve this monitoring contract.
- iv. **ACTION (motioned by Hicham ElTal, seconded by Eric Swenson, approved by committee):** Recommend GSAs authorize Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA to enter into an agreement, on behalf of the GSAs, with QK for monitoring work and other technical support, as presented.
  1. Duration 12 months, with opportunity to extend.
  2. Not to Exceed \$136,050.00
  3. Share cost according to existing MOU



## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. Remote Sensing Decision Support Tool (Prop 68 Planning Grant funded work) – Dominick Amador (Woodard & Curran) presented an update on the remote sensing decision support tool development. The goal is to utilize satellite technology to estimate monthly Et at a parcel level and combine this with information on precipitation and surface water deliveries to provide a better understanding of net groundwater use at higher resolution than currently available. Dominick described the work to date, conducted utilizing previously purchased Et data from approximately 2008 through 2013 He provided a mockup of the dashboard the tool will provided for end users. Next steps include collecting parcel-level surface water delivery data from local irrigation districts as an input to the accounting steps of the tool.
  - i. Prior to opening up for committee discussion, Samantha Salvia reminded committee members that this tool is being developed under grant funding from DWR. Woodard & Curran is scoped to develop the tool itself and a technical support document summarizing the tool's capabilities and limitations. How the GSAs decide to use the tool is a policy matter – it may be used to identify trends in groundwater use, to support allocation framework discussions, or for other information purposes to help with basin management activities.
  - ii. Committee Member Discussion
    1. Q: What is difference between  $ET_{actual}$  and  $ET_{Applied\ Water}$ ? `A:  $ET_{actual}$  provided directly from METRIC independent of any other factors.  $ET_{Applied\ Water}$  is essentially the evapotranspiration after processing (accounting for root storage, precipitation, etc.)
    2. Comment (Eric Swenson): The real world won't be as neat and clean as this tool. For Merquin County Water District, the measured deliveries to individual parcels are a mix of surface and groundwater and hard to disaggregate. Some users have unusual water supplies like wastewater treatment plant effluent where data may not be readily available. Monthly data will likely be challenging and annual is probably more possible. Need to think about how to accurately measure in the



future moving forward. Suggest the tool have options for reporting on monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.. Getting the satellite data will be the easiest part, sorting out the other water use will be more challenging.

3. Comment (Hicham EITal): METRIC data is good, especially for identifying trends – but have to understand its limitations. The method is as strong as the information used to calculate evapotranspiration (applied) and depends on a number of factors such as the quality of the CIMIS data.
- iii. Public Questions Submitted Via Chat – a number of questions were submitted into the chat and are captured below. Due to time constraints, not all questions could be answered during the meeting.
1. Public Q: What are Metric rasters? A: A tool that uses satellite infrared imagery to get a heat signature off the land surface. Once it goes through a modelling process and account for solar radiation and other climatic data – the satellite image is transformed into a layer describing where there is crop evapotranspiration. They cover a large area at a 30m resolution. Overall – it uses satellite imagery to determine evapotranspiration on a high-resolution basis.
  2. Public Q: What about sub-surface drip? A: The method of irrigation is independent of this method – it's measuring the crop evapotranspiration and thus generally operational methods don't matter.
  3. Public Q: Applied water is different right? applied water includes ET and deep percolation and runoff which would need to be measured with meters...correct?
  4. Public Q: Won't ET be elevated if the picture is taken while someone is irrigating?
  5. Public Q: How is precipitation going to be measured from parcel to parcel? CC Q: How is precipitation measured and how does is variability incorporated? A: We use PRISM (from University of Oregon) which takes into account many factors to interpolate point data to provide a spatially complete (30m resolution) precipitation on a daily basis.
  6. Public Q: How many ground based weather stations are going to be used to inform the satellite etc information.
  7. Public Q: How will riparian water application be calculated? By that I mean surface water used that is not being provided by MID (e.g. creek lift pumps).
  8. Public Q: What will be the procedure if the remote-sensing consumption numbers are not consistent with the numbers calculated by growers from a parcel-level... and they have data from meters, etc to support?
- b. Stakeholder Advisory Committee update – Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) presented a brief summary of the July 26 Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting. She noted it was the second meeting of this group, listed topics covered, and summarized the group's discussion on moving to in-person meetings.
- i. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) recommended keeping legal counsels involved when scheduling the next meeting because it's possible the Governor's Executive Order altering Brown Act requirements (e.g. allowing Zoom meetings) may expire at the end of September 2021.
  - ii. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) pointed out that the previous Merced IRWM stakeholder meeting process invited stakeholder input online at the same time as the agenda (e.g. ranking of issues, providing comment ahead of time) and asked if this could be considered for future Merced GSP stakeholder meetings.



