



MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: October 19, 2022, 9:30 to 11:30 AM

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

Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino	Stevinson/Merquin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Vandenberg	MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alexis Rudich (standing in as alternate)	MCFB
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Darren Olguin	Resident of Merced County
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dave Serrano	Serrano Farms - Le Grand
<input type="checkbox"/>	David Belt	Foster Farms
<input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	Olivia Gomez	Community of Planada
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nataly Escobedo Garcia (alternate)	Leadership Counsel
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parry Klassen	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Darcy Brown	River Partners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rick Drayer	Merced/Mariposa Cattlemen
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Thomas Dinwoodie	Master Gardener/McSwain
<input 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. Drought Check-in

- a. Adriel Ramirez (Merced Subbasin GSA [MSGSA]) shared countywide data from Self-Help Enterprises about bottled water, tanked water, and well program participation (see slide). He confirmed that there could be some overlap in participation between the programs, at least across the bottled water and other programs, but wasn't sure about the level of other program participation overlap.
- b. Joe Scoto shared that farming has been difficult, some ground had already been fallowed by the time some surface water became available later. Other farmers agreed that similar steps had been taken.

4. Recap of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan July 2022 Update

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran [W&C]) shared a summary of the edits to the revised GSP that was resubmitted to DWR in July 2022, including sustainable management criteria updates and new management actions.
- b. Q (Maxwell Norton): Has the revised GSP been approved by the state? A: It is pending review by DWR. There isn't a regulatory deadline for when a final determination will be made, but we've heard it will be a faster than previous 2 years. Initial input is that it might be announced by December 2022.
- c. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): What's happening with counties around us in terms of what's been submitted and approved? A: Most surrounding counties/basins submitted revised GSPs in July, same as Merced, and are also waiting for DWR's review.
- d. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): Has any of the mentioned subsidence coordination been done so far? A (Jim Blanke, W&C): Yes, there have been several meetings with the surrounding subbasins as part of a facilitated process to develop an understanding of the subsidence issue, how much pumping is occurring and where, and what each GSP's method is for responding to the issue. The GSAs are looking to continue this process.
- e. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): Does the state care or know that an effort is being pursued for a regional solution to subsidence? A: Yes.
- f. Comment (Bob Kelly): Doesn't see consistency between a 2021-2022 map he's seen (presented to the levee district by SJRRP) and what is in the subsidence slide depicting average subsidence 2015-2021.
 - i. Mr. Kelly was asked to send the copy of the map to which he referred to Chris Hewes (W&C) for comparison. It makes sense that these may not match because they represent different time periods (2021-2022 vs longer-term 2015-2021).





- g. Q (Maxwell Norton): It seems illogical that someone would pump from a deeper well when they can pump from shallower – is this not already done more widely because of limited yields or a water quality issue? A: It can be due to both reasons.
- h. Q (Joe Scotto): If a well fails due to shifting/collapse, but you're below the Corcoran Clay, can it be replaced below the Corcoran? A: Through the well permitting process, wells generally have been approved to be replaced directly in the same aquifer if it's a straight replacement, but long-term goal is still to reduce below Corcoran Clay pumping.
- i. Jim Blanke (W&C) summarized three comment letters that have been received in response to the resubmitted GSP. These letters are part of DWR's process for them to consider as part of their review of the revised GSP.
 - i. **Link to SGMA Portal to view comment letters in response to the Revised Merced GSP:**
<https://sgma.water.ca.gov/portal/gsp/comments/9> (then click on the button "Submitted During Resubmission Period" to filter to view the three letters discussed during the 10/19 meeting).
- j. Hicham ElTal (Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA [MIUGSA]) thinks that there is likely not content within the comment letters that would cause DWR to deem the GSP incomplete.
- k. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): Did any of these three agencies submit comment letters for the prior letters? A: Yes, NMFS and Leadership Counsel. USBR SJRRP was a new letter; they were engaged specifically as part of the revised GSP update process.

5. 5-Year GSP Evaluation Lookahead

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the requirements for completing a 5-year evaluation of the GSP, given that it was submitted 2.5 years ago.
- b. Q (Joe Scotto): How can DWR require an evaluation even though the Plan hasn't been approved yet? A: The timing and requirements are part of the regulations.

6. Reports

- a. GSA Reports
 - i. Adriel Ramirez (MSGSA) shared that since the last 6/27 meeting, the GSA has:
 - Developed and established its phase 1 land repurposing program to reduce consumptive use of groundwater by 15,000 AFY no later than 2025. The application period closes 11/15 (recently extended by the GSA Board). Two public workshops have been held about the program, and mailers have been sent to all eligible landowners. Materials can be found on the GSA's website: <https://mercedsubbasingsa.org/>. Also, the GSA has approved new fees (through a Proposition 218 process) to fund programming.
 - The MSGSA Board has also approved principles to support allocation and recharge credit frameworks, as well as other GSA activities.



