

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

MINUTES

February 2, 2021 – 3:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Blake Wilbur, Mike Lane, Richard Garcia, Jessi Snyder, Eric Correia, and Geoff Vanden Heuvel

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mark Boyes and Eric Furtado

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: None

GSA MEMBER STAFF PRESENT: Aaron Fukuda (Interim General Manager) and Trisha Whitfield

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Stacie Ann Silva, Lisa Walsh, and Soapy Mullholand

1. CALL TO REGULAR ORDER

The meeting was opened by Chairman Wilbur at 3:05 p.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments from any members of the public were provided.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Wilbur asked if any Committee members had any changes to be brought up regarding the special meeting minutes held on November 3, 2020. A motion and second were made by Jessi Snyder and Geoff Vanden Heuvel, respectively, to approve the minutes as presented.

4. MKGSA ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Fukuda gave an update on the Committee Membership Term Expiration. Three members in Group 1, Richard Garcia, Mark Boyes, and Jimmy Nichols, terms were up in December 2020. Eric Correia replaced Jimmy Nichols. Mr. Correia's 3-year term will start on January 1, 2021. Richard Garcia is interested in staying on the Committee and will submit a letter to the MKGSA Board. If approved by the Board, he will serve another three years. Mark Boyes from Group 1 has not decided if he wants to continue or not, so Mr. Fukuda will follow up with him within the next week or two. Mr. Fukuda gave an update on the Disadvantaged Community seat. The Waukena School Superintendent actively looked for someone, but she has now moved to another school district. Mr. Fukuda is working with the new superintendent to help find someone.

5. MKGSA GENERAL MANAGER SEARCH

Mr. Fukuda provided an update, noting that they closed the solicitation on December 15, 2020, and that 12 candidates submitted their resumes for consideration. There was a committee that was assigned to look at the applications. Introduction interviews were conducted. The MKGSA Board opted to suspend their search for a General Manager and are exploring options for the administration of the MKGSA.

6. KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACTIVITIES

Mr. Fukuda began his report with an update of the Kaweah Subbasin Managers Report regarding data collection and what is happening regarding GSP implementation. Provost & Pritchard (P&P) helped develop a graphical reporting system, which allows irrigation districts to upload data to the diversion points, and it will track all the surface water coming in and how much loss is going to groundwater. Mr. Fukuda noted that the GSAs are continuing discussions on what Data Management System (DMS) will be used in the future.

The next report Mr. Fukuda provided was on the Proposition 68 Planning Grant. He noted that the Grant Administration is still ongoing. Mr. Fukuda indicated that the SkyTEM reimbursement was submitted to DWR. Next, Mr. Fukuda pointed out that the well monitoring data collection effort had run into some difficulty due to some of the landowners not giving permission access due to a liability concern. Lastly, he reported that the Well Metering Pilot Program finally got up and running with Fresno State University and participation with vendors willing to commit meters to the program.

Mr. Fukuda gave an overview of the Prop 68 Implementation Grant. Round 1- \$26 million, \$21 million for overdrafted basins, \$5 million for Underrepresented Community, minimum of \$2 million per basin, max is \$5 million per basin per grant application, cost-share is minimum 25%. Mr. Fukuda reported that the Kaweah Subbasin application was submitted by January 8, 2021.

Thereupon, Mr. Fukuda provided an update on the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy, highlighting that the Focal Species List had gone through several refinements. He also noted concerns regarding neighboring impacts. The next meeting will be on March 16, 2021.

Mr. Fukuda then provided an update on the Water Marketing Strategy, beginning with a list of the members that are now on the Committee. Their first meeting with a full committee will be getting organized and then seeking a consultant to help them through the process.

Mr. Fukuda gave an overview of the Kaweah Water Foundation (KWF). The Foundation was formed in October 2020. He noted that the KWF was established to comply with Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS). He reported that the KWF is focusing on Nitrates right now, and they need to establish a short-term and long-term drinking water solution.

Mr. Fukuda finished his Kaweah Subbasin report by providing an update on the Stanford SkyTEM project. He noted the revised model would be delivered at the end of the year.

7. MKGSA GSP REVIEW

Mr. Fukuda provided an update. DWR has noted that they are on schedule to meet their end-of-the-year deadlines. He also stated that DWR should be delivering reviews of some GSPs towards the middle of the year.

GSP Implementation – Update

Mr. Fukuda then provided a report on the MKGSA Workplan. He noted they were working with Montgomery & Associates on a 2021 workplan. He gave an overview/update on the highlighted

projects. The plan is to get the groundwater model up and running, finalizing the Water Accounting Framework, refine the monitoring network, and start working on sustainability projects. Mr. Fukuda also noted he would be moving the Mid-Kaweah Board through a policy discussion regarding Water Budget, Water Allocation, Water Accounting Framework, Water Metering, Enforcement, Monitoring Network, and Water Marketing Strategy.

