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

# MINUTES

October 5, 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, Lee Johnson, Soapy Mulholland

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Lane

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

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Rhett Anderson, Derrik Williams, Janessa Iden, Peter Petrelis, Maryse Suppiger, Tim Leo, Andrew Hart, Angela Islas, Johnny Gailey, Mallory De Hoog, Sean Nicholson, Brandon Dykstra, Jeff Sumi, Joseph Gallegos, Richael Young

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
   Jessi Snyder commented that minutes should be edited to refer to the advisory committee as committee members, not directors. Committee member Snyder motioned to approve the minutes with that edit, seconded by Committee member Correia. The September 7, 2021 minutes were unanimously approved by all Advisory Committee members present.

4. KAWEAH SUBBASIN ACTIVITIES
   a. **Kaweah Subbasin Manager's Report**
      No update
   **b. Prop 68 Planning Grant**
      The Kaweah Subbasin GSA's are working with Fresno State University to determine the best flow meter across a range of applications and meeting a reasonable price point. The goal is to receive the final report from FSU by the end of the year so the GSA's can provide a recommended list of flow meters best suited for the MKGSA's environment and applications. Well imaging is also part of the Prop 68 planning grant. The MKGSA has funding for well videoing, growers may get their well imaged if they agree to make it searchable via public records request. Anyone interested is encouraged to be forthcoming.
   **c. Prop 68 Implementation Grant**
      This grant is currently ongoing. Part of the Prop 68 Implementation grant is the Okieville recharge basin. James Fisher (TID) is the project manager. The construction design is

expected to be done in Spring 2022, and the project will be bid out. The landowner and the MKGSA already made a purchase agreement.

**d. RCIS Program**

Fukuda followed up on Committee Member Vanden Huevel's comment for a collaboration between the GSA's and the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) for the RCIS program. Fukuda contacted Soapy Mullholland of SRT to potentially look for pilot project opportunities for multi-benefit land fallowing, there may be opportunities in the $50M SB 129.

**e. Water Marketing Strategy**

The water marketing strategy will have the first public workshop on October 27th at 6pm introducing water market case studies and background, share the process of how the community and stakeholders can provide input, and to share details on the grant Tulare Irrigation District.

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

No updates.

5. MKGSA GSP

**a. GSP Review – Update**

No significant updates. Fukuda mentioned that Valerie Kinkaid discussed how the California State Water Resources Control Board provided comments on many GSPs. However, the MKGSA did not receive any comments from them yet.

**b. GSP Implementation – Update**

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

Fukuda presented the most recent version of the pumping cap proposal, which has been iteratively evolved in its present form to version 7. The MKGSA is likely to approach its measurable objective this year with back-to-back abrasively dry years (with 2021 being the driest year on record). Therefore, the MKGSA is proposing an emergency groundwater pumping reduction until the Water Accounting Framework is complete, allowing those that store more water to pump more (expected in the next year or two).

Groundwater is divided into two categories:

- 1. *Native yield* is a negotiated value of 10 inches per assessed acre (pumped, not ET), which is greater than the average annual precipitation because it includes recharge from rivers and canals. This water is free, can be moved, and can carry over to future years on a limited basis.
- 2. *Relief pumping*. Any amount of water greater than the native yield but below the groundwater cap. This pumping is voluntary and must be requested. Surface water users can utilize relief pumping supplies free (because their irrigation district payments have gone toward recharging the groundwater table) but with a small service charge for tracking and monitoring. Surface water users can also supplement their surface water supplies without counting against the pumping cap. Groundwater dependent users will have a service charge and a per acre-foot charge.
    - This will have two tiers. The first tier cannot be transferred to other parcels and will have a low cost to groundwater dependent users. The second tier will have a higher cost but can be transferred to other parcels.

Fukuda discussed 6 questions about the allocation that are asked most frequently when discussing the proposed water allocation. Chairman Blake recommended committee members send their comments, questions, and concerns for the MKGSA to summarize and compile them prior to the next meeting.

1. What method is used to track groundwater pumping and how to growers access it?
2. Will the allocation be applied retroactively to October 2022?
3. How far can growers move their water?
4. If you exceed pumping in 2022, what is the penalty (money or loss of water in future)?
5. Should cities limit building permits?
6. What should the pumping cap be in AF/acre (inclusive of Native Yield)?

Chair Wilbur requested a clear outline on when flooding a field counts toward a groundwater credit (on-farm recharge) while flood irrigating a field during the growing season doesn't provide any groundwater credits. Fukuda confirmed more detail would be provided, and discussed how flood irrigating displaces water from the lower aquifer, which is believed to be the aquifer most responsible for land subsidence.

Committee member Correia suggested that using ET would be much simpler than calculating pumped values. He outlined examples of how multiple wells/turnouts per field and recycling water would be very difficult to manage and gauge accurately in the first year. He also suggested keeping the groundwater cap as close to 2.5 ft as possible, as this lowers the average water use and is a step in the right direction.

Johnny Gailey stated the EKGSA technical advisory committee is recommending 1.65 AF/acre. The GKGSA has not decided if, or how, to implement a cap yet.

Chair Wilbur inquired the justification for setting a maximum limit on trading distances if the water stays within the basin and will likely be cost prohibitive to pump much beyond the allotted cap. Fukuda and Committee member Mullholland voiced their concerns of trading "paper water", causing local cones of depressions that are hydrologically disconnected, so undesirable results are realized at a local level.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS, UPDATES, OR OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST
   No comments.

7. ADJOURN
   Wilbur adjourned the meeting at 5:11 p.m. to October 5, 2021

Attest:_____ _____

GSA Board Secretary Advisory Committee Chair