

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

MINUTES

March 17, 2022 – 3:00 p.m.

This Committee Meeting was held remotely with no physical location due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Governors Executive Order N-29-20.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Blake Wilbur, Geoff Vanden Heuvel, Richard Garcia, Jessi Snyder, Mike Lane, Soapy Mulholland, Lee Johnson, Eric Correia, Max Storms

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

GSA MEMBER STAFF PRESENT: Aaron Fukuda (Interim General Manager), James Fisher, Trisha Whitfield

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Craig Moyle, Eric Osterling, Peter Petrelis, Chris Hunter, Paul Grenseman, David Cardoza, Derrik Williams, Tim Mendonca, Tim Leo, Alma, Nick Martin

1. **CALL TO REGULAR ORDER**

The meeting was opened by Chairman Wilbur at 3:00 p.m.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairman Wilbur called for comments from any members of the public present at the meeting. None were forthcoming.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of February 2022 minutes will be deferred to a later meeting.

4. **STATUS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

a. **Re-Appointment of Members**

Max Storms will replace Tom Brassfield as the of California Water Service (CalWater) representative. Storms is a water resources engineer at CalWater. The MKGSA Board approved of the 3 Committee members renewing their terms on the MKGSA committee, and Max Storm's application. Because of this renewal, Soapy Mulholland's nomination and election as Vice Chair of the MKGSA Advisory Committee will take effect.

5. **KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACTIVITIES**

a. **Kaweah Subbasin Manager's Report**

No update.

b. **Prop 68 Planning Grant**

Fukuda provided the update. The grant managers, EKGSA, edited the scope of work with additional Prop 68 Planning funds to help critical data gaps. James Fisher submitted an amendment to the Prop 68 Planning Grant to fund additional monitoring equipment, so all dedicated monitoring well locations are now instrumented.

c. Prop 68 Implementation Grant

Okieville recharge site is in Escrow, the land purchasing agreement was signed in February. MKGSA and TID staff met this week with Provost and Pritchard on the design for the structures and long-crested weir this week. CEQA documentation was completed in early March.

d. RCIS Program

Public review of the RCIS is complete.

e. Water Marketing Strategy

Fukuda provided the update. The Water Marketing Strategy Committee (WMSC) met in-person on March 23rd at Tulare Irrigation District. The WMSC reviewed and approved of the guiding principles, and the principles will be provided via PowerPoint to the MKGSA Committee following this committee meeting. The WMSC also completed the existing markets chapter of the technical memo and is beginning the designing elements of the marketing strategy and a section on the outcomes of existing reverse auctions report. Early feedback from research on reverse auctions (aka “Dutch Auctions”) is it is difficult to obtain feedback from the lack of documentation.

f. Kaweah Water Foundation (CV SALTS)

No update.

g. DWR SGMA Grant 2022

Fukuda provided the update. All 3 GSAs met with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) this week. DWR received the Kaweah Subbasin’s \$15M spending plan and verbalized support, and \$7.6M in funding may be provided in this uncompetitive grant. The Kaweah Subbasin is not in contract with DWR yet, but it is anticipated the funds may be available late in 2022. The largest of this grant ear-marked for the MKGSA project was proposed for the City of Visalia’s Cameron Creek Linear Recharge Basin. This is almost identical to the effort just completed in Packwood Creek.

Unlike most grants, funding for the DWR SGMA Grant did not have many strings attached, and the criteria set that water projects could meet it were broad allowing GSAs the ability to prioritize project funding according to their needs. Nearly \$90M in projects the GSAs proposed could have fit these criteria, but the Kaweah Subbasin GSA managers narrowed the spending plan down to \$15M for submittal.

h. Department of Conservation Multi-benefit Block Grant

The Kaweah Subbasin is are applying for the full \$10M grant funding block, this project will be spearheaded by the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) and Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District (KDWCD). Provost & Pritchard was hired to prepare the grant application. The draft grant application is complete, and the final draft will be ready for submittal before the April 1st deadline. The \$10M spending plan is proposed as follows:

- \$3M for project development
- \$5.3M for project implementation
- \$0.6M for partnership and outreach
- \$0.5M for monitoring
- \$0.5M to develop a Kaweah Subbasin Multi-benefit Agricultural Repurposing Plan.

