

**MID-KINGS RIVER GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY
JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021**

This meeting was held by conference call due to local Covid-19 requirements. Chair McCutcheon called the regular meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Barry McCutcheon, Chair; Michael Murray, Vice-Chair (phone)
Dianne Sharp

DIRECTORS ABSENT: Steven P. Dias

OTHERS PRESENT: Dennis Mills, GM and Board Secretary
Ray Carlson, Legal Counsel (phone)
Amer Hussain, Geosyntec (phone)
Stacey Ann Silva, New Current (phone)
Johnny Gailey, Delta View WA (phone)
Shawn Corley, Lakeside IWD (phone)
John Doyel, City of Hanford, (phone)
Brandon Herraman, Congressman Valadao's staff (phone)
Lita Spencer, Westchester Group (phone)

ESTABLISH QUORUM

It was determined that a quorum was present at the meeting.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR FEBRUARY 9 AND MARCH 9, 2020 MEETINGS

Chair McCutcheon asked if there was a motion regarding the draft February 9, 2021 and March 9, 2021 meeting minutes. It was noted that Attorney Carlson had provided a few minor corrections to the draft minutes. Director Sharp made a motion to approve the draft February 9, 2021 and March 9, 2021 meeting minutes with the noted corrections. Vice-Chair Murray seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved the meeting minutes of February 9, 2021 and March 9, 2021 meetings with the noted corrections. The vote for all of the Directors was as follows:

AYES: Barry McCutcheon, Michael Murray; Diane Sharp

NOES: None

ABSTAINED:None

ABSENT: Steven P. Dias

COMMUNICATIONS

Manager Mills reported that Bill Tos had visited him and conveyed that the Tos family had discussed the potential that had been discussed at a previous Board meeting of a 4.0 AF/acre maximum pumping limit. Their view seemed to be that it could be reasonably implemented with enough time. He relayed that their family would likely need to transition some of their orchards and try to have more row crops available.

Manager Mills relayed that staff from the Ramboll Group made him aware that they were recently awarded a contract by DWR to undertake SkyTEM soils evaluations across the critically overdrafted groundwater subbasins in CA.

DWR communicated through an email about three El Rico wells not being reported in Fall 2020. However, it seemed to be an issue where information was submitted, but it wasn't being reflected through the SGMA Portal. Manager Mills' understanding was that the matter was now fully resolved.

Amer Hussain of Geosyntec made the Tulare Lake GSAs aware that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) had recently updated their interconnected surface water mapping tool.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Reports on Grants

Manager Mills reported that a budget adjustment had been processed for the Round 3 SGM Grant to move funding from tasks that were completed to others that were still in process. A second reimbursement request was being implemented to request reimbursement for the remaining consulting efforts related to GSP Development previously paid.

In way of review, Manager Mills again reported that the Kings CWD 2021 Recharge Project Round 1 Implementation grant application was not initially selected for funding. Manager Mills reported that Kings CWD had submitted a letter to DWR after meeting with staff and receiving information on how the application was scored. The letter pointed to information contained in the application that seemed to not be fully appreciated by DWR. The letter did lead DWR to slightly adjust the application scoring, but it was not enough to secure funding for the effort. DWR communicated that the project was something they viewed positively, and it scored well, but the figures included in the application were inconsistent with the verbiage of the application on where benefits would be developed.

Manager Mills relayed that DWR staff relayed that there may be additional grant funding available this summer to fall which is being appropriated now through the State budget. Recent announcements have indicated the total State Drought Funding package to be \$5.1 billion, of which DWR would have \$300 million for SGMA Implementation projects. Related to that DWR staff requested a list of projects from Kings CWD that might qualify for funding. That list was developed and conveyed to DWR.

Report on MKR GSA Finances

Manager Mills reported the balance for the agency's accounts were roughly \$72,000.

