

MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: July 17, 2024, 10 AM to 12 PM

LOCATION: Hybrid meeting with physical location at Merced County Farm Bureau conference room, 646 State Hwy 59, Merced, CA 95341 and online via Zoom

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Justin Vinson	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Chavez	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ken Elwin (alternate)	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dave Nervino	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eric Swenson (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mike Gallo	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nic Marchini	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	George Park (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kel Mitchel	Turner Island Water District GSA #1

Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

	Representative	Community Aspect Representation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alvaro Arias	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arlan Thomas	MIDAC member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bill Eisenstein	River Partners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Stevinson Representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breanne Vandenberg	MCFB
<input type="checkbox"/>	Caitie Diemel	ESJWQC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Arnold	Arnold Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Melendrez	City of Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Danielle Serrano	Serrano Farms - Le Grand
<input type="checkbox"/>	David Belt	Foster Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eddie Rojas	E&J Gallo Winery
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emma Reyes	Martin Reyes Farm/Land Leveling
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jean Okuye	E Merced RCD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Sansoni	Sansoni Farms/MCFB
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Scoto	Scoto Brothers/McSwain School Dist.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Baker	Clayton Water District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Kayser-Grant	Sierra Club
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maxwell Norton	Unincorporated area

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush MWC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Susan Walsh	City of Merced
<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"/>	Zachary Hamman	Cal Am Water
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phillip Woods (alternate)	UC Merced
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	Live Oak Farms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Nervino (alternate)	Stevinson/Merquin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scott Menefee (alternate)	Clayton Water District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill Spriggs (alternate)	Resident City of Merced
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lou Myers (alternate)	Benjamin Land LP

Meeting Notes

1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

2. Roll Call

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

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 5/22/24.

4. Public Comment

- a. None received.

5. Reports

- a. GSA Reports
 - i. Merced Subbasin GSA (MSGSA) – Ashlee Chan-Gonzalez provided several updates:
 1. Draft allocation rule is posted for on MSGSA's website for public review (<https://mercedsubbasingsa.org/groundwater-allocation/>).
 2. PIN numbers were sent out for access to the groundwater accounting platform and
 - a. Q (T. Dinwoodie): Was the response rate from parcel owners close to your goal? A: Hoping for about 20% of acreage to register by the time of the first workshop. Anticipating holding a second workshop.
 3. Land repurposing program year 3 is open until July 31. Three applications have been received so far.
 4. Valley Eco is developing refined scopes and timeline with all involved subcontractors and MSGSA Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) partners to kick off the program.

- ii. Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA (MIUGSA) - Matt Beaman provided these updates:
 - 1. Well registration is ongoing, with only 12 remaining wells needing to register.
 - a. Q: Is County prepared for increased cost on tax bill? A: There's a process that MIUGSA has to work with the County. There's been a lot of communication with County staff to prepare.
 - 2. Groundwater accounting functionality development continues, but also preparing first groundwater usage statements.
 - 3. An Urban Allocation Plan was adopted last month; 1.4 AF/ac over currently developed land through 2031, then reduces to 1.1 AF/ac by 2033.
 - 4. Continue to manage several grant funded projects.
 - 5. Submitted an application to USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). If awarded, would provide funding for "packages" of sensors: flow meters, soil moisture sensors, weather station/ET data. Will find out around October about award.
 - iii. Turner Island Water District GSA-#1 (TIWD GSA-#1): Kel Mitchel provided several updates:
 - 1. The GSA has been focusing on identifying loss between diversion and delivery points.
 - 2. Working on implementation of grants internally.
 - 3. Sit in Delta-Mendota basin partially, so have been busy with adoption of new GSP in that Subbasin.
- b. CIMIS Station Report
- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) confirmed that finding a new CIMIS station is still a high priority. MID has been coordinating with a potential landowner.
- c. Groundwater Export
- i. Hicham Eltal (MIUGSA) shared that there is a temporary restraining order (TRO) put in place in Kings Subbasin that puts a hold on SGMA implementation. Would be a problem if County walks away from the groundwater export policy. It behooves this group to set up an ad-hoc of the Coordination Committee to come up with some ideas, with a goal of updating the rules on groundwater exports.
 - ii. More info on the Kings Subbasin – DWR did not approve the GSP and it went to the SWRCB. Rules were put in that local stakeholders did not think were affordable. A judge has now put a hold on SGMA.
 - 1. *Clarifying correction to minutes after meeting – DWR has approved all GSPs within the Kings Basin.*
 - iii. Comment (Kel Mitchell, TIWD GSA-#1): TRO was specifically against the probationary status of the GSP. The GSAs are still obligated to implement the GSP in the meantime. The TRO is against the SWRCB's determination.
 - 1. Hicham: I understand, but expect that additional TROs could be put on the entirety of SGMA implementation in the subbasin.
 - iv. Q (T. Hutton): is Merced County going to walk away from groundwater export? A: Hicham thinks this may be the case.
 - v. Comment (Kel Mitchel, TIWD GSA-#1): We could do this later in the year if it's in response to the TRO.
 - vi. Q (S. Walsh): When you say the county, are you specifically referring to the CEO's office? A: No, the County as a whole.
- d. Current Groundwater Conditions
- i. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) provided an update on groundwater conditions and new monitoring wells.

