



**MID-KAWEAH GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

February 11, 2025 @ 3:00 PM
City of Tulare Council Chambers
491 North M Street
Tulare, CA 93274

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Nelsen, David Bixler, Dennis Mederos, Liz Wynn and Blake Wilbur

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Martin

GSA MEMBER STAFF PRESENT: Aaron Fukuda, Kathi Artis, Marc Mondell, Diana Zegarra, Debbie Burgos, James Fisher, Trisha Whitfield, Leslie Caviglia, and Nick Bartsch

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Geoff Vanden Huevel, Marc Mondell, Johnny Gailey, Luis Paniagua, Mark Larson, Johnny Gailey, Tara Khan and Adriana Becena

- 1) **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Nelsen called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.
- 2) **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Chair Nelsen called for public comments.
- 3) **GENERAL BUSINESS**
 - a) **Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting on December 10, 2024.** Mr. Fukuda stated there was one correction in the minutes regarding the vote for the California Groundwater Coalition. By a motion of Director Bixler, seconded by Director Wilbur and unanimously carried by all directors present, Meeting Minutes for December 10, 2024, were approved.
 - b) **Financial Statements – Year-to-Date** - Ms. Artis presented the financial statements. By a motion of Director Wilbur, seconded by Director Wynn and unanimously carried by all directors present, the financial report as presented was approved.
 - c) **Legal Counsel Report** – Ms. Kincaid provided the report on ongoing legal activities including an update on DWR review of 13 subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) deemed incomplete and their determinations pushed later into February 2025. She also stated the Kern Subbasin hearing is set for February 20, 2025. Next, Ms. Kincaid updated the Board on Executive Order 1625, which stated that agencies and landowners could move water but not own it. She also gave an update on the Kings County lawsuit against the State Water Resources Control Board.
 - d) **MKGSA Advisory Committee Update** – Mr. Fukuda updated the Board on Advisory Committee activities. Thereupon, Mr. Fukuda reported that MKGSA Staff recommends approving the MKGSA Management Committee’s Recommendation to appoint Ben Litwack to the MKGSA Advisory Committee. By a motion of Director Wilbur, seconded by Director Bixler, and unanimously carried by all member present, the appointment of Mr. Litwack to fill

the vacant At Large City of Visalia seat on the MKGSA Advisory Committee was approved.

- e) **MKGSA Groundwater Sustainability Plan – 2024 Second Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plan and Coordination Agreement – Update**
 - i) 2024 Second Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plan and Coordination Agreement Update – Mr. Fukuda gave the update. SWRCB has completed Red-Flag review. SWRCB staff anticipates this process to take approximately 5 months (June 2025). SWRCB staff will be finalizing a Staff Report (Summer 2025). Then, SWRCB staff will take action to move us back to DWR (Fall 2025)
- f) **MKGSA Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation**
 - i) 2025 Kaweah Subbasin Workplan – Mr. Fukuda gave the review. The Kaweah Subbasin Technical Team met on January 7, 2025 to establish a 2025 Workplan that identifies the projects and management actions outlined in the Kaweah Subbasin GSPs and establishes a schedule for completing those items. The 2025 Workplan considers schedules and deadlines outlined in the GSPs. Each of the 2025 Workplan elements has been assigned to a Kaweah Subbasin Technical Core Team lead. By a motion of Director Bixler, seconded by Director Wynn and unanimously approved by all Directors present, the 2025 Kaweah Subbasin Workplan is approved.
 - ii) MKGSA Well Mitigation Program – Mr. Fukuda gave the update. As of December 2024, MKGSA has nine households on Interim Services, seven Wells on Interim Services and one home within the City of Tulare that is moving through MKGSA Mitigation Program.
 - iii) Kaweah Subbasin Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) – Department of Conservation Comment Letter – Mr. Fukuda gave the review. The Department of Conservation (DOC) approved a \$10 Million grant to the Kaweah Subbasin, lead by Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District. DOC approved all five Kaweah Subbasin MLRP projects in early 2024. In December 2024, the DOC released the revised DOC Round 1 and 2 Guidelines for the MLRP. Upon reviewing the Guidelines in December, we discovered that the language we had worked on with DOC was not included, and in its place was a requirement that if any project conducts recharge, the amount of recharge cannot be included in any future allocation or groundwater pumping. Based on the goal and objectives of the Kaweah Subbasin MLRP, this language is very problematic and removes the incentive to pursue MLRP projects. We anticipate that if this language remains in the Guidelines, all five projects in the Kaweah Subbasin will remove their project from consideration. By a motion of Director Wynn, seconded by Director Bixler and unanimously approved by all Directors present, the motion is approved supporting and signing on to the Kaweah Subbasin Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program – Department of Conservation Comment Letter.
 - iv) Discussion and Consideration for Task Order No. 10 – Data Management System Amendment No. 1 with Montgomery & Associates – Mr. Fukuda gave the review. In December 2022, the Mid-Kaweah GSA entered and executed Task Order No. 10 – Data Management System for \$113,500. Task Order No. 10 – Data Management System Amendment No. 1 with Montgomery and Associates represents the ongoing maintenance costs for 2025. Montgomery and Associates will also perform semi-annual updates of the DMS with the annual groundwater information required under SGMA. These costs will be shared equally with the other Kaweah Subbasin GSAs and incorporated in a forthcoming Kaweah Subbasin Cost Sharing Agreement. By a motion of Director Wynn, seconded by Director Bixler and unanimously approved by all Directors present, Task Order No. 10 – Data Management System Amendment No. 1 with Montgomery & Associates, conditioned upon the inclusion and adoption of the Kaweah Subbasin Cost Sharing Agreement was approved.
 - v) Discussion and Consideration of Task Order No. 16 – 2025 Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation with Montgomery & Associates – Mr. Fukuda gave the review. The Mid-Kaweah GSA submitted the 2024 Second Amended Groundwater Sustainability Plan (2nd Amended GSP) to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) in November 2024. The 2nd Amended GSP represents a significant departure from the prior versions of the

