



## MEETING MINUTES – Merced GSP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: January 24, 2024, 1:30 to 3:30 PM

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

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### Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Community Aspect Representation</b>
<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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Baker	Clayton Water District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Kayser-Grant	Sierra Club
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adam Malisch	UC Merced
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phillip Woods (alternate)	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"/>	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 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 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, conducted roll call, and reminded attendees that past meeting materials are available online at [mercedsgma.org](https://mercedsgma.org).

### 3. Questions/Comments from the Public

- a. No questions/comments.

### 4. 2024 Rural Communities Water Managers Leadership Institute Introduction (Self-Help Enterprises)

- a. Sue Ruiz (Self-Help Enterprises, SHE) provided an introduction to the 2024 Rural Communities Water Managers Leadership Institute and this year's particular focus on bringing in members of the north part of the region including Merced.
- b. Agencies and community members can apply to participate (at no cost) online at <https://bit.ly/SHELeadershipInstitute>
- c. Comment (Jean Okuye): Agreed that education was a great approach.

### 5. Reports

#### a. GSA Reports

##### i. Lacey McBride (MSGSA) shared the following updates:

1. The MSGSA continues to work on its allocation policy and plans to release a policy statement on values in the coming weeks (on schedule) for public comment.
2. Multi-benefit land repurposing grant (\$8.9M grant awarded last summer) – in February, the GSA is going to evaluate releasing an RFP to select a firm/team to develop the plan, implement projects, perform outreach, and conduct monitoring (in addition to working with partners already identified).
3. Q (Charles Gardiner): Would it be appropriate to distribute the allocation policy to the SAC email list? A: Yes! It will become public through MSGSA Board meetings and packets, but Lacey can pull it out and distribute it.
4. Sue Ruiz (SHE): The Leadership Institute program would include skills useful for engagement with multi-benefit land repurposing program, not just SGMA.

##### ii. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) shared the following updates:

1. MIUGSA has been focused on the implementation of the well registration policy because it feeds into groundwater accounts which benefits monitoring and tracking of the allocation MIUGSA has adopted.
2. MIUGSA sent out a formal reminder in early December about the Dec 15 deadline to register wells of a certain size before a penalty is assessed. This resulted in ~800 additional wells registered.
3. The MIUGSA Board took a recent action to provide some flexibility for staff to void penalty invoices if well owners register late by Jan 31.
4. MIUGSA has been trying to evaluate sites for installation of an additional CIMIS station, but there are some challenges around siting it (need perennial grass), availability of irrigation water, and guaranteeing long-term access.

