

# MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: March 20, 2024, 1:30 to 3:30 PM

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

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## Coordination Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hicham ElTal	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scott McBride	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Justin Vinson	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Chavez	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ken Elwin (alternate)	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	George Park (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kel Mitchel	Turner Island Water District GSA #1

## Meeting Notes

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm.

### 2. Roll Call

- a. Coordination Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above. A quorum was not present.

### 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Did not have quorum, so approval was tabled for a future meeting.
- b. No comments were made on the draft minutes from 1/24/24.

### 4. Public Comment

- a. None received.

### 5. Reports

- a. GSA Reports
  - i. Merced Subbasin GSA (MSGSA) – Ashlee Chan-Gonzalez provided several updates:
    1. MSGSA recently adopted an allocation framework that reflects the spatial variability and existing conditions of the sustainability zones. Sustainable yield (SY) plus an allowable pumping allowance (APA). Framework is available on the MSGSA website: <https://mercedsubbasingsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MSGSA-Board-Native-Groundwater->

[Allocation-Policy-Framework-closed-ses-edits-02.01.24Clean.pdf](#).

Workshops are planned to get input on the SY and APA in the near future.

2. Initial meetings planned soon to discuss the request for a new GSA from within MSGSA.
  - ii. Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA (MIUGSA) - Matt Beaman provided this update:
    1. MIUGSA continues to work on the agricultural well registration program. The GSAs has registered 1,400 wells out of ~1,500 total expected. Penalty invoices have been sent to owners who didn't respond. Usage statements will be sent out soon, based on the GSA putting together groundwater use accounts for each well.
  - iii. Turner Island Water District GSA-#1 (TIWD GSA-#1): Kel Mitchel was not available to present.
- b. Groundwater Export Policy
  - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented slides that summarize what has occurred as well as an approach for next steps.
  - ii. Eric Swenson (MSGSA) suggested that it would be ideal if there was a reasonable way to implement long-term monitoring of the primary exit pathways for groundwater; this would encourage applications for permits for export in the future.
  - iii. Committee members discussed options for how to meet and discuss this topic in the future to ultimately draft an agreement between the GSAs.
  - iv. Q (Greg Young, MSGSA): Have all the members of the GSAs seen the proposed language as it was brought forward to the County? Greg characterized the concern that other GSAs might approve something and the MSGSA/MIUGSA would not have ability to intervene. A (Matt Beaman): MIUGSA's board has seen and discussed it. He would like to come up with a unified approach across all three GSAs to avoid issues down the road.
  - v. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) clarified that the intent would be to define rules for what kind of groundwater exports are allowed, without need for all three GSAs to review every single case-by-case request in the future.
  - vi. Next step is to form the ad-hoc committee to discuss this further.
  - vii. Charles Gardiner pointed out a high-level concern expressed during the Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting on 3/20/24 that the most recent Board of Supervisors activity was a surprise, and that the Committee was not included in discussions.
- c. CIMIS Station Report
  - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided a refresher of the California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) and an update on the last remaining site in Merced County. Merced site 148 is effectively decommissioned due to land use changes being made by the landowner. The equipment itself is functional, but the data it collects is not usable with the land use changes.
  - ii. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA) suggested some kind of incentive, e.g. guaranteed allocation, for a landowner to be able to irrigate a pasture for the CIMIS station relocation.
  - iii. Eric Swenson (MSGSA) requested a copy of the CIMIS station siting requirements to forward onto MSGSA Board Member Pedretti who indicated he might have a potential site. Available here:  
[https://cimis.water.ca.gov/Content/pdf/CIMIS\\_Station\\_Siting.pdf](https://cimis.water.ca.gov/Content/pdf/CIMIS_Station_Siting.pdf)
- d. Filling Data Gaps/Monitoring Wells

- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided an update on efforts to fill data gaps in the groundwater level monitoring network, including pointing out wells that have been removed, new wells that have been installed, and locations where there are plans to drill new wells or instrument existing wells.
  - ii. There have been challenges in the past installing wells on private property, so recent focus for new wells has been on County-owned property.
  - iii. MIUGSA will be fronting the cost of the wells before they're reimbursed by the grant from the State. MIUGSA would like to discuss the option of a cost share for the upfront cost before reimbursement happens. Matt proposed having staff make a projection of the costs over the next year and then have each GSA return to their Boards to discuss the GSA's upcoming budget.
- e. Well Consistency Determination for Wells at Multiple GSAs
  - i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided a brief update on the process for making a well consistency determination. MIUGSA's rules generally don't allow new pumping, but do allow for replacement wells. A particular situation has arisen with a well located within MIUGSA that will serve outside of MIUGSA and the GSA is considering how to address.
  - ii. Comment (Greg Young): MSGSA's current policy (which would probably limit the approval of the current request) applies only for a short time longer before approval of the new proposed allocation soon. Would like to coordinate on this particular case that has come up.
  - iii. Jim Blanke (W&C) recommended that folks involved in the permit approval process to sit down in the same location to discuss in more detail.
    - 1. Hicham ElTal (MIGUSA) confirmed the intent to set rules and policies to streamline this in the future, understanding that right now we're in an interim stage.
  - iv. Q (Mike Gallo, MSGSA): Are there rules for existing wells that serve parcels in a different GSA (in the same subbasin)? A: There are rules to address this that can be discussed more in detail offline. There are still some remaining challenges to work through though.
  - v. Comment (Mike Gallo): in the large scheme, these situations are relatively few, but they do exist and need to be addressed.
- f. Potential Creation of New GSA
  - i. Eric Swenson (MSGSA) shared that proposed next steps that were shared at last week's MSGSA Board Meeting; he confirmed that Merquin County Water District and Stevinson Water District want to start taking the next steps (e.g. start regular meetings) as soon as April.
  - ii. Comment (Greg Young): MSGSA staff were directed by their Board at last week's meeting to start reaching out to the other GSAs on this topic. This outreach should occur very soon.

## **6. Water Year 2023 Annual Report Overview**

- a. Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) provided a presentation on the water year 2023 annual report.

## **7. Updates on Basin Conditions and Sustainable Management Criteria for GSP Update**

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided updates on several items, including:
  - i. Airborne electromagnetic (AEM) surveying being incorporated into the GSP
  - ii. An analysis performed to assess trends between various groundwater quality constituents and groundwater levels.

- iii. Recap of previously discussed approach for sustainable management criteria for subsidence and change in storage.
- b. Comment (Eric Swenson, MSGSA): Recent DWR technical report suggested to GSAs that drilling in subsidence areas should be limited, plus limiting screened intervals.
- c. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Do you think we'll have another dialogue with DWR to confirm our approach? A: It's possible, W&C can check with DWR on potential of having a check in on approach to response to corrective actions.

## **8. Next steps**

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) provided a preview of some components of the groundwater model scenario updates that are upcoming.
- b. Hicham ElTal (MIUGSA): Wants to see realistic projects and management actions added to the model, not an over-projection.
- c. Eric Swenson (MSGSA) asked about timing for model results. A: The next meeting in May will include an updated historical condition scenario output and current conditions scenario output. The projected condition, sustainable yield, and project/management actions scenarios may not be quite ready at that point.

## **9. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 3:11 pm.

### **Next Regular Meeting**

#### **Proposed for May 22, 2024 at 1:30 pm**

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

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