



MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: January 31, 2022, 1:00 to 3:00 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)	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino	Stevinson/Merquin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Ramos	MCFB
<input 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joe Scoto	Scoto Brothers/McSwain School Dist.
<input 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 checked="" 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"/>	Nataly Escobedo Garcia (alternate)	Leadership Counsel
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parry Klassen	ESJWQC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Darcy Brown	River Partners
<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	Bill Spriggs (alternate)	Merced resident
<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"/>	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 and meeting guidelines, conducted roll call, and reminded attendees that past meeting materials are available online at mercedsgma.org.
3. SGMA Implementation Grant Application
 - a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided an overview of the existing projects and new projects considered, the project selection approach, application status, and next steps.
 - i. \$171 million is available in Round 1 grant funding and is not competitive between basins; therefore, funding will be split evenly between critically overdrafted basins, including Merced, at \$7.6 million per basin. The \$7.6 million may be reduced depending on the types of projects submitted in the San Joaquin Valley, due to complexities of DWR's funding sources.
 1. Round 2 is expected in 2023 and will be open to all medium and high priority basins not receiving money in Round 1.
 - ii. Merced is considering 18 existing and new projects, including 11 storage and recharge projects and 7 interties and monitoring/management projects.
 1. Amsterdam Water District Surface Water Conveyance and Recharge Project
 2. Buchanan Hollow Mutual Water Company Floodwater Recharge Project
 3. Crocker Dam Modification (GSP Project 31)
 4. Deadman Creek Canal Off Stream Storage and Recharge
 5. G Ranch Groundwater Recharge, Habitat Enhancement & Floodplain Expansion Project - Planning
 6. G Ranch Groundwater Recharge, Habitat Enhancement & Floodplain Expansion Project - Implementation
 7. Purdy Project (East Pike Recharge Basin) (Project No. 37)
 8. Purdy Project (E. Purdy, W. Purdy, and Kevin Recharge Basins) (Project No. 38)
 9. Tri City's Water Recharge/Underground Storage Feasibility
 10. Vander Dussen Subsidence Priority Area Flood-MAR Project
 11. Vander Woude Storage Reservoir
 12. Filling Data Gaps Identified in Data Gaps Plan
 13. LeGrand-Athlone Water District Intertie Canal - Phase 2
 14. Merced Water Resources Model Enhancement
 15. Merquin County Water District Sustainable Yield Management Plan and Plan Implementation
 16. MIUGSA Groundwater Extraction Measurement Program
 17. Turner Island Water District (TIWD) Water Conservation
 18. TIWD Shallow Well Drilling
 - iii. The funds requested by the 18 projects total approximately \$27.4 million. In order to select the projects that will be submitted within the application to DWR, each project will be scored using 10 evaluation criteria defined by the state.
 1. Projects are currently being scored by the Coordination Committee, which will be compiled into a ranking.
 2. Modifications to the final rankings may be recommended by the SAC.





