

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

**MINUTES**

August 22, 2023 – 3:00 pm

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Eric Correia, Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, Lee Johnson, Richard Garcia, Joe Machado, Robert Saenz, Aaron Oliver, Jordan Leal

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Greg Collins, Jessi Snyder

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

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES:** Georgina King, Andrew Hart, Craig Horning, Ray Faria, Jennifer Jackson-Faria, Gary Castillo

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Correia at 3:00 p.m.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Correia called for public comments. None were forthcoming.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. Committee Member Leal motioned to approve the Regular Meeting minutes for August 10, 2023. Committee Member Saenz seconded the motion. Motion was carried.

4. **MKGSA GSP**

a. **GSP Review – Update**

1. *Kaweah Subbasin Technical Team Approach for Determining Minimum Thresholds – Update*

Ms. King presented the report. King followed up on the guidance document from DWR labeled “Considerations for Identifying and Addressing Drinking Water Well Impacts” where it recommends 20% from the bottom of the well as a protective threshold. The Committee didn’t see the rationale behind 20%, as this can be not protective enough in shallow wells (not enough head above the pump in shallow wells) and far too conservative in deep wells (for instance, any less than 80 ft is not protective in a 400 foot well, which is too conservative). Ms King said pumps are typically placed 5 ft from the bottom of the well, and the pump is typically 3 ft in length. Therefore, a protective threshold should be calculated in feet above the top of the pump. 10 ft and 20 ft of water above the top of the well were both proposed, Correia and Vanden Heuvel in favor of 10 ft and Fukuda and Saenz in favor of 20 ft above the pump. Ms. King will follow up with the committee and evaluate the financial implications for each of those scenarios.

Committee Member Vanden Heuvel suggested the GSA look at low-interest loans (bridge loans) rather than amassing a large cash reserve for mitigation when the demand is not yet known. Vanden Heuvel also suggested that the mitigation plan does not include the assumption that the GSA is at fault when a well goes dry. The GSA must first investigate the cause (subsidence, screen clogged, pump needs to be lowered, etc) before making a determination on fault, and subsequently determining appropriate mitigation measures.

2. *MKGSA Mitigation Plan Public Comments* – The Mid-Kaweah GSA received Comment Letters from the East Kaweah GSA and Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, in addition to the comment letters received from Community Water Center and Self-Help Enterprises last month. Public comment letters are available for distribution and will be summarized in a “comment matrix” in the September Advisory Committee Meeting.

b. **2023 Allocation Policy Discussion Items**

1. *Cash Reserve Policy* – Mr. Fisher proposed how revenue will be partitioned into different GSA budget categories. The sources of revenue are largely met by “Call-for-Funds”, which are paid by Tulare Irrigation District, the City of Visalia, and the City of Tulare. However, the Emergency Ordinance provides a separate revenue stream. The MKGSA proposed to restrict all revenue streams for specific purposes. For instance, funds from the Emergency Ordinance derived from mitigation tier water or groundwater dependent growers are to be solely used for purchasing surface water (or possibly buying back water credits from growers so those credits are not pumped). The other portion of the emergency ordinance funding will pay for the administrative costs to operate the GSA and for the proposed MKGSA mitigation plan. The rest of the costs (expenses not tied to replacement water or the Emergency Ordinance) will be met by the Call-For-Funds.
2. *Carry Over Policy*– Deferred to the next meeting.
3. *Unpaid Invoice Policy* – Currently 40% of Emergency Ordinance Funds are uncollected and 31% of water accounts have not settled their balance. It is possible that growers are leveraging the high interest environment to pay groundwater fees as late as possible. Mr. Fisher proposed a policy similar to TID’s late fee policy, and is consistent with Water Code 10730.6 relating to SGMA. By motion of Committee Member Vanden Heuvel, and seconded by Chair Correia, the motion was carried.

c. **2023 Allocation Invoicing – Update**

Mr. Fisher provided the update. The MKGSA is anticipating water accounts on the Water Dashboard to be carrying over large amounts of water credits. 2022 was allocated a year of water over a short span of 5 months, resulting in carry over credits for more than 95% of accounts. In 2023, ample rain and record amounts of surface water deliveries resulted in large surface water credits. Mr. Fisher reported that the average water account may have 3.5 AF/acre rolling into the 2024 water year.

5. KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACTIVITIES

All grant updates were deferred to a future meeting in the interest of time.

- a. **Proposition 68 Implementation Grant** – Okieville construction to begin in mid-September, 2023, after bird nesting season.
- b. **SGM Round 1 Implementation Grant** – Management was transferred from the MKGSA back to the GKGSA, the original grant manager.
- c. **SGM Round 2 Implementation Grant** – MKGSA was not awarded funds for the submitted projects of Catron Basin and Well Mitigation.
- d. **Department of Conservation Multi Benefit Land Repurposing Grant** – No update
- e. **Kaweah Subbasin Water Marketing Strategy Grant** – No update

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 5:03 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 3, 2023.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
GSA Board Secretary

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Advisory Committee Chair