

MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Joint Coordination Committee & Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: September 18, 2023, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

LOCATION: Merced Irrigation District, Franklin Yard Facility, 3321 North Franklin Road, Merced, CA 95348 and online via Zoom

SECONDARY TELECONFERENCE LOCATION: One member of the Coordination Committee teleconferenced from a secondary location: THE SANDBOX Paso Robles, 1345 Park Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446

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

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 type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino (alternate)	Stevinson/Merquin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Vandenberg	MCFB
<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input 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 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"/>	Adam Malisch	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Phillip Woods (alternate)	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maxwell Norton	Unincorporated area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Olivia Gomez	Community of Planada
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Caitie Diemel	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 type="checkbox"/>	Wes Myers	Merced Grassland Coalition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lou Myers (alternate)	Benjamin Land LP

Meeting Notes

1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

2. Roll Call

- a. Coordination Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above. A quorum of members was not established.
- b. Stakeholder Advisory Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above.

3. Approval of May 24, 2023 Coordination Committee Meeting Minutes

- a. Tabled to the next meeting due to not establishing a quorum of the Coordination Committee.

4. Public Comment

- a. None received

5. Reports

- a. GSA Reports
 - i. Merced Subbasin GSA (MSGSA) – Lacey McBride provided several updates:
 1. The MSGSA Board recently approved revised sustainability zones that take into account several new pieces of information since the first time the zones were drafted. Currently working on developing an interactive online map for viewing the new boundaries.
 2. In August, the MSGSA Board considered a schedule to adopt a GSA-specific allocation policy in 2024, implement a dry run in 2025, and fully implement in 2026.
 3. Land Repurposing

- a. Local program just finished 2nd application period; GSA approved 6 additional applicants (3,100 AFY reduction at total cost to GSA of \$880,000).
 - b. MSGSA received an \$8.9M land repurposing grant from the State and will be developing and implementing a more detailed land repurposing plan.
 - 4. MSGSA finished a recent round of instrumenting wells (pressure transducers) in an effort to fill data gaps.
 - ii. Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA (MIUGSA); Matt Beaman provided several updates:
 - 1. MIUGSA has been continuing to work on GSA rules (as previously reported in more detail); expect to be making a draft final version public soon.
 - 2. MIUGSA received a well permit consistency determination request for a well located in MIUGSA but that will likely serve land within MSGSA. MIUGSA would like to coordinate with MSGSA on this request due to the inherent complexities. MIUGSA thinks a comment letter from MSGSA may be useful.
 - a. Comment (Maxwell Norton): Approving this well request will make it longer to bring that area into compliance with state law. This will extend the period that restrictions have to be imposed on existing irrigators.
 - b. Q (Charles Gardiner): What is the timing on the approval? A: There is no deadline requirement for review; requested was received about a month ago. There is a desire to process these in a reasonable amount of time.
 - c. Q (Susan Walsh): Will this set a precedent once a decision is made? A: Potentially, yes. There is a difference in practice vs what the ordinance language describes.
 - d. Comment (Susan Walsh): Make sure it's a defensible choice because it's likely to come up again in the future.
 - e. Comment (Lacey McBride, MSGSA): This is an important topic because it will likely come up again in future well permit consistency determination requests. Once the MSGSA has an allocation in place, this should be easier to coordinate on. During this interim time, MSGSA should be able to coordinate with MIUGSA on this current request.
 - iii. Turner Island Water District GSA-#1 (TIWD GSA-#1): Kel Mitchel provided several updates:
 - 1. The GSA is moving forward with using grant funds to update infrastructure and reduce water usage in the GSA's area.
 - 2. The GSA has been continuing to develop a recharge policy.
- b. Current Basin Conditions
 - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided an update on the current conditions of the basin. While edits to this segment of the meeting are still undergoing revisions (e.g. addition of summary statistics), some edits have been made in response to previous comments on making this more accessible.
 - ii. Matt presented a subset of slides from a longer report that contains overview information as well as hydrographs for each individual wells. He also highlighted several wells recently installed, including Michael Rd located in the Above Corcoran Clay Principal Aquifer. The full set of slides were uploaded to MercedSGMA.org.

- iii. Q (Maxwell Norton): In the El Nido region, what is the source of the recovery for Below CC? A (Hicham ElTal): It is likely due to a water transfer from MID, which reduced pumping in the area.
- iv. Q (Charles Gardiner): Is it fair to say that recent groundwater levels in the Above Corcoran aquifer are higher because of rainfall, and higher in Below Corcoran aquifer because of reduced pumping? A: (Matt Beaman) Yes, plus an impact of delayed pumping in the Below Corcoran.

6. Stakeholder Advisory Committee Membership Update

- a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) described that the GSAs intend to open an application period in the next several weeks to replace some seats on the SAC that have had low participation. Existing regularly attending committee members are welcome to stay on the committee. SAC members are encouraged to forward the application on to people they think may be interested in serving, especially as things get busier in the next year with the development of the 5-year update.
- b. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA): The application will be very similar to what was used previously to gather membership for the current committee.