6. MKGSA GSP

a. GSP Review – Update

1. DWR Determination and Evaluation

Fukuda provided the update. DWR hosted a wkshop on January 27, 2022 for subbasins receiving letters. The Kaweah Subbasin has 180 days to resolve the identified corrective actions (July 27, 2022). The 3 deficiencies identified were:

- a. Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) for lower groundwater levels.
 - i. Need to define metrics for undesirable results (UR) and minimum thresholds (MT) by evaluating impacts on beneficial users
 - ii. Define impacts from lower groundwater levels on beneficial users
 - iii. Define how do MTs impact other sustainability indicators
- b. SMCs for land subsidence
 - i. Mid-Kaweah and Greater Kaweah GSAs did not define metrics for UR & MT based on subsidence that would interfere with uses.
 - ii. SMCs for the EKGSA & GKGSA are not complimentary, particularly around the Friant Kern Canal (GKGSA permits much more subsidence)
- c. Interconnected surface waters.
 - i. The plan does not sufficiently and consistently characterize interconnected surface waters, nor define the SMC for depletion.
 - ii. The GSP identifies potential interconnected surface water areas but does not develop criteria to specifically address those areas.

Changes in the GSP must address all connected comments in the GSPs. After the submittal of the Kaweah Subbasin's (KSB) responses DWR's determination letter, due July 27, 2022, there will be another public comment period set to end in early Fall 2022. The KSB only has one shot at addressing these deficiencies sufficiently. If DWR still deems the GSP deficient with the appended corrections following the determination letter, the KSB's GSPs will be deemed "inadequate" and proceed to a SWRCB/DWR probationary hearing.

DWR only evaluated major items required for approval. There are still many other corrective actions that need to be addressed for the 2025 GSP update.

2. Kaweah Subbasin GSP Technical Work - Update

All 3 deficiencies must be corrected in coordination with the other two GSA's. Therefore, all 3 GSA's, Montgomery & Associates (M&A), and Provost and Pritchard (P&P) are meeting weekly to develop the policy and technical work as a subbasin to complete this task on time.

Derrick Williams emphasized DWR's main issue is the process how SMCs were developed, not that our SMC's were unsustainable necessarily. DWR wants us to identify and quantify beneficial uses and users, and define undesirable results based on how those uses and users. Williams reminded the MKGSA Committee that it is M&A's job to provide the technical tools and data to make the best decisions, but ultimately the final decisions on the most fitting undesirable results to mitigate for and minimum thresholds to avoid are decisions that must be made by the MKGSA Board and Advisory Committees.

Currently, the undesirable results for depleted groundwater levels that the KSB is trying to avoid is domestic wells drying up. Here are the decisions being discussed that will likely be agenda items soon.

- Exclude wells to an older date (older than 30 years, older than 50 years)
- What percentile of wells to protect (90, 85, 80, etc.)
- What feature of the well to protect (middle of screen, top of screen, etc.)
- Should originally proposed hydrogeologic zones be revised (break it down by predominant user type?)

Williams said we will need to decide what level we decide is significant and unreasonable, and how much we will mitigate to. In other words, if we set our level of protected wells high, then we can go way below our minimum thresholds but it will be more expensive to mitigate. Conversely, we can elect to not mitigate, but this would make ideals more difficult to achieve in our efforts.

Vanden Heuvel and Snyder both remarked that domestic well age should be considered to 30 years, not 20 years. Vanden Heuvel also remarked that the density of domestic wells varies by area. Vanden Heuvel also remarked the domestic well density has considerable spatial variability and needs to be accounted for.

b. GSP Implementation – Update

Emergency Ordinance public outreach is ongoing. The MKGSA completed 5 workshops in March: 20-30 growers attending each workshop, ranging from 60 minutes to 3 hours each.

c. MKGSA Groundwater Allocation and Pumping Cap Proposal – Emergency Ordinance Review Update

The public comment period ends on March 25, 2022. To date, only one comment letter has been received for the Emergency Ordinance. None of the comments objected to the cost or quantity of water. This year, surface water users will be charged \$10/AF. This rate is relatively high to cover many one-time costs to set up the program. Cost per AF in subsequent years are anticipated to be lower.

The MKGSA intends to send out two invoices. The first invoice pre-purchases the annual allocation of groundwater (native, tier 1, and tier 2). The second invoice is a true-up for any overages, or a zero-balance invoice showing the credits that will rollover to 2023.

The last of the 3 LandIQ workshops will be Friday, March 25th at the Agri-center Social Hall in Tulare. Dr. Joel Kimmelshue of LandIQ will be in person to present.

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

Jessi Snyder submitted a sub-committee (3-5 committee members) for well mitigation. Vanden Heuvel, one Agricultural rep, one industrial rep, and one environmental rep may also join.

8. ADJOURN

Wilbur adjourned the meeting at 4:48 p.m. The next meeting date is April 5th at 3pm.

Attest: _____
GSA Board Secretary

Advisory Committee Chair