



MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: February 27, 2023, 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	MIDAC member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino	Stevinson/Merquin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Vandenberg	MCFB
<input 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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nataly Escobedo Garcia (alternate)	Leadership Counsel
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parry Klassen	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Darcy Brown	River Partners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rick Drayer	Merced/Mariposa Cattlemen
<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 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
<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. Reports

a. GSA Reports

- i. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) shared that she has no updates outside of the "Demand Reduction Discussion" agenda item later in the meeting.
- ii. Kel Mitchell (TIWD GSA-#1) shared that he has no updates outside of the "Demand Reduction Discussion" agenda item later in the meeting.
- i. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) presented an update on Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge (Flood-MAR), including a background on Flood-MAR, permitting, and a pilot project for temporary short-term permit of Flood-MAR at Mariposa & Owens Creek.
 - Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): What happens when someone's property naturally floods? Can it be claimed as recharge? A: No. Natural flooding is the baseline – purposeful flooding is "new" volume.
 - Q (Maxwell Norton): Why is 90th percentile set so high, wouldn't 70th be more reasonable? Want to look at cumulative effect on whole part of the valley. A: State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is trying to acknowledge senior water rights holders. It would take a lot of work to support a request to reduce that number.
 - Q (Maxwell Norton): Flooding at Highway 59 provides an example of where this program is beneficial? A: Yes.
 - Comment (Brad Samuelson): Working with Governor's Office and SWRCB and Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) on process to get a parcel to implement Flood-MAR more efficiently.
 - Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA): Planning on evaluating Bear Creek for similar Flood-MAR permitting next year and then in following years, Merced River, which would potentially be more impactful.
 - Q (Thomas Dinwoodie): Can the plan in place be implemented anytime it's needed, say in 5 years? A: No, have to reapply every year. But having done it once, there is significant legwork that has been done, such as identifying stream gaging. MID is working on legislation to streamline this process.
 - Q (Maxwell Norton): Are stream gages essentially a weir with a ruler on them? A: Yes.
 - Comment (Brad Samuelson): A big obstacle through current permit is that existing diversions (e.g. 2-3 cubic feet per second (cfs) pumps in creeks for past 30 years), they're not allowed to use them under

the permit because they're not permitted through California Department of Fish and Wildlife, but can use during flood stage.

- a. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA): Proposed legislation would be no permits for existing pumps, only new.
 - Q (Nataly Escobedo-Garcia): Is there a number for that legislation you mentioned? A: No, but a similar one with some overlaps is SB 23.
 - Q (Joe Scoto): Does the permit holder have to go to the landowner? Whose responsibility is that? A: Permit holder has to make sure everyone is adhering to the laws. Landowner can work with a local water district or the GSA. Applicant can be any combination of groups that can identify land for this purpose, but it would be ideal if done in a coordinated fashion at the GSA level.
 - Comment (Brad Samuelson): Would be ideal to have the permit for the whole subbasin. Response: There are a lot more obstacles to this.
- b. Current Basin Conditions – Jim Blanke (W&C) presented hydrographs of groundwater elevations measured over the last 11 years for each principal aquifer. He encouraged participants to look at high-level trends (e.g. decrease in 2012-2014 previous drought, flattening in 2015-2018, then some more downward trend during current drought), as well as increased frequency of monitoring in the last 1-2 years.
 - i. Q (Brad Samuelson): Does rate of subsidence correlate with groundwater levels? Is it a goal to continue monitoring to determine this? A: A section in the GSP presented an attempted analysis about this and found in some places it did correlate and some places it didn't. There is limited groundwater level data in the subsidence zone (data gap area). There is also a lag in subsidence which makes things more complicated. Still waiting on the latest subsidence data for December 2022. It is a goal to continue monitoring to determine this relationship.
- c. SAC questions and discussion
 - i. No additional questions.

4. WY 2022 Annual Report Preview

- a. Chris Hewes & Jim Blanke (W&C) presented a summary of initial results from the Water Year 2022 Annual Report that is being drafted, including sustainable management criteria status, an update on using Electrical Conductivity values to estimate Total Dissolved Solids concentrations, and change in storage calculations based on the updated groundwater model.
- b. Q (Maxwell Norton): What is the monitoring network for groundwater quality? A: Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program by Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition
- c. Q (Maxwell Norton): Will hard copies of the annual report be available? A: No, the report is provided electronically only.
- d. Q (Brad Samuelson): What do you predict we'll see for change in storage for water year (WY) 2023? A: Speculating, but based on previous wet years, we're



likely to see a small increase in storage, but usually it's less in magnitude than the decline in storage we typically see during a dry year.