- a. Modifications should “document and justify why a lower scoring project was included within the Spending Plan versus a higher scoring project.” (from the grant’s Proposal Solicitation Package)
 - b. Several factors may drive modifications, including:
 - i. Feasibility (water rights, realistic recharge potential, project proponent ability to provide materials and meet grant requirements)
 - ii. Location (subsidence, areas with declining groundwater, areas surrounded by domestic wells, priority areas according to the sustainability indicators, GSAs / geographic distribution)
 - iii. Others as deemed important by the subbasin
 3. GSA staff will review the scores and make recommendations, if any, to address specific, justifiable needs.
 4. Lastly, the Coordination Committee will receive the aggregated scores and recommended modifications, and identify projects for submittal as part of the grant application due on February 28. Projects not selected will be retained for future funding opportunities.
- b. SAC discussion
- i. Parry Klassen: If everything goes according to plan, when can we expect these projects to be implemented?
 1. Simon Vander Woude: Our project is designed and ready for construction within the next year.
 2. Bob Kelley: Our project is in environmental permitting phase.
 3. Matt Beaman: Our project is undergoing review and design; construction likely in next three years.
 4. Jim Blanke: Generally, implementation projects will be required to be completed in the next three years to utilize grant funding.
 - ii. Charles Gardiner: SAC, are these appropriate projects? Are there other projects that should be added for future consideration?
 1. Susan Walsh: Is the scoring rubric based on state or local priorities? How can we balance state and county priorities in funding?
 - a. Jim Blanke: Scoring criteria are set by the state. As long as projects are eligible for funding, the basin is given freedom to select projects that are deemed most beneficial.
 - b. Matt Beaman: State gave initial preference to select project types (including geotechnical, floodplain enhancement, etc.), but the list of eligible project types is extensive and includes the projects presented today.
 - iii. Susan Walsh: Are ‘Underrepresented Communities’, ‘Small Water Systems’, and ‘Human Right to Water’ terms defined by the state?
 1. Jim Blanke: Yes, there are definitions for each of these terms provided by the state in the grant Proposal Solicitation Package and Guidelines. For example, Underrepresented Communities are mapped by the state using census tract and community boundaries.
 - iv. Jim Blanke: SAC, what criteria are reasonable for changing rankings or modifying funding amounts?
 1. Dave Serrano: Will projects in the northern and northeastern portions of the basin be ranked high due to groundwater aquifers flowing to the rest of the basin?

- a. Jim Blanke: Groundwater flow could be considered as part of potential modifications to scores if desired.
2. Jean Okuye: Can we prioritize projects where recharge could get into the aquifer the fastest and those that benefit underrepresented communities and small water systems? Could we explore other projects to more quickly inject water into aquifers?
 - a. Jim Blanke: While there are not any active injection projects under consideration for this grant proposal, there are some similar projects being explored by TIWD and MID. The application gives higher scores to projects that benefit underrepresented communities and small water systems.
3. Darcy Brown: River Partners has worked with Rosemary Knight at Stanford in other basins and data provided by her lab team has been very insightful. Similar geophysical investigations in Merced could be a great addition to this slate of projects.
4. Parry Klassen: Noted that surface water injections may exceed strict drinking water quality standards and, after a few years, well casings can become blocked with biological and mineral accumulation.
5. Maxwell Norton: Be sure to consider, from an engineering perspective, that projects are feasible, not just desirable.
6. Reyn Akiona: Of the \$7.6 million, are some projects required to address a few specific criteria (geophysical investigations, groundwater recharge, and floodplain expansion)?
 - a. Jim Blanke: When the draft PSP was released, that was a requirement, but the requirements have since been made more broad and such requirements are no longer basin-specific.
7. Maxwell Norton: How realistic is it for the state to grant water rights to the projects?
 - a. Matt Beaman: MID and other parties applied for a floodwater right at the end of 2019, but the SWRCB has not yet accepted the application. MID expects to hear somewhat soon, but timeline will depend on drought curtailment activities.
8. Lisa Kayser-Grant: When looking at the TIWD diversion proposal, will there be any impact or assessment of impact to westside seasonal wetlands? If rights are given to stormwater, how will that impact wetlands in the future? Want to ensure that health of wetlands is being considered.
 - a. Kel Mitchel: TIWD has no intention of applying for stream diversion applications. As it stands, the project simply manages the TIWD's existing resources.
9. Trevor Hutton: Does any of the scoring take into account the possibility of continued drought? Which projects will be most effective in that case? I keep hearing mention of "wet years", but wet years may well be rarer in the near future.
 - a. Jim Blanke: Scoring criteria provided by state doesn't consider duration of drought, but we can add that to list of potential modifications to rankings, if desired.

