

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

**MINUTES**

November 2, 2021 – 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, Eric Correia, Richard Garcia, Jessi Snyder, Mike Lane

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lee Johnson, Soapy Mulholland

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

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Jordan Leal, Andrew Hart, Bryant Platt, Craig Moyle, Derrik Williams, Eric Osterling, Joey Benevedes, Johnny Gailey, Kaylin Coelho, Lisa Walsh, Manny Gomes, Marlene Ferreira, Maryse Suppiger, Nick Martin, Peter Petrelis, Rhett Anderson, Rick McCombs, Sean Nicholson, Stacie Ann Silva, Steve Jackson, Stuart Hall, Tim Leo, Charles Fisher, Janessa Iden

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

Committee member Lane motioned to approve the minutes with that edit, seconded by Committee member Correia. The October 5, 2021 minutes were unanimously approved by all Advisory Committee members present.

4. KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACTIVITIES

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

October 20<sup>th</sup> committee meeting for all 3 GSA's, mostly about pumping cap for all GSA's. EKGSA decided to implement the 1.65 AF/acre this year, retroactively to October 1st, 2021. GKGSA has not decided on a pumping cap and has the initial structure of the pumping cap outlined in case of emergency declaration.

b. **Prop 68 Planning Grant**

We received an update that Fresno State is on track to finish the report on well metering which may be done by the end of the year but possibly January. The first phase of the project focused on the performance of a suite brands of well meters under properly set up and calibrated conditions. The second phase, which is ongoing, focuses on the performance of each well meter in non-ideal conditions (e.g. improperly installed).

c. **Prop 68 Implementation Grant**

Tulare Irrigation District is finalizing details for a purchase agreement for the property at the Okieville Recharge Basin site. TID performed an on-site visit with Provost and Pritchard, and will be submitting the first progress report to the Department of Water Resources this month.

**d. RCIS Program**

The MKGSA is working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) and begin searching for pilot project grant opportunities for multi-benefit land fallowing projects.

**e. Water Marketing Strategy**

52 public attendees on October 27<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Dr. Matthew Feinup introduced water market case studies and background, share the process of how the community and stakeholders can provide input, and shared details on the grant Tulare Irrigation District. Fukuda said most of the discussion revolved around protecting disadvantaged communities from unintended consequences of a water market.

**f. Kaweah Water Foundation (CV SALTS)**

No updates.

5. MKGSA GSP

**a. GSP Review – Update**

MKGSA staff reviewed the Tulare Lake Basin letter by the SWRCB letter. This letter highlights addressing issues related to disadvantaged communities, lowering of domestic wells, and land subsidence. No updates on if/when we will receive our DWR review letter.

**b. GSP Implementation – Update**

Representative monitoring network is ongoing, the Tulare Irrigation District well survey is complete, and we expect the report next month. Fukuda expects the Kaweah Subbasin MODFLOW model proposal from M&A and P&P soon to update the water budget. McKay and Seaborn Reservoirs will have a boundary of habitat around the reservoir, or a “habitat moat” around the Seaborn Reservoir for a multi-benefit grant application to FEMA. We are working on reconfiguring Basin No. 3 to improve the use of tertiary treated water from the City of Visalia and to incorporate habitat for migrating birds. The City of Tulare is working on Catron Basin, a stormwater and recharge basin. Finally, the City of Visalia is working on Cameron Creek, a linear recharge basin.

**c. MKGSA Groundwater Allocation and Pumping Cap Proposal**

MKGSA sent out solicitation for comments on the main 6 issues. The MKGSA compiled all the comments for discussion.

1. *What is the method to track pumping and how to growers check their water budget?* We will begin using ET measurements from LandIQ to start because data is complete spatially and temporally across the district. OpenET was just released this month, however, the lack of ground-truthing has resulted in higher uncertainties and a tendency of overestimate the amount of water consumed. Therefore, the MKGSA will rely on LandIQ ET measurements. Chair Wilbur asked what do about ET signals registered on fields not irrigated. Fukuda recommended waiting until the end of the first year before data “true-ups” are pursued. Fukuda and the Committee also recommended LandIQ data remain private and not published for public review. However, growers may request

data for their particular fields. Data will be available on an online platform called the Water Dashboard, allowing growers to check their allocation and current usage on a monthly basis.

2. *How will the pumping cap be implemented in the first year?* Fukuda proposed not retroactively implementing the allocation to October 1<sup>st</sup>. Instead of a punitive action against growers that planted before a cap was in place, an 0.25 ft groundwater incentive is proposed for growers that did not plant in fall. Committee member Vanden Huevel suggested the credit should be increased, because not planting saves the GSA 18 inches – he proposed a 9-inch credit. The committee decided to not have any incentives or disincentives for decisions made before the allocation – and instead, provide that additional 0.25 ft to all growers to ease the adjustment of the allocation in the first year.
3. *How far can growers move/trade water?* Fukuda explained this is the only item that will need further investigation before a decision, because this could undermine the goals of the Kaweah Subbasin Water Marketing Strategy. However, moving water within a ranch (conglomeration of adjacent parcels by a water user / land owner) is anticipated to be permissible.
4. *What should the penalty be in 2022 if the cap is exceeded?* The pumping cap is proposed at 2.25 ft, and you have the ability to purchase additional volumes of water from a “mitigation tier”, which is not punitive, but the cost for the MKGSA to replace that water on the market in an average year (\$250-350/AF) up to 1.0 additional AF/acre. Committee Member Correia said none of his fields could survive at 2.25 AF/acre and recommends a minimum of 2.5 AF/acre for the first year. Fukuda agreed. Therefore, with mitigation water, growers could use 3.5 AF/acre before reaching the penalty tier. The penalty tier is \$500/AF and a 1:1 loss in future water supply.
5. *What should the pumping cap number be?*  
On a gross acreage scale, the MKGSA gross acreage can support 2.1AF/acre, while the TID net is 2.5 AF/acre. And the Kaweah Subbasin average is 1.5 AF/acre. Therefore, the proposed range of pumping caps is between 1.5 and 2.5 AF/acre. Chair Wilbur and Committee Member Vanden Huevel were both concerned that pursuing a number that is sustainable is a goal to reach by 2040, and it is better to allow some overdraft in the first year(s) to slowly adjust and monitor the economic consequences of a groundwater cap. The Committee decided 2.5 AF/acre is a good starting point. This water would be allocated from the starting date (anticipated Spring 2022) to the end of the 2022 water year (September 30, 2022)
6. *What is the durability of the groundwater allocation?* Committee Member Vanden Huevel and Chair Wilbur suggested no “leave-behind”, and allow 100% of unused water to be available to growers in future years. This way, not pumping water is incentivized. If water levels continue to drop, the Committee recommended first adjusting the pumping cap number (2.5 AF/acre) before metrics that disincentivize conserving water, such as the durability.

Fukuda said he and legal counsel will begin drafting the Emergency Policy document in December 2022 and be shared with the Advisory Committee for review in early 2022 for an open public comment period. The Emergency Policy is anticipated for April 2022.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS, UPDATES, OR OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST  
No comments.
7. ADJOURN  
Wilbur adjourned the meeting at 5:19 p.m. The next meeting date is TBD.

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

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Advisory Committee Chair

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