- a. Comment (Maxwell Norton): It seems like it would be possible for the GSA to buy a ranchette and manage it yourself, without worrying about access. Response: That may be a potential worst-case scenario, but the GSA would like to avoid this route because it still carries a hefty cost that would need to be coordinated with all the GSAs.
  - b. Comment (Joe Sansoni): What are the size requirements? A: 600 ft x 600 ft (8 sq acres). The station itself is 10x10 feet with cattle gates (20 ft x 20 ft ultimately) but need perennial grass around that.
  - c. Comment (Simon Vander Woude): City of Merced has sewer land available that could be a possible location. Response: This region has been evaluated in the past and unfortunately doesn't have the right land cover type.
  - d. Q (Maxwell Norton): How is well registration process going for MSGSA? A (Lacey McBride): MSGSA has not started a well registration process. It may be considered in the future. The GSA plans to monitor the allocation program using evapotranspiration (OpenET to start).
5. MIUGSA and MSGSA have been developing a Water Accounting Platform using ET data which could be a good presentation topic for an upcoming SAC meeting.
- iii. Kel Mitchell (TIWD GSA-#1) was not available to present.
- a. Current Basin Conditions –
- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented a subset of slides from a longer report that contains overview information as well as hydrographs for each individual well.
  - ii. Key updates to the monitoring network include:
    1. New dual completion well (above and below Corcoran Clay) at the same site at Harmon Rd in the very southern tip of the Subbasin. Trying a satellite connection in lieu of cellular in southern portion of basin due to cellular reception issue.
    2. The Jefferson Rd well site (installed 2020 or 2021, both below and above Corcoran Clay) has had some recent cellular reception issues so MIUGSA has been out to the site to replace equipment and try a new vendor.
    3. Michael Rd (south/central of the Subbasin, above Corcoran Clay) was added in 2022 and has been measured for the last year. It should be instrumented soon to provide more frequent measurements.
    4. Northwest of Lake Yosemite (North of City of Merced) there is an existing MID production well that will be instrumented soon based on GSA + grant funding.
    5. There are some additional sites in Le Grand and spread throughout the Subbasin that have had inconsistencies in measurements (e.g. oil in well); the GSAs are looking at fixing or replacing, as possible.
  - iii. Q (Joe Scoto): Why are there no wells in the TIWDGSA-#1 area? A: TIWD provides data from their wells for the annual report, but no wells are officially part of the monitoring network, so they don't show up on the presented current conditions slides/maps.
  - iv. Q (Sue Ruiz): Is there a way that community engagement could help collect the data? Do you need more domestic wells? A (Charles Gardiner): The process requires a lot of involved landowner/technical work to get the wells qualified and the data collected. A (Matt Beaman): The GSAs have been asking for years to help identify wells to add to the network. What they've found is that where there are willing participants, there is often lack of construction information (e.g., minimum data

standards from the State can't be met). The majority of domestic wells in the Merced Subbasin are already in the MIUGSA area and the monitoring network already mostly adequately covers MIUGSA's region through the use of MID's production wells for monitoring. More wells are needed outside of the traditional domestic well and MID production zone.

1. Comment (Lacey McBride): If there are landowners out there that would allow the GSAs to drill a dedicated monitoring well on their property, that would be very helpful for outreach.
- ii. The full set of slides were uploaded to MercedSGMA.org.

## **6. Discussion about 1/23/24 Merced County Board of Supervisors Meeting Considering Amendment to Merced County's Groundwater Ordinance Export Policy**

- a. Lacey McBride (MSGSA): The Board of Supervisors have been considering an amendment to the Groundwater Ordinance Export Policy which would require the GSA in the originating basin and GSA in the receiving basin to provide a sustainability determination report on all exports. Right now the GSAs make the sustainability determination for new well installs, but it's specific to the GSP.
  - i. Yesterday, the Board tabled the decision for one year unless the GSPs in Chowchilla, Delta-Mendota, Turlock are all approved earlier. In the meantime, the extension gives the GSAs time to prepare for a future basinwide policy change.
- b. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) summarized the consensus reached at the Coordination Committee earlier in the morning which would involve foundational safeguards and rules for potentially allowing groundwater export to occur, but limited to the native/sustainable yield (e.g. excluding developed supply).
- c. Comment (Maxwell Norton): Advisory committees like this one should be involved very early on in the process. Very interested in being involved.
- d. Q (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Is everything that the SAC has been providing input on been included? A (Charles Gardiner): Clarification – input from the SAC has been taken into consideration for the GSP. This County well policy is a new and separate issue.
- e. Overall – the group anticipates coming back to this topic at a future meeting when there's a little more to discuss and provide input on.

## **7. Consideration of Updates to Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC)**

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) walked the group through a reminder of the schedule overview of the GSP development, recommended corrective actions from DWR, and a schedule overview of the upcoming GSP Update. He also walked the group through different sustainability indicators and considerations for updates to the SMC.
- b. Groundwater Storage
  - i. Comment (Ben Migliazzo): Have to stick with groundwater levels since we're already tracking this. Could be downfalls to using storage volume directly.
  - ii. Comment (Maxwell Norton): Groundwater levels are what people care about. For farmers, it determines the cost of pumping. For homeowners, they care about whether the well is dry or not.
  - iii. Comment (Arlan Thomas): Setting storage volume is the ultimate barometer and he would support using that.
  - iv. Q (Lisa Kayser-Grant): What additional information does the set storage volume method provide? What would be the accuracy of either method used through time? A: This is purely a calculated volume coming out of the groundwater model that ultimately relies on groundwater levels to calculate the difference. It's not directly measured. Through time, because they're using the same inputs, the "accuracy" or trend of either method would be relatively the same through time.