4. DWR GSP Comments

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided an update on DWR comments on the GSP and requested that SAC Representatives review the final determination letter ahead of the next meeting when potential solutions will be presented.
 - i. The GSP was developed in a collaborative stakeholder environment, completed in November 2019, adopted in January 2020, and is currently being implemented.
 - ii. Initial comments from DWR were provided in a consultation letter dated November 2021 and a final determination was released on January 28, 2022. The final determination identifies three potential deficiencies and potential corrective actions.
 - iii. The three deficiencies were summarized.
 - iv. The GSAs held a meeting with DWR staff on January 10, 2022 to discuss the potential deficiencies and pathways to approval. A technical team is currently evaluating new data and approaches to respond to the comments, focused on groundwater level thresholds and subsidence, and drafting approaches to be developed and shared with CC and SAC.
 1. Likely endpoint will be an updated version, with redline, for all or certain portions of the GSP that will be adopted by GSAs by late July 2022.
- b. SAC discussion
 - i. Bob Kelley: Has the GSAs looked at the other studies cited by DWR regarding minimum thresholds?
 1. Jim Blanke: The GSAs are in the process of reviewing these studies and will incorporate relevant findings as necessary when revisiting the sustainable management criteria.
 - ii. Susan Walsh: Finds the language posed by the state challenging; wants to thank those who thoughtfully worked on the GSP, including the SAC. It can be difficult to interpret the criticism provided by the state.
 - iii. Bob Kelley: Seems that the most difficult deficiency to address will be subsidence, especially as it continues. In absence of other information, the state suggests zero subsidence, which will be a challenge to achieve without immediately addressing sub-Corcoran pumping.

5. Drought Update

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided an update on the drought.
 - i. The Merced subbasin is still in a severe drought, but precipitation is slightly above the 1991-2020 average for the water year. Forecast is for continued dry conditions, however.
 - ii. Self-Help Enterprises and the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley developed a map (<https://arcg.is/WqOGD>) of tanked water locations in the San Joaquin Valley.
- b. SAC discussion
 - i. Maxwell Norton: There appears to be less tanked water locations than last year, maybe suggests that some wells have been drilled deeper?
 1. Lacey McBride: Between November and this meeting, no new tanked water participants were added in Merced County. Self-Help is now receiving applications to fund drilling of deeper wells.

6. GSA Reports

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided a brief overview of the 12/21/21 Coordination Committee (CC) meeting:





- i. Focused on identifying projects to consider for inclusion in the SGM grant application and on the scoring process.
 - b. Lacey McBride provided an update for the Merced Subbasin GSA:
 - i. The GSA has been working on Phase 1 of their two-phase GSP implementation, which seeks to achieve reductions in groundwater consumption.
 - 1. Phase 1 focuses on land repurposing and fallowing. The GSA is working through elements of the program to eventually achieve 15,000 AF annually in groundwater reduction.
 - 2. A public workshop was held in November 2021 to kick off Phase 1 of the implementation approach.
 - 3. Proposition 218 will be used to fund Phase 1. The target date for a public hearing and election is summer 2022 and a subcommittee is currently making recommendations for the fee structure.
 - a. Next meeting is February 10, both virtual and in-person
 - ii. The GSA is also developing a well consistency determination policy to address potential changes from the County of Merced Department of Environmental Health, which would require GSAs to ensure that wells are consistent with the goals of the GSP.
 - c. Matt Beaman provided an update for the Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA:
 - i. The GSA has been holding several stakeholder guidance committee meetings to discuss agricultural reductions. At this point, no allocation volume has been set, but stakeholders are expressing a desire for high certainty (e.g., low allocation) while still providing some flexibility. The GSA is currently considering the stakeholder committee's feedback and preparing a recommendations document that will be presented at a meeting in March.
 - d. Kel Mitchel provided an update for the Turner Island Water District GSA #1:
 - i. The GSA is currently preparing for the for 2022 irrigation season. Most recent work pertains to the water conservation project (discussed today), which is emblematic of what TIWD wants to achieve moving forward. Both the GSA Board and staff are working closely with other GSAs on collective plans to achieve these goals.
 - e. SAC discussion
 - i. None.
- 7. Public Comment
 - a. None.
- 8. Next steps and adjourn
 - a. Meeting was adjourned at 2:56 PM.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD March 2022

Meeting to be conducted virtually (subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org