

**MID-KAWEAH GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

MINUTES

March 5, 2024 – 3:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Correia, Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, Aaron Oliver, Jordan Leal, Richard Garcia, Jessi Snyder, Robert Saenz

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joe Machado, Greg Collins

GSA MEMBER STAFF PRESENT: Aaron Fukuda, James Fisher, Diana Zegarra

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Georgina King, Craig Hornung, Stacie Ann Silva, Aaron Henderson, Phil Mirwald, Trisha Whitfield, Jayce Leal

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Correia at 3:05 p.m.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Correia called for public comments. None were forthcoming.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. Chair Correia called for the approval for the February 20, 2024 meeting minutes. Committee Member Saenz motioned to approve the minutes and the motion was seconded by Committee Member Leal. The minutes were approved.

4. **EMERGENCY ORDINANCE POLICY UPDATE**

Mr. Fisher provided three proposed updates to the Emergency Ordinance.

- **Precipitation calculation** - Mr. Fisher presented the amount of precipitation credited to a grower's account. Currently, 80% of precipitation is credited to a grower's account, which is a rounded value and based on the water accounting framework. Analysis by 4Creeks Engineering on behalf of the Greater Kaweah GSA proposed the exact (non-rounded) number from the water accounting framework be adopted subbasin-wide, indicating the MKGSA should have approximately 71% of precipitation credited to the account. Fisher asked the committee whether the Board should consider using the more precise number. Committee Member Vanden Heuvel stated this percentage is more precise than what is currently known and recommended keep the rounded number for simplicity and consistency. Vanden Heuvel also stated we will be changing the water accounting framework once the Kaweah Subbasin model is up and running, so we can use a more precise number with the best available data very soon. The committee agreed, no updates to the calculation will be recommended to the Board.'
- **Fallow Field Clarification** – Historically unirrigated fields could be manually modified by MKGSA staff to ensure the only ET read off the field was met with precipitation. However, the precipitation policy migrated to a 25-year rolling average, rather than the observed value. Fisher recommended fallow fields be treated the same even though precipitation is treated differently now. If there is a wet year and the ET from precipitation

is greater than the 25-year rolling average, the fallow field policy will cancel out net usage. If it is a dry year and the ET from precipitation is lower than the 25-year rolling average, the fallow field application would have no effect, as a grower who does not fill out the application would not be able to rollover unused precipitation credits anyway. The committee agreed.

- GSA to GSA transfers – Fisher noted there are several ranches along the GSA borders that are divided between the MKGSA and GKGSA. In many cases, there are excess water credits on one half of the ranch, and a deficit of credits on the other half. Currently there is no mechanism for an operation to even out those discrepancies. While no firm policies or ideas or policies have been drafted, Fisher asked for committee feedback on whether a policy allowing GSA-to-GSA transfers to be drafted and considered. The Committee agreed it would be a good idea to prepare a draft policy for future consideration.

5. MKGSA GSP

a. **Sustainable Management Criteria**

Georgina King provided the report on the updated (version 3) of the water levels and associated mitigation costs. With some nuance on the EKGSA, a subbasin-wide 10x minimum threshold approach was adopted, with 5x serving as the measurable objective.

Mr. Fukuda presented an update on the mitigation costs and a proposed reservation policy. After providing an overview of the cost structure of the MKGSA. Fees collected from the emergency ordinance are expensed into 3 categories: administration, surface water, and mitigation. Administration and mitigation are currently covered with \$10/AF. Surface water funded by groundwater dependent tiers and penalty tiers, less \$10/AF for administration. These funds can be used either for purchasing surface water, or possibly buying down water credits from growers to not pump.

Mr. Fukuda recommended a reserve policy should be approximately \$1.6 million for mitigation specifically. Mitigation funds and/or tiered costs can be adjusted annually to meet the targeted reservation goal. The primary benefit of this method is twofold. First, the District need not forecast expenses (risking over-collection), rather, set the rates to recover the costs expensed from the previous year to build back to the targeted reservation fund. Second, the targeted reserves have already been nearly billed out from the first three years of the emergency ordinance while the mitigation plan was not in place yet.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS, UPDATES, OR OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Chair Correia motioned for any updates or reports. None were forthcoming.

7. ADJOURN

Chair Correia adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2024.

Attest: _____
GSA Board Secretary

Advisory Committee Chair