- ii. Q (S. Vander Woude): how much data do you need to inform policy? A (Jim Blanke, W&C): Depends on how it's being used. Longer for sustainable management criteria. Immediately useful for other trending and analyses.

6. Sustainable Management Criteria for New Representative Groundwater Level Monitoring Network Wells

- a. Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) provided a description of the proposed approach for setting sustainable management criteria at new representative groundwater level monitoring wells.
- b. Comment (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Will be interesting to look at DWR's assessment of this methodology, they may have different ways of looking at values and being consistent across the state. Hicham likes that the method uses historical data.
- c. Comment (Kel Mitchell, TIWD-GSA#1): Methodology makes sense, but hesitancy to establish MTs/MOs where aquifer zone hasn't been pumped, e.g. the Above CC in TIWD's region where there are plans to pump more shallow than deep.

7. Modeling Results for Baseline Projected Conditions + Projects/Management Actions Scenarios

- a. Andres Diaz (Woodard & Curran) walked the group through a presentation on multiple model scenario updates and conclusions about the impact of projects & management actions (PMAs) on the long-term Subbasin sustainability. He also presented on how the groundwater levels in neighboring subbasins will have a major impact on how successful implementation of activities in the Merced Subbasin will be long-term.
- b. Q (Kel Michell, TIWD-GSA#1): On annualized acre-feet per year (AFY), are you calculating by year types or is it statistical weighting? A: It is weighted by the 50-year hydrology of a different mix of water year types.
- c. Comment (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): 90/20 rule in the area is subject to the Delta being in excess. It is typically a much lower number.
- d. Q (George Park, MSGSA): If there are inaccuracies in the projects, should we share? Lone Tree project has additional land repurposing and the numbers don't look accurate. A: Yes! Will follow up separately.
- e. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Can you model if the neighboring subbasins are sustainable? A: Our PMAs scenario essentially makes this assumption. Hard to define exactly what sustainability is – we assumed they managed above their minimum thresholds.
- f. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Does Chowchilla agree with the subsurface flow directions? A (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): There's ongoing discussion about flows between above CC, but generally agreed on below.
- g. Q (T. Dinwoodie): Is there conversation between the Subbasins? A (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Spent 2 years working with Madera on putting together an agreement to work together. While it's been signed, Hicham doesn't feel it has significant teeth.
- h. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): After running the model with PMAs, there's no net change in storage. With PMAs, are there still problem areas within the Subbasin?

Hot spots? A: There is the option to analyze the model results that way. It's been most focused on the subbasin as a whole to date though.

- i. Comment (A. Thomas): The success of the program depends on how much land can be taken out of production.
- j. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Can you do groundwater contours for different years based on the model data? A: Yes, if change in groundwater levels is an appropriate metric we could try that.
- k. Comment (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Described that he needs more information on the sustainability zones because it's expected each zone will be managed somewhat different.
- l. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Does MSGSA have a different model? A (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): No.
- m. Comment (Matt Beaman, MIUGSA): We were somewhat conservative in providing yields from projects, based on concern that other GSPs were overly ambitious in what they reported.
- n. Q (B.Eisenstein): Water budget has a row for stream seepage, is there a decrease from baseline? A: Yes, because of a rise in groundwater levels, there is a reduction in stream seepage.
- o. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): What flows are you using in the model for streams? A (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): Baseline model assumptions use historical streamflow.
 - i. Andres confirmed that new FERC flows were not used. Used MercedSIM flows for the previous GSP.
 - ii. Hicham confirmed good to use existing values as-is, but possible future item to incorporate.
- p. Comment (Jim Blanke, W&C): Goal of today to present on assumptions and get input from folks on any assumptions that need to change.
- q. Q (Charles Gardiner, Catalyst): Is it too late to add projects? A: Yes for modeling, but not too late to be helpful to GSP overall.
- r. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Is the wildlife corridor modeled with any impact? Might help subsidence or groundwater levels.
 - i. A: No, made the choice not to model specifically at this time, but this can be added as a narrative in the GSP.
 - ii. Q (B.Eisenstein): Any plans to integrate MLRP thinking into the model? E.g. if a certain amount of land repurposing is unavoidable, then it might have a good double benefit of becoming recharge, or similar. A: Not yet, but this would be a good component to add as a goal in the Plan.
- s. Climate change scenario
 - i. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA) Is this a requirement? A: Yes.
 - ii. Q (Nic Marchini, MSGSA): Where do you get information on what climate change will do? A: DWR developed values from global circulation models and downscaled it to California. They have their own hydrologic model grid and pulled out the precipitation and evapotranspiration values that were fed into MercedWRM.

8. Next steps

- a. Jim Blanke (Woodard & Curran) discussed next steps.

- b. Committed to sharing the public workshop date once it's scheduled.
- c. Q (Hicham ElTal, MIUGSA): What is the status of the depletions? A: The state guidance has not come out yet. The project team is putting together an assessment methodology for the revised GSP.

9. Adjourn

- a. Meeting adjourned at 11:52 am.

Next Regular Meeting Proposed for October 16, 2024 at 10am

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

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org