- e. Public Q: How long until we receive all of the cumulative change in storage data for 2023? A: This won't be updated until the next annual report in early 2024. However, updated groundwater levels will be presented on hydrographs in each meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.
- f. Q (Hicham ElTal): Is the storage graph based on groundwater level measurements? A: The storage graph is based on a comprehensive update of the groundwater model based on pumping, diversions, hydrology, etc. Groundwater levels are used to validate the results from the groundwater model.
- g. Public Q: Does the overall model take into account naturally stored water? Dam storage? It doesn't make sense that groundwater levels wouldn't be included. A: The groundwater model is developed as a computer simulation taking into account all hydrologic data we have (precipitation, stream inflow, pumping, surface water deliveries and diversions, evapotranspiration, etc.). The model simulates the whole system. Then we run the model and compare what the model says for expected groundwater levels to what was observed. The storage values represent groundwater and do not include water stored in reservoirs.

5. Demand Reduction Discussion

- a. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided a high-level update on demand reduction activities occurring within MIUGSA including:
 - i. Two major actions take in 2022 by MIUGSA Board:
 - 1. Adopted groundwater allocation
 - 2. Developed well registration portal
 - ii. Additional rules, regulations, and enforceable policies being finalized.
 - iii. Participating as pilot partner in development of Groundwater Accounting Platform with Environmental Defense Fund and Water Data Consortium
 - iv. Pilot Flood-MAR project (as described earlier by Hicham)
 - v. Q: Platform that is being built to better express data to farmers/growers on how to allocate their water – is this only for the 3.3 AF/ac that MIUGSA is allowing? Would a developmental water application that doesn't involve the same water be tracked separately? A: The platform is intended to incorporate various water sources available, including surface water and developed supply from MID in addition to groundwater pumping. In the future, it will include trading and exchanges, but MIUGSA stakeholders asked to postpone this for the time being.
 - vi. Q (Parry Klassen): Is domestic well registration up and running? How is it going? A: Deadline is 12/31/2024 for domestic wells. Quite a few domestic wells have already been registered, potentially due to overlap in mailing for an agricultural audience.
- b. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) provided a high-level update on demand reduction activities occurring within MSGSA including:
 - i. Two phased GSP Implementation Approach
 - 1. Phase 1 – 2021-2025
 - a. Goal is 15,000 AFY
 - b. Land Repurposing program developed in 2022, with 16 applications selected in first round, with project lifetimes

- ranging 3-5 years, and cumulative 7,263 AFY water saved, with average savings \$198/AFY.
- i. Applications for second year expected to open in June/July.
 - c. WY 2023 Recharge Framework and Registration Form approved, to record credits by growers for recharge in WY 2023. Looking forward to the future when the GSA will have an allocation program in place, while encouraging growers to recharge today.
 - d. Parcel-based water budgets via EDF/Water Data Consortium Water Accounting Platform Pilot Project.
2. Phase 2 – 2026-2040: Groundwater allocation program
 - a. Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee created to make recommendations to the MSGSA Board. Expecting another set of recommendations to be published in March.
 3. Q (Joe Scoto): Asked clarifying question about how water savings were calculated in the application process. A: All applicants entirely all or primarily groundwater irrigation, with 1-2 that have surface water used in addition. The reported value for cumulative water saved does not include surface water (only includes groundwater savings).
 4. Public Q: Is any land being repurposed for recharge basins? If so, are they being allowed to have credit for building such basins? A: Don't think any have specifically said they are repurposing to a recharge basin. One of the agreements is looking to fallow and recharge, but once agreement is up, it will go into production.
 5. Q (Ben Migliazzo): How many estimated acres are irrigated in the MSGSA white areas? A: Approximately 170,000 acres are irrigated in total MSGSA area. Would have to go back to mapping to pull out the "white areas".
 6. Q (David Belt): For the orchards removed, have you looked at the age of crop? Would they have been removed anyways without the incentive program? A: Some were for annual crops. Most were orchards. The age of crop wasn't part of the application process, but the consumption of the crop was considered. The groundwater use reduction of an older orchard is going to be less than one in its prime.
 - a. David suggests considering this more directly for future applications.
 7. Q (Trevor Hutton): How were the ad hoc committee members selected and whose interests do they represent? A: 3 of the 6 MSGSA Board members are on the ad-hoc committee (Eric, Gino, Mike) and they were chosen by the MSGSA Board.
- c. Kel Mitchel (TIWD GSA-1) provided a high-level update on demand reduction activities being considered by the GSA:
 - i. Shifting cropping patterns

- ii. More efficient utilization of storage and pump infrastructure to minimize system losses of applied water
- iii. Design of and planning for upgraded and new infrastructure to curtail applied water needs

6. Grant Updates

- a. This item was skipped due to time, but slides will be presented online at MercedSGMA.org.

7. Public Comment

- a. None provided.

8. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Meeting was adjourned at 11:34am.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD – expected to be May 2023, likely a joint meeting with the Coordination Committee

Meeting to be conducted as an in-person meeting with opportunity to participate virtually (subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org