8. Mr. Fukuda provided a presentation on the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley. He noted that the MKGSA Board authorized \$10,000 to support the effort. He pointed out that the Central Valley Valley is facing an unprecedented water crisis. SGMA Implementation without projects could mean 42,000 lost jobs in ag, 65,000 in the Valley, and the loss of \$7 billion per year in revenues.
9. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS, UPDATES OR OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST
Mr. Fukuda gave an update on our groundwater levels.
10. ADJOURN
There being no other matters to come before the Committee, Mr. Wilbur adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Advisory Committee Chair

Attest:

GSA Board Secretary

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 30, 2021 **PROJECT #:** 9603
TO: Aaron Fukuda, Mid-Kaweah GSA
FROM: Tim Leo and Derrik Williams
PROJECT: GSP Implementation Support
SUBJECT: 2021 Priority Activities

This brief technical memorandum identifies priority groundwater management activities for 2021. The Mid-Kaweah Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) outlined an implementation plan to reach groundwater sustainability by 2040. The GSP is currently being reviewed by the Department of Water Resources (DWR); a decision on its adequacy will be rendered before the end of January 2022. The Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MKGSA) retained Montgomery & Associates to assist with implementation planning for sustainability projects and management actions presented in the GSP. M&A prepared a 2-year workplan in September 2020 that identified the following 7 high priority implementation activities:

1. Submit Annual Reports
2. Determine GSA staffing needs, operational/administrative funding needs, and member in-kind Assistance
3. Complete Future Baseline Water Budget
4. Reconcile Water Budgets with Historical Data
5. Confirm Kaweah GSA-level Water Accounting Framework (WAF) Allocations
6. Revise Subsidence and Groundwater Storage Minimum Thresholds
7. Revisit Undesirable Results

Activity 1 is underway; the first annual report was submitted before April 2020 and the second annual report is currently being prepared by Provost & Pritchard Consulting Engineers.

Activity 2 is largely being completed by GSA staff, and is ongoing. The recommended completion date for the remaining activities was the end of 2022.

Progress on some of the high priority activities was less than expected in 2020, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, detailed evaluation of the scope and schedule of some of the priority activities led to the decision to delay the start date in order to coordinate the work with other ongoing work (e.g., the NASA grant work by Stanford University) or contract the work differently. Given these delays, it is important to revisit the high priority activities and begin work early in 2021.

High priority tasks for 2021 are as follows:

1. **Groundwater Modeling** – a proposal for this work was provided by M&A to the three GSAs in the Kaweah Subbasin and will be contracted under an agreement with all three GSAs. The modeling work will address work plan priority activities 3 and 4 and will prepare the GSAs to respond to anticipated comments from DWR on the GSP. Although the initial modeling is being completed for all three GSAs, this activity may also include GSA-specific modeling, such as evaluating pumping cut back scenarios in the area west of the MKGSA to determine impacts on groundwater levels. As outlined in the proposal, this work is scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2021. Task 1 will include an assessment of how to address water budget inconsistencies that were identified in the GSP, and will result in a single, comprehensive, and consistent water budget for the entire Subbasin.
2. **Water Accounting Framework (WAF)** – the modeling work in Task 1 will support evaluation of the WAF. The WAF allocation rules and framework that were agreed to during GSP development will be retained. The primary change will be that the groundwater model will be used as the basis for the revised WAF to ensure consistency between the hydrogeologic water budget and the allocation water budget.
3. **Monitoring Network** – M&A will assist the MKGSA in fine-tuning the monitoring networks presented in the GSP. This will entail reviewing the status and adequacy of existing monitoring sites to ensure that monitoring data are accurate and representative of the aquifer they are intended to represent. M&A will review the spatial extent of the monitoring networks in each aquifer, and provide suggestions on monitoring network improvements.
4. **Sustainability Projects** – M&A will assist MKGSA initiate early work on some of the sustainability projects identified in the GSP. To the extent possible, this work will extend

the list of projects. For example, the GSP should be expanded to include the drywell system to enhance recharge; this system is currently being evaluated.

M&A understands that MKGSA must focus on the highest priority activities that protect MKGSA's interests, protect the interests of all the GSAs in the Subbasin, and prevent State intervention in the Kaweah Subbasin. DWR will provide comments on the three Subbasin GSPs within 12 months and will likely require them to be clarified or refined. M&A recommends that MKGSA promptly address the high priority activities listed above in order to prepare for the results of DWR's review. We look forward to working with MKGSA and stakeholders on this high priority work in the most cost-efficient and streamlined manner.