MKGSA GSP. The 2nd Amended GSP recognizes that immediate Sustainability projects and management actions must be implemented if the Kaweah Subbasin is to achieve sustainability by 2040. Task Order No. 16 (TO 16) incorporates the time and materials envisioned by Montgomery & Associates to participate and assist in each Core Team meeting; however, this does not include Montgomery & Associates acting as the Technical Team Core Lead (except for the Water Accounting Framework and Land Subsidence). The share of expenses will be equally shared with EKGSA and GKGSA. The estimated cost of TO 16 is \$349,990 and would cover costs through June 2025. By a motion of Director Wilbur, seconded by Director Wynn and unanimously approved by all Directors present, Task Order No. 16 – Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation with Montgomery & Associates was approved.

- vi) Discussion and Consideration of Task Order No. 17 – Urban Strategic Plan with Montgomery & Associates – Mr. Fukuda gave the review. The City of Visalia and the City of Tulare, as members of the Mid-Kaweah GSA (MKGSA), utilize groundwater to meet their urban needs. In 2021, MKGSA began discussing a program to limit groundwater pumping cutback program in May 2022. The MKGSA recognized that due to the continuous pumping of groundwater under Visalia and Tulare, groundwater depression existed below the two cities. In groundwater terms, this is called a Cone of Depression and represents lower groundwater levels due to the drawdown in groundwater levels in wells in relation to the surrounding area. Therefore, Visalia and Tulare are working with the MKGSA to identify specific projects and management actions to address this Cone of Depression and achieve groundwater sustainability through an Urban Strategic Plan. Task Order No. 17 Urban Strategic Plan is the first phase of the Strategic Plan. There are five tasks associated with Phase 1. Montgomery & Associates anticipates that this project will take approximately 10 months and be completed by the end of the year. Montgomery & Associates anticipates that this task order will cost approximately \$221,112. By a motion of Director Wynn, seconded by Director Mederios and unanimously approved by all Directors present, Task Order No. 17 – Urban Strategic Plan with Montgomery & Associates to be equally cost-shared between the City of Visalia, the City of Tulare, and the MKGSA was approved.
- vii) Discussion and Consideration of Task Order No. 18 – Subsidence Outreach Plan with Montgomery & Associates - Mr. Fukuda gave the review. During the development of the 2024 2nd Amended MKGSA GSP, it was identified that subsidence was an undesirable result that would be difficult to manage and require immediate attention. The MKGSA Advisory Committee requested that the MKGSA Staff and Montgomery & Associates first develop a Subsidence Outreach Plan to educate landowners and groundwater users on subsidence. Working with Montgomery & Associates, we developed Task Order No. 18 (TO 18), a Subsidence Outreach Plan. TO 18 proposed three subsidence outreach strategies. Montgomery & Associates anticipates the cost will be \$60,170 and will take place over three months. Geoff Vanden Heuvel made a public comment. By a motion of Director Wilbur, seconded by Director Bixler and unanimously approved by all Directors present, Task Order No. 18 – Subsidence Outreach Plan with Montgomery & Associates was approved.

4) INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

- i) Water Year 2025 Hydrologic Conditions – Mr. Fukuda gave the update. Mr. Fukuda noted the current status of precipitation, snowpack, and reservoir storage statewide. Mr. Fukuda also briefed the Board on the recent flood releases on the Kaweah and Tule Rivers that were ordered by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

- 5) **CALIFORNIA GROUNDWATER COALITION** – Mr. Fukuda gave the report. The next California Groundwater Coalition (CGC) Board Meeting will be held on March 4, 2025, in Sacramento. Mr. Fukuda also noted that March 5, 2025, will be CGC Lobby Day. MKGSA Interim General Manger plans to attend both meetings.

- 6) **LEGISLATION** – No update
- 7) **BOARD/STAFF UPDATES, FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS OR OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST** – No Report
- 8) **CLOSED SESSION** – No closed session
- 9) **ADJOURNMENT:** Next Regular Meeting – March 11, 2025