

MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordination & Stakeholder Advisory Committees Joint Meeting

DATE/TIME: March 9, 2026, 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
☒	Bryan Kelly	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
☐	Scott McBride	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
☒	Justin Vinson	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
☐	Frank Verduzco	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
☐	Ken Elwin (alternate)	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
☐	Bob Kelley	Merced Subbasin GSA
☐	Gino Pedretti (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
☒	Mike Gallo	Merced Subbasin GSA
☒	Nic Marchini	Merced Subbasin GSA
☐	George Park (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
☒	Chase Hurley	Turner Island Water District GSA #1
☐	Justin Darnell (alternate)	Turner Island Water District GSA #1

Stakeholder Committee Members in Attendance:

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

☐	Nav Athwal	TriNut Farms
☐	Simon Vander Woude	Sandy Mush MWC
☐	Susan Walsh	City of Merced
☒	Thomas Dinwoodie	Master Gardener/McSwain
☐	Trevor Hutton	Valley Land Alliance
☐	Wes Myers	Merced Grassland Coalition
☐	Zachary Hamman	Cal Am Water
☐	Phillip Woods (alternate)	UC Merced
☐	Ben Migliazzo (alternate)	Live Oak Farms
☐	Blake Nervino (alternate)	Stevinson/Merquin
☐	Bill Spriggs (alternate)	Resident City of Merced
☐	Lou Myers (alternate)	Benjamin Land LP

Meeting Notes

1. Call to Order and Welcome

- a. Charles Gardiner (Catalyst) called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

2. Roll Call

- a. Coordination Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above.
- b. Stakeholder Advisory Committee members in attendance are shown in the table above.

3. Approval of Coordination Committee Meeting Minutes

- a. Quorum not available to approve minutes; tabled for future meeting.
- b. No comments received on presented minutes.

4. Public Comment

- a. None received.

5. Reports

- a. GSA Reports
 - i. Merced Subbasin GSA (MSGSA) – Lacey McBride provided several updates:
 1. The GSA's groundwater allocation went into effect 1/1/2026, as approved in October 2024. There are still opportunities to register wells for non-field uses, like dairies, other animal uses, etc. where OpenET cannot track consumption off of that land use.
 2. The MSGSA Board is considering a new policy to recognize riparian areas in the groundwater accounting platform (e.g., where it shows consumption not associated with applied groundwater). The Technical Advisory Committee is also anticipated to make recommendations related to cover crops.
 3. The MSGSA Board is considering a Phase II fee since the four-year Phase I fee is sunsetting. The engineering report is expected to be discussed at the 3/12 Board meeting.
 4. Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) – the GSA will consider approving 6 development projects that will get funding for design,

permitting, and planning projects (not construction dollars). RFP for this closed in January.

- a. Q: Is that anywhere near the target? A: The MLRP doesn't have a target; \$8.9M is available from Department of Conservation. These 6 projects represent \$750K. \$5M has previously been awarded for other construction projects.
5. All but one of the construction projects are under contract and moving forward with implementation. One is still in contracting phase.
- ii. Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA (MIUGSA) - Matt Beaman provided these updates:
 1. MIUGSA Board adopted a new allocation; initial allocation ended 12/31/2025. It's a 3-year allocation at 3.3 AF/YR average over span of three years. It also adopted a policy for unused carryover from the first allocation period.
 2. The GSA continued to meet with growers in responses to fall 2025 grower accounting statements to discuss adjustments.
 3. More updates will be presented later about ongoing updates to the monitoring network as well as other grant-funded implementation projects.
 4. The GSA is coordinating on a potential new CIMIS site, in progress with landowner and the state.
- iii. Turner Island Water District GSA-#1 (TIWD GSA-#1): Chase Hurley provided several updates:
 1. TIWD has been working through two grant-funded projects (also presented in more detail later). The grant covered the drilling and other components, but pump equipment is being provided by the GSA.
 - a. Modernization project – the contractor started last week.
 2. 1.5 years ago, River Partners bought some land on the northwest end of the GSA. River Partners recently presented a development plan for the next two years where they anticipate 0 AFY of demand Apr-Sep of each year through introduction of native habitat. GSA is coordinating with the agency.
 3. The GSA is working on voluntary agreements for 10-11 landowners in the GSA because previous agreement expired after 7 years; the GSA is working on extending this in lieu of a Prop 218 fee study.

