

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

**MINUTES**

September 7, 2021 – 3:00 p.m.

*This Committee Meeting was held as a hybrid meeting, teleconference for the public 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, Mike Lane, Richard Garcia, Jessi Snyder, Lee Johnson

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Eric Correia, Soapy Mulholland

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

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES:** Tim Leo, Angela Islas, Bryant Platt, Derrick Williams, Eric Furtado, Johnny Gailey, Lisa Walsh, Rhett Anderson, Tessa Hall, Hylon Kaufmann

**1. CALL TO REGULAR ORDER**

The meeting was opened by Chairman Wilbur at 3:01 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**

Director Snyder motioned to approve the minutes without edits, seconded by Director Lane. The August 3, 2021 minutes were unanimously approved by all Advisory Committee members present.

**4. KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACTIVITIES**

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

*i. Kaweah Subbasin MODFLOW Model* – The GSP water budget is not conducive for tracking water in the water accounting framework, by lumping several inputs/outputs via the inventory method. A MODFLOW model will provide more detail and allow the MKGSA model different scenarios to better visualize how groundwater management decisions affect the overall water budget. The model matches groundwater observations well on average, but there are considerable discrepancies at extreme water showing high errors levels (the exceptionally deep & shallow observations). Fukuda said the MKGSA will continue to rely on our GSP water budget until the MODFLOW model is complete, which is anticipated to take a year or more.

**b. Prop 68 Planning Grant**

Fukuda will work with James Fisher to collect metadata on a select number of representative monitoring network wells to get the elevations of well screenings. The MKGSA has the funding to begin this work and this project is anticipated to begin soon.

**c. Prop 68 Implementation Grant**

Fukuda summarized the MKGSA kickoff meeting between the MKGSA and DWR. All of the \$3.8M funds must be spent by March 2024, the largest project in this grant is the Okieville Recharge Basin. This grant is unique in that it requires 3 years of post-construction monitoring and reporting, and the MKGSA will be graded on their grant administration performance, which impacts how DWR reviewers grade future proposals submitted by the MKGSA.

**d. RCIS Program**

Director Vanden Huevel reemphasized the need for collaboration between the GSA's and the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) for the RCIS program. One vehicle for collaboration he suggested was a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Director Vanden Huevel suggested GSA's either need a dedicated staff member to manage the RCIS program, or to take advantage of SRT's local knowledge and expertise to manage it. In other words, SRT can be the MKGSA's local habitat conservation partner, where SRT finds the project and the space for implementation, and the MKGSA supplies the funding and supplemental technical resources. Chairman Wilbur concurred. Fukuda will bring this idea to the other two GSA's, and then contact Soapy Mulholland (SRT) with Director Vanden Heuvel.

**e. Water Marketing Strategy**

Fukuda discussed how the MKGSA is working with Stantec to schedule public workshops about the Kaweah Subbasin Water Marketing Strategy (WMS). These workshops will focus on introducing the concept of water markets, reviewing water markets currently in place, and soliciting feedback from the community on the primary concerns or proposed rules that should be in place. Initial workshops will be scheduled sometime between late-September through October. Fukuda said the WMS will be implemented on a small scale and gradually roll out to the Kaweah Subbasin, ideally in line with the water allocation timeline. Chair Wilbur recommended the small rollout be implemented in a diverse area covering all major industries, so unintended consequences can be addressed early and basin-scale implementation occurs as soon as possible.

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

No updates.

**5. MKGSA GSP**

**a. GSP Review – Update**

No updates. MKGSA review likely to take longer than most GSPs due to the complexities evaluating subbasins with coordination agreements between multiple GSAs.

**b. GSP Implementation – Update**

- i. *MKGSA Water Allocation Process* – Fukuda explained the MKGSA is working on an allocation process, and a detailed presentation to the Advisory Committee is anticipated to occur within the next 30 days. The allocation will be based on the current water budget published in the GSP, not the MODFLOW model still under development by M&A. The MKGSA will be seeking community involvement to fine-tune the allocation in time for an early 2022 implementation. Chair Wilbur and Director Vanden Heuvel emphasized the need for rapid implementation as growers are preparing for their 2022 season already. Fukuda explained that the allocation will likely be lower than the Lower Tule and Pixley area, because pumping went unfettered for 2 years while other GSA's had an allocation, prompting a harder cut

for this growing season. Fukuda also explained all 3 GSA's are coordinating weekly so the allocations should be similar.

**c. MKGSA Request for Proposals – Groundwater Sustainability Plan Projects and Management Actions – Discussion and Consideration of Recommendation to MKGSA Board of Directors**

Fisher presented a workflow for the MKGSA to accept and approve new Projects and Management Actions (PMAs) to our GSP on a rolling basis via the MKGSA website. Currently, the MKGSA can only append new PMAs every 5 years for the DWR 5-year GSP updates. The benefit of this proposed workflow is new ideas can be rapidly approved to the GSP and eligible for large grants requiring GSP status, as many recent DWR "request for proposals" have required. The process and application (now posted on midkaweah.org) proposed by Fisher were approved by Director Snyder and seconded by Director Vanden Heuvel and approved unanimously.

6. **SELF-HELP ENTERPRISES – DRINKING WATER WELL MITIGATION FRAMEWORK**  
Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) collaborated with Leadership Council with Justice and Accountability and Community Water Center to develop this drinking water mitigation program, about 2 years ago. SHE has since been presenting this mitigation program to GSAs as a blueprint as each GSA strategizes best practices to protect groundwater-dependent drinking water communities. Angela Islas (SHE) reviewed the current data on drinking water impacts, the legal requirements and costs to mitigate the current impacts, and some design considerations for the MKGSA. After the presentation, Fukuda explained the MKGSA will implement a mitigation program to address any undesirable results, with both predictive and reactive strategies.
7. **COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS, UPDATES, OR OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST**  
Director Vanden Heuvel said Senator Hurtado has been a champion for SB 559, where the state provides funding for the Friant-Kern subsidence issue. Vanden Huevel explained most of the money toward those repairs is coming from local farmers and federal funding, but very little from the state. Leadership Council and the Community Water Center opposed SB 599 for additional state funding, causing further delays to state funding. Repairing this canal is imperative, as the capacity to carry water south of Porterville decreased by 60%. Fukuda agreed, TID's cost share is considerable, and makes less funding available for local projects and management actions.
8. **ADJOURN**  
Wilbur adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m. to October 5, 2021

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

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Advisory Committee Chair