- c. Data Gaps Plan (Prop 68 Planning Grant funded work) – Samantha Salvia and Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) presented the findings and recommendations from the Data Gaps Plan. The goal of the plan is to identify and rank priority areas for the installation of monitoring wells or subsidence monitoring stations to support basin characterization and future GSP refinement. The Plan priorities were developed based on feedback from the SAC and CC April meetings and GSA staff review. The Plan will be finalized and sent to the GSAs this week.
  - i. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) confirmed that reaching out to the Turlock Subbasin for coordination on planned monitoring adjacent to the Merced River is a good idea.
  - ii. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) suggested additional consideration on areas outside the Corcoran relative to DACs
  - iii. Eric Swenson (MSGSA): Suggested deprioritizing monitoring in areas that are unlikely to be pumped (e.g. because water may be saltier than typically used for ag)
- d. Minimum Thresholds in Areas Lacking Historical Monitoring Data – Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) described that the GSP adopted in January 2020 includes minimum thresholds set for 25 representative wells based on a methodology that utilizes historical data and proximity to domestic wells. The GSP acknowledged that during implementation the GSAs would need to develop a methodology for new representative wells that may lack historical data or are not within 2 miles of a domestic well. Samantha summarized recent discussion and analysis with GSA staff and recommendations on how to proceed with establishing MTs in areas lacking historical monitoring or domestic wells. The recommendation so far is to use the GSP methodology where possible, and to address others on a case-by-case basis. New minimum thresholds should be set as interim while additional data are collected.
  - i. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) clarified that this is an ongoing process and it hasn't been figured out entirely yet. As a next step, it would be beneficial to evaluate some real-world examples (e.g. new monitoring wells in TIWD or El Nido).
- e. Insights from DWR Comment Letter on Other GSPs – Samantha Salvia (Woodard & Curran) summarized DWR input on four GSPs it has reviewed so far and their potential relevance to the Merced GSP.
- f. Legislation Update – Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) provided a summary of SWRCB latest emergency rules/notices affecting surface water diversions and their potential implications for the basin.
  - i. SWRCB recently published emergency rules due to the drought, including restrictions to both pre- and post-1914 diversion licenses in the San Joaquin River watershed. The priority date threshold for rights was set to 1883 in the previous drought (~2012-2016) but no priority date threshold has been determined this time for the San Joaquin Valley watershed (e.g. affects all rights). MID expects to have a normal diversion this year due to storage prior to the emergency rules. MID and the cities coordinated on a letter to the SWRCB urging them to consider establishing a priority date that would help MID and not prevent them from capturing next year's storms due to lack of storage space in their reservoir.
  - ii. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) reported that AB 252 (Department of Conservation: Multibenefit Land Repurposing Incentive Program) is in the California legislature now and would create a Department of Conservation funding program. MSGSA signed a letter of support for the bill. The Governor put ~\$500M aside for this land repurposing but the legislature may not approve it. MSGSA supports such a program because they anticipate they will need to utilize land repurposing as a strategy to reduce groundwater use in the GSA to meet sustainability goals.



- g. Allocation Framework Update – With only a few minutes left in the meeting, there was not time for much discussion on this item. At a future meeting, the ad-hoc group will provide an update on the development of the allocation framework.
  - i. Hicham EITal (MIUGSA) quickly summarized several concerns related to MSGSA’s 5 yr objective:
    1. What is the baseline from which MSGSA will measure their 15,000 AFY reduction goal for Water Year 2025? The difference between wet and dry year pumping is more than the 15TAF goal.
    2. MSGSA’s goal is stated in terms of consumptive use. GSP water budget is based on groundwater pumping. Need to be on the same page re consumptive use vs pumping as basin moves forward.
    3. MSGSA has claimed the groundwater budget in the GSP indicates wetlands do not use groundwater, but they do.
    4. No progress has been made on the issues of final allocation and accounting for imported surface water.
  - ii. Hicham agreed to type up a list of the concerns and send them out to assist in future discussions.

**8. Next steps and adjourn**

- a. Confirm next meeting date – TBD based on identification of a meeting space and status of Brown Act requirements.
- b. Meeting adjourned at 3:22 PM

**Next Regular Meeting**  
**TBD, expected in October 2021**  
Information also available online at [mercedsgma.org](http://mercedsgma.org)