- The Strategic Planning Ad-Hoc Committee is preparing an allocation and recharge credit framework that will be presented in November to the GSA Board.
- ii. Q (Tim Dinwoodie): On the MSGSA Zoom call on 10/18, it was mentioned that only 2 applications have been received. Is this an indication that people in jurisdiction aren't interested? If more applications not received, will you have to implement harsher means to reach the goals? A: This morning, an additional 2 mailed applications were received. Some may have been delayed due to the protest of the Prop 218 fee. MSGSA is anticipating additional applications through the November deadline. It's possible that the allocation framework could have to be implemented earlier if the program doesn't reach its goal.
- iii. Q (Ben Migliazzo): Is the goal a reduction of 15,000 AF every year or a single cumulative volume? A: It's an ongoing 15,000 AF every year by 2025. This year (2022) could reach 3,000 AFY but it needs to reach a larger, ongoing annual volume of 15,000 AFY by 2025.
- iv. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) shared that:
 - MIUGSA Board adopted a groundwater allocation in May 2022 in line with the GSP's sustainable yield, in effect from Apr 2023 – Dec 2025, of an average 3.3 AF/ac. A newsletter was recently sent that summarizes this program.
 - At the last meeting, the Board adopted a well registration policy, with different deadlines by well type. Largest and most immediate effort is that wells serving parcels >10 acres need to register by April 1, 2023. Paper and electronic forms will be made available.
 - MID Board approved making developed supply available to its growers, so MIUGSA will be at 4 meetings with MID in mid-November to talk about SGMA and using developed supply as a SGMA compliance tool.
 - MIUGSA is evaluating creation of allocations for urban water agencies. Stakeholder Guidance Committee meetings are upcoming on this topic.
- ii. Q (Blake Nervino): How are you notifying people that have wells that they need to register them? A: Mailers will be sent out, considered to be the best outreach method given availability of contact information.
- iii. Q (Joe Scoto): For MSGSA, what is your allotment per acre for extraction? Is there curtailment now? A: In the process of developing this. An allocation should be established by 2026. No curtailment until 2026 except through the voluntary land repurposing program.
- v. Kel Mitchell (TIWD GSA-#1) shared that:
 - GSA Board meeting recently discussed logistics for implementing projects funded by the grant funding that is approved.
 - GSA Board briefly discussed allocations, but mostly about maintaining consistency with the other GSAs.
- b. Current Basin Conditions – Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided a background on monitoring in the subbasin, including the shift from twice per year measurements to monthly measurements for most wells starting in 2021. He also explained some

of the challenges related to collection and interpretation of monthly data when studying trends. He presented three hydrographs from 2012 to present, one for each principal aquifer.

i. Q (Maxwell Norton): Is it reasonable to presume that a lot of the monitoring wells are influenced by cone of depression by neighboring wells? A: Yes.

c. SAC questions and discussion

i. Q (Susan Walsh): What are we waiting for that we may have to react to? A: First, DWR assessment of revised GSP. Second: Watching groundwater levels and lots of outstanding items around monitoring, data gaps, and developing management actions.

ii. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): Why aren't we looking at incentives for land repurposing throughout the rest of the county outside of MSGSA? A (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): MIUGSA's incentive is to recharge (via surface water rights), not repurpose land. MIUGSA is looking into opportunities to support growers to bank water.

7. Prop 68 Implementation Planning & Projects Grant Round 2 (due Nov 30, 2022)

a. Jim Blanke (W&C) described the recently released grant application.

b. ***Note that the Merced Subbasin is eligible for up to \$20 million in grant funding, not the amount reduced by funding received in round 1, as described in the meeting.***

c. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) shared some additional potential projects for grant application:

i. Empower MID growers to use surface water rights to recharge and do their own budgeting. Example of piloting a 20 acre property with a 1 acre recharge basin.

ii. Another round of dry wells.

iii. For owners with flood irrigation facilities, still use drip or irrigation, but in wet year do flooding and some measurement.

iv. Those who rotate crops, mostly sandy, do some other projects.

d. Comment (Russ Spear, Water Holistic West): Have you applied in the past to put in water retention measures? (check dams, bioswales, etc.). This helps to recharge. Also announcing: WGBH Boston program that colleagues are putting on called "No trees, no rain".

e. Comment (Tom Dinwoodie): Recommends projects that can be used throughout California, e.g. recharge pilots. This might be beneficial in the application review process.

8. Ongoing and Upcoming Activities

a. ***Note that the meeting ran out of time at this point and so Jim Blanke (W&C) gave a brief update on the slides for each of these.***

b. Grant Updates

i. Prop 68 Implementation Grant (May 2020 – Mar 2023)

ii. Prop 68 Implementation Planning & Projects Grant Round 1 (Jun 2022 – Jun 2025)

iii. SDAC Grant



- c. Water quality data sampling coordination – coordination continuing with the water quality coalition
- d. Evapotranspiration tools & methodologies update – coordination is occurring within the subbasin and with surrounding subbasins
- e. Lessons learned from Madera and Chowchilla Subbasins
- f. DWR Flood-MAR Project
 - i. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) briefly shared that DWR is funding a project in the MID area for Flood-MAR.
- g. SAC input on prioritization for future activities
 - i. Comment to consider for future meetings (Blake Nervino): Where are we going to get surface water for recharge?

9. Public Comment

- a. Susie Silvera – Amongst sweet potato farmer community, recent discussions involved a mailed notice about April 2023 well registration (from MIUGSA). Are there other sources of communication happening to farmers as a whole? General consensus was that they thought the MIUGSA notice was junk mail and almost missed it. They were surprised to do some research to hear [GSP] meetings have been ongoing for so long. Ms. Silvera also noted that there appears to be a large SAC group in terms of membership but only 15 people showing up in person.
 - i. Response: MIUGSA has limited contact information, mostly mailing addresses. Expect to do some phone outreach in the future.
 - ii. MSGSA is doing similar outreach and is also starting to present at additional public meetings like other agency meetings. Also have had several online and in person workshops.

10. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Meeting was adjourned at 11:43am.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD – expected to be January 2023

Meeting to be conducted hybrid (physical + virtual; subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org