- v. Q (David Belt): There's more than one type of storage. It doesn't mean that storage is available – it could be locked up in sand grains. Prefers the groundwater levels as a proxy.
  - vi. Comment (Joe Sansoni): Annual storage calculation involves more assumptions.
  - vii. Comment (Simon Vander Woude): Agree with a data driven approach (collecting groundwater levels directly).
  - viii. Public Q (Geoff Vanden Heuvel): Are you already calculating storage change for the Merced Subbasin in the annual report? Did you come up with a gross volume of water that's in storage? A: Yes. It's an output from the groundwater model. The model outputs a total volume of storage in addition to the change through time.
  - ix. Comment (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Concerned that there are a lot of assumptions used in calculating storage that deserve some attention as they're important. Also recognizes benefits of using groundwater levels as a proxy for this SMC.
    - 1. Response: Refinement of physical characteristics used in the model are always being updated where possible.
- c. Groundwater Quality
- i. Comment (Joe Sansoni): Concur with everything presented. Think "already planned" and "potential new considerations" are obvious next steps to see if any additional actions are needed. Don't want to compete with other agency responsibilities. May need to go back to DWR on the validity of the recommendation to look closer at existing monitoring that's occurring.
  - ii. Comment (Simon Vander Woude): Already do a lot of water quality monitoring through CAFO permits and Water Quality Coalition, etc. Would be a waste of time to redo it. Also additional management activities for water quality are being considered through programs like CVSALTS. In theory, recharge may help manage water quality concerns but it could contribute to issues in certain cases.
  - iii. Comment (David Belt): David sits on several boards that develop/work with the Nitrate Control Plan. ILRP already pays for some of the costs. There is no way to solve nitrate program without help from SGMA Recharge. Thinks collaboration is needed, e.g. sharing data, on solving the problems.
  - iv. Comment (Lisa Kayser-Grant): Is it true that if you have contaminated groundwater, you've reduced your supply. Wouldn't that feed into goals and measurements elsewhere in the GSP? It's impacted as a beneficial use.
    - 1. Response: That's correct, though it does depend on the contaminant type and location. For the GSAs and stakeholders, what tools do we have in our toolbox to change that concentration? Recharge projects can exacerbate or help, but septic tank approvals and other forces driving water quality concerns may be beyond the GSA jurisdiction. Coordination with other groups who do have that control will be important.
- d. Filling Data Gaps in the Groundwater Level Monitoring Network
- i. Comment (Maxwell Norton): Performing a linear regression for retroactively estimating groundwater levels seems like a risky proposition given the complexity of the groundwater system.
    - 1. Response: It will likely be more complex than just linear, more like a multi-variate regression. The process will also involve testing and calibration against existing wells with a longer data history.

## 8. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Charles Gardiner asked the SAC members to pay attention to when the public workshop is scheduled and asked for input on how to get folks to turn up to the workshops.



- i. Q (Simon Vander Woude): What will be the topic of the workshop? A: Partially a review of the GSP and Annual Report, but more focused on the proposed edits/updates to the GSP and the potential impacts on the community.
  - ii. Comment (Breanna Vandenburg): Merced Farm Bureau is happy to help coordinate hosting a workshop at their office. Less focus on SGMA/GSP overview is needed because it's been covered a lot previously.
  - iii. Jean: Resource Conservation District and UC Extension can be used as networks to publicize about the workshop.
- b. Meeting was adjourned at 3:38pm.

**Next Regular Meeting**

**Proposed for March 20, 2024 at 10am**

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

Information also available online at [mercedsgma.org](https://mercedsgma.org)