

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

MINUTES

September 19, 2023 – 3:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Correia, Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, Lee Johnson, Robert Saenz, Aaron Oliver, Jordan Leal, Jessi Snyder

MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Collins, Richard Garcia, Joe Machado

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

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Georgina King, Andrew Hart, Soapy Mullholland

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. Minutes from August 22 were not reviewed prior to the Advisory Committee meeting. Review and consideration for approval will be deferred to the October 3rd Advisory Committee meeting.

4. **MKGSA GSP**

a. **GSP Review – Update**

Georgina King provided the report. The Kaweah Subbasin Technical Team (hereafter, “Team”) evaluated the protective thresholds of domestic wells. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) recommended wells are protected if the water level is at least 20% from the bottom of the well. However, MKGSA Advisory Committee found this recommended metric arbitrary, as this would likely be too protective for deep wells and leave an insufficient head for pumps to function for shallow wells. The Team evaluated 18 ft (5 ft from the bottom of the well, plus 3 ft for the well, plus 10 ft for minimum head for the pump to perform), as well as 20 ft and 30 ft. The mitigation costs were insensitive to all 3 numbers simulated. Therefore, the more conservative 30 ft was deemed most appropriate for the program. The Team is in the process of selecting minimum thresholds (MTs) for the water levels. After water level MTs are selected, the Team will iteratively evaluate water levels from a subsidence and well mitigation perspective.

b. **Proposed Mitigation Plan Changes in Response to Public Comments Received**

Ms. King presented the summarized public comment letters on the MKGSA Mitigation Plan. Letters were received from Community Water Center, Self-Help Enterprises, the East Kaweah GSA, and Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District. Interestingly, NGOs want the plan to focus on domestic wells, while the EKGSA and LSID want the plan to include mitigation of agricultural wells and other critical infrastructure (the comments conflict). The rest of the comments provided did not conflict. Some of the other comments included

shortening the response time for interim drinking water to 72 hours or less, providing Spanish translations for all meetings and materials, shortening the length of the application to encourage more interest and intention, and removing SAFER funds as a funding source and outlining a more secure long-term funding source for the implementation period.

Committee Member Vanden Heuvel is concerned about the liability of pre-mitigating wells and/or spending an inordinate amount of staff time assisting with well mitigation before determining whether the GSA is at fault or not. The mitigation plan may transform the GSA to a “first responder” for dry wells, and there are a multitude of ways a well can fail even while a GSA is meeting sustainability goals throughout the service area. Vanden Heuvel recommended we determine a consistent methodology and process for determining how the well went dry and estimate how much that will cost. Because of the Human Right to Water, State resources may assist with the investigations &/or funding.

c. **2024 Allocation – Update**

Fukuda provided the report. Tulare ID water levels suggest rapid water level rises in wet years (on the order of 15+ ft), but dry years erode those water levels faster than rates of replenishment. Therefore, Fukuda concluded that although it is counterintuitive to reduce the allocation after a wet year, it may be the optimal approach to keep the water levels high longer after a wet year. Fukuda recommended an allocation of 14 inches of tiered water. With the existing 10 inches of native yield, the groundwater allocation would be 24 inches (2 AF/acre). Committee Member Vanden Heuvel recommended modeling efforts focus on how long it takes for the “groundwater mounds” from recharge travel westward and out of the GSA. Vanden Heuvel also suggested 10 inches of tiered water instead of the 14 inches. Chair Correia, along with the rest of the committee, strongly urged the 2.5 AF/acre groundwater pumping cap be removed, as this discourages recharge and groundwater credits. Correia and the committee recommended there be no cap (or at least a conservative cap) to how many groundwater credits are used in a year provided a grower recharged enough water to pump in dry years.

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 5:11 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2023.

Attest: _____
GSA Board Secretary

Advisory Committee Chair