

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

MINUTES

June 18, 2024 – 3:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe Machado, Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, Aaron Oliver, Jordan Leal, Richard Garcia, Robert Saenz, Eric Correia, Greg Collins

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jessi Snyder

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

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Georgina King, Johnny Gailey, Andrew Hart, Jimi Valov, Lisa McEwen, Manny Gomes, Rachael Glauser, Phil Mirwald

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Correia called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Correia called for public comments. None were forthcoming.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Correia called for the approval for the June 4, 2024, meeting minutes, however this agenda item was deferred to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

4. **MKGSA EMERGENCY ORDINANCE (EO)**

- a. **2025 Allocation Discussion** – Mr. Fisher provided the report. Mr. Fisher reviewed how the Emergency Ordinance implementation has progressed thus far. Fisher outlined three interesting findings on the EO. (1) Groundwater dependent acreage is much smaller than anticipated, and only 1/3 of available tiered water was purchased from groundwater dependent parcels. Only 3.3% of irrigated acreage is outside of Tulare Irrigation District and have no ditch company stock. (2) The MKGSA is recharging much more than ever before. Even though 2024 was a statistically average water year, MKGSA is anticipated to recharge 20% more than average. (3) Heavy reliance on surface water in 2023 and 2024 have increased water levels in the upper aquifers proportional to the water credits available to growers. The average grower is anticipated to have 4.21 AF/acre of groundwater credits in their account rolling over into WY2025. Based on the current water levels, the Kaweah Subbasin Technical team confirmed that these rollover credits could be safely extracted and water levels would still be at or above the measurable objective.

Fisher presented a hypothetical if the allocation remained the same at 1 AF/acre of tiered water. Based on the net water recharged (124,000 AF in 2023 and an extrapolated 45,000 AF in 2024) and if 1 AF/acre was extracted in 2023 and 2024 (1 AF/acre * 66,500 irrigated acres), there will be a remaining 36,500 AF of recharged water to roll over for a future allocation. In other words, in the event of an abrasively dry drought in 2025 where there was no recharge, the MKGSA could still allocate 0.5 AF/acre in 2026.

Committee Member Vanden Heuvel was concerned that the allocation is still treated like a bathtub - blind to whether the water is pumped in the upper (unconfined) or lower (confined) aquifers. Chair Correia agreed, and requested the MKGSA should use 2025 to increase awareness of what depths the confined aquifer begins as there are currently conflicting viewpoints among drillers, landowners, and technical staff. Fukuda agreed and is committed to distributing outreach materials educating landowners on the confined aquifer, such as a contour map showing depths to the top of the Corcoran Clay.

- b. **EO Policy Update** – Fukuda explained there were schools and non-profits with irrigated acreage with invoices. Fukuda recommended exempting properties that were either school farms or non-profit in exchange for educating their students on SGMA. Fukuda recommended that farms owned by schools but rented by growers remain in the allocation.
- c. **Kaweah Subbasin Safe Groundwater Storage Authority (KSSGSA)** – A draft concept of another groundwater entity was proposed. The KSSGSA proposes to manage a separate water bucket (“Safe Storage”) available but separate from tiered water from each of the 3 GSA’s. Water above the measurable objective could be managed and allocated more efficiently with the KSSGSA at the subbasin scale while avoiding undesirable results. There were no significant concerns from the Committee and a more detailed white paper is expected for further consideration.

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

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

6. ADJOURN

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

Attest: _____
GSA Board Secretary

Advisory Committee Chair