6. Water Year 2025 Annual Report Update

- a. Chris Hewes (Woodard & Curran) presented on the Water Year 2025 Annual Report current conditions.
 - i. Q: What does DWR think of the status of the cumulative change in storage? A: By letter of the regulation, change in storage is tied to performance of the groundwater level monitoring network. In general, the ongoing long-term storage reduction needs to be halted through implementation of projects and management actions.
- b. Chase Hurley presented maps and a photo describing an ongoing project with TIWD GSA-#1.
- c. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) presented an update on new monitoring wells installed as part of the Filling Data Gaps project.
 - i. Q: How is data transmission handled? A: New wells will have satellite telemetry.
- d. Brad Samuelson (Water & Land Solutions) presented updates on several projects:

- i. Amsterdam Water District – multi-benefit land repurposing, in the middle of choosing the site for a 14-acre recharge basin, in response to grant-funded studies completed previously.
- ii. Le Grand-Athlone Water District Intertie Canal – Phase I is completed; surface water delivered to 500 acres that had never seen surface water below (in WY 2025). Phase II is currently securing additional funding. Phase 3 will involve a new canal further south.
- iii. La Paloma Mutual Water Company – multi-purpose land repurposing project that provides habitat restoration, reduces flood risk, and promotes groundwater recharge. Phase 1 is complete. Phase 2 is seeking \$2.5M to complete implementation.
- iv. Beer Creek Ranch project - will re-establish 1,171 acres of irrigated farm ground to floodplains. Seeking \$7.5M in implementation funding. Due to the Stanford tTEM analysis, found a historic Bear Creek channel sub-surface which will be ideal for recharge, when previously though the whole property wouldn't support effective recharge.
- v. Sandy Mush Mutual Water Company – Vander Dussen Subsidence Priority Area FloodMAR Project is completed.
- vi. Sandy Mush Mutual Water Company – Vander Woude Storage Reservoir. Completed project was able to save 700+ AF of groundwater pumping in WY 2025.

7. MercedMAR Tool Presentation

- a. Dominick Amador (Woodard & Curran) and Daniel Siegel (Earth Genome) presented the Merced Managed Aquifer Recharge (MercedMAR) modeling tool recently developed by the GSAs to implement FloodMAR in the Merced Subbasin, including the following components:
 - i. Updates to the Merced Water Resources Model (MercedWRM) for several new and improved datasets.
 - ii. Groundwater Recharge Assessment Tool (GRAT) used to identify ideal areas for recharge, when to recharge, and what volume.
 - iii. Opti Enhanced tool that combines the GRAT outputs, run the outputs in MercedWRM, and post-process the results for visualization and decision-making purposes.
- b. Q: Is Stanford regularly involved in the County to look for spots to maximize recharge? A: Not exactly. There are geophysical contractors in general who will do this. For Brad's example project where this was mentioned, River Partners hired Stanford to do this. tTEM is more intensive and harder to implement, though it has higher resolution than Aerial Electromagnetic (AEM) survey.
- c. Q: What Districts or land managers are using this tool now? A: All three GSAs have access, but it's brand new.
- d. Q: Does this give the State the opportunity to monitor, or is it proprietary? A: The State does not have access; it's password-protected for each GSA.
- e. Q: Is this tool implemented around the state? A: DWR's watershed studies which served as the starting point for this study are a lower-resolution (less fine scale) of what MercedMAR accomplishes. MercedMAR is the first of its kind to develop and integrate local efforts.
- f. Q: Have we considered the various recharge projects underway currently? A: No, but GRAT will allow modeling of this if desired.

8. Domestic Well Mitigation Program Development Update

- a. Matt Beaman (MIUGSA) shared that all three GSAs have adopted the domestic well mitigation program ahead of the 4/1/2026 deadline. GSAs are currently working on the mechanics/logistics of the program implementation.
- b. Q: Last meeting, some parameters were still in flux. What's the latest? A: Evaluation criteria related to dates were revised. Everything presented from past meetings, as well as committee feedback, was incorporated into the adopted program.
- c. Q: If someone's well goes dry in summer 2026, are they eligible and can they participate? A: Logistics/mechanics take time. If it meets the eligibility criteria, yes they could apply and get funding once the application is open.

9. Next steps

- a. Jim Blanke (W&C) described some next steps and upcoming documents being developed statewide that the GSAs are planning to review once available.
- b. Q: What's the latest on subsidence BMP? A: DWR finalized the subsidence BMP late 2025. There weren't significant changes between draft and final. It maintains guidance on critical head for subsidence which is challenging.
- c. Suggestion – don't meet on a Monday morning in the future. Weds afternoon better.

10. Adjourn

- a. Meeting adjourned at 11:46 AM.

Next Regular Meeting

TBD summer 2026

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

Information also available online at mercedsgma.org