7. GSP 5-Year Update

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided an update of why the 5-year update is required, a timeline of the GSP development and approval process to date, and then presented more information on the 9 corrective actions from DWR's initial GSP determination letter and an overview of strategies for how the GSAs are intending to address these in the GSP 5-year update.
- b. Q (Maxwell Norton): Isn't the impact obvious for what declines of water levels will have on domestic wells? A: Yes overall, but it's more about quantification of the impacts – the estimated number of wells.
- c. Q (Brad Samuelson): Is it a model run that would show how many domestic wells would be dewatered? A: It has more to do with developing a water level surface associated with interim milestones and then comparing this to the known information on domestic well locations.
- d. Q (Hicham ElTal): What's the threshold for defining saline water? 2000 mg/L? Does the storage of the basin exclude saline? A: Yes, that threshold sounds about right and yes, the storage reported on the slide (45 MAF as of 2015) includes the freshwater portion only.
 - i. Comment (Hicham ElTal): More concerned with impact of surrounding subbasins on the Merced Subbasin's storage.
- e. Q (Maxwell Norton): There are many things that can be analyzed and detected in water. TDS is a strong overall indicator. Feels like the State is looking for something. Do you know what that might be? (nitrates, something else?) Concerned about making the GSAs into water quality regulatory agencies when there are lots of other agencies and efforts to manage this separately. A: You may be right. We think the DWR is juggling many things right now, especially focusing on interconnected surface waters. However, water quality is still important and thus we're continuing to see comments like this from DWR.
 - i. Comment (Hicham ElTal): The original GSP specifically chose to stick with one indicator (TDS), even when challenged in the past. Agreed with recognizing existing programs that are in place.
 - ii. Comment (Joe Scoto): Don't like the additional language that would require additional water quality regulation by the GSAs.
 - iii. Comments (Charles Gardiner): Some water quality regulators/existing programs may be coming to the GSAs to discuss/enforce recharge policies in the future.

- f. Jim Blanke (W&C) provided a preview of the 6 meeting topics planned for the CC and SAC in the next year as part of the GSP 5-year update.
- g. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): What is the suspension/attendance deadline for getting SAC revitalized? Should we have a dedicated meeting to get new SAC members up to speed? A (Matt Beaman, MIUGSA): Yes, it would be good to have focused sessions, whether one-on-one, or in a specific group, with new folks to bring them up to speed rather than doing this with the whole group. We anticipate having new SAC members by the next meeting, though there may be some stragglers.

8. Contracting Recommendations

- a. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) shared three open contracting topics to solicit input/comments/direction from committee members before they are considered for execution.
 - i. Merced GSP 5-Year Update
 - 1. Lacey McBride (MSGSA): GSP included an estimate of \$800,000 of the GSP 5-year update as of 2020, so she considers this in the same ballpark from a budget standpoint. The original GSP had grant funding, but this one does not.
 - 2. Q (Maxwell Norton): While have enjoyed working with Woodard & Curran, should it be the long-term goal to develop internal capacity and expertise to carry out these functions? A (Hicham ElTal): Still need consultant support this effort, don't have a large enough team internally to carry this out. There are also enough varied parts where we may need various types of expertise based on how the implementation carries out through time or other DWR requirements in the future.
 - ii. Merced Subbasin Integrated Managed Aquifer Recharge Evaluation Tool (MercedMAR)
 - 1. No questions or comments were received. This topic was already presented/discussed in more detail at the previous meeting.
 - iii. Monthly Groundwater Level Monitoring
 - 1. Comment (Hicham ElTal): Some wells are production wells with accumulated oil sitting on top of the water which gets in the way of the sounding/measurement. MIUGSA may be coming back with a separate proposal to purge the oil accumulation.
 - 2. Q (Tom Dinwoodie): Is there an opportunity for UC Merced to participate in the data analysis side? A: Yes, it's possible and MIUGSA is willing to discuss with UC Merced. This would be more task-oriented and less research-oriented, which may not end up being a good fit.

9. Data Gaps Update

- a. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) shared a map of wells that the MSGSA identified for potential monitoring, as well as a subset of wells that were instrumented with pressure transducers. She described that Woodard & Curran was requested to re-run the data gaps tool with a scenario that includes the new transducer location. Found that it didn't reduce the number of data gaps in Above/Below Corcoran but it did shift the data gaps/priorities locations.
 - i. Last week, the MSGSA Board gave direction for MSGSA staff to work with the other GSAs to move forward with using grant funding to coordinate on installation of new wells.

- b. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA): To group, if you do know an existing well, time is of the essence because there becomes a point of no return once you get far along enough on the new well permitting/installation process.
- c. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA): For surface water interactions, it gets more complicated because you need a location where you can do both groundwater level and streamflow monitoring. Also – does MSGSA allow higher/lower groundwater pumping in different sustainability zones?
 - i. Lacey McBride (MSGSA): Nothing is finalized yet, but that has been discussed. There are also opportunities identified to match some monitoring with what is planned by Delta-Mendota on the opposite side of the San Joaquin River.
- d. Q (Charles Gardiner): What kind of well outreach has occurred to fill data gaps with existing wells?
 - i. Lacey McBride (MSGSA): Have come to the SAC and other groups several times. MSGSA has widely distributed a form that asks for information about potential existing wells. Have also done outreach through distribution list, Technical Advisory Committee, and Board Meetings.
- e. Q (Simon Vander Woude): Where are the remaining data gaps? A: They are generally in the northwestern corner for Below Corcoran Clay. Also central portion of the Above Corcoran Clay.
 - i. The draft results of the tool have been posted to MercedSGMA.org.
- f. Comment (Maxwell Norton): There might be some frost protection wells maintained, but not used frequently, that would be good candidates. Response (Matt Beaman): These are likely mostly located in MIUGSA's area and that portion of the network is generally not prioritized for filling data gaps.

10. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) shared a list of next steps for the next several months.
- b. Meeting adjourned at 11:43 am.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD, potentially November 2023

Meeting to be conducted as an in-person meeting (subject to change)

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org