Report on Current Tulare Lake Subbasin Issues

Manager Mills reported on various key amounts reported in the 2020 Tulare Lake Subbasin (TLS) annual report submitted to DWR. He reported that the water year (WY) 2020 TLS groundwater pumping was estimated to be 375,293 acre-feet (AF), which was roughly 90,000 AF less than in WY 2019. Some of that difference was likely connected to a change in source data for cropping in the subbasin. WY 2020 TLS surface water deliveries were estimated to be 413,521 AF and total water use was estimated to be 774,527 AF. WY 2020 TLS groundwater storage change was estimated to be a decrease of 25,706 AF. In comparison the Kaweah subbasin estimated a roughly 400,000 AF decline in groundwater storage over the same period and the Tule subbasin's estimate was a decline of over 1 million AF. The Tule estimate seems oddly high and Manager Mills reported there had been discussions about that subbasin filing an addendum to their annual report.

Manager Mills reported that the TLS GSA managers discussed having Geosyntec be the selected consultant for WY 2021 annual report and 2020 TLS GSP Comments. Previously the El Rico GSA expressed reservations on that topic, but at that meeting seemed to back away from their reservations. All parties also seemed to agree on Amer Hussain working as the TLS Point of Contact and transitioning away from Dusty Ference. Regarding a consultant team to address GSP comments from DWR, Manager Mills relayed that he wanted to see who would be included to verify the team's qualifications were sufficient for the task. Manager Mills asked the Board if they had any thoughts on these matters, but none were relayed.

Manager Mills reported that the TLS GSA managers discussed having Luhdorff & Scalmanini (L&S) be the TLS groundwater modeling consultant, if necessary. The J.G. Boswell Land Co. and the El Rico GSA are most comfortable with L&S as a groundwater modeling consultant because L&S has developed a private groundwater model in the Lake Bottom. Lake Bottom interests believe L&S are the only consultant that currently understands the issues associated with deep groundwater pumping in that area. Several years ago, Kings CWD was in an adversarial position with L&S through Apex Ranch Groundwater Bank dealings. Manager Mills recommended that the MKR GSA support L&S engagement for now, given that subsidence and deep Lake Bottom pumping is a significant issue that will need to be modeled. However, he also recommended that the MKR GSA to engage another consultant to be able to review and critique the L&S efforts. The Board supported both of those recommendations.

Report on Inter-Basin Coordination Issues

Manager Mills reported that the TLS and adjacent subbasins plan to have consultants meet and discuss differences in adjacent GW models. He also reported on a discussion of SkyTEM efforts through common areas to improve groundwater model boundaries.

Discussion of WY 2020-2021 Conditions and Potential Efforts

Manager Mills reported on a Land IQ cropping summary for WY 2020. This estimate was developed from a retrospective look at satellite imagery, meaning there was no ability to

field verify the findings. The summary showed there was a total cropped acreage of 110,683 acres where the top crops appear to be wheat/corn/sorghum (multi-cropping), walnuts, almonds, alfalfa and pistachios. Kings CWD engaged P&P to develop a Township/Range/Section based pivot table from the Land IQ GIS shapefiles. That effort is still in development.

Manager Mills reported on a Spring 2020 vs Spring 2021 groundwater level comparison of KCWD groundwater monitoring information. Using a straight average comparison, it appears there is a decline of roughly 7.5 feet. In Spring 2020, there was one deepest reading in that season. In Fall 2020, there were thirteen deepest readings (out of roughly 200) in that season. In Spring 2021, were five deepest readings in that season.

Manager Mills reported on Land IQ Et information from January through March, during the period when there were local Et stations. There were 97,375 total acres in the MKR GSA area, with roughly 12,175 urban acres, meaning there were 85,200 cropped acres. He reported that Land IQ has conveyed monthly Et values of Jan = 5,274 AF (0.74 inches/acre), Feb = 8,315 AF (1.17 inches/acre), and Mar = 14,963 AF (2.11 inches/acre).

Manager Mills reported on Kings River runoff information over the past several years and this year's drought conditions. He reported that the average Kings River runoff (100%) is roughly 1,210,000 AF. 2019 was a very wet year and the runoff was 175% of average, which was 2,117,500 AF. 2020 was a dry year and the runoff was 55% of average, which was 665,500 AF. 2021 appears to be an extremely dry year and the runoff is estimated to be roughly 27% of average, which would be 330,000 AF. When considered the period of 2019 through 2021 together, the period appears to be roughly 86% of average runoff on the Kings River.

Manager Mills reported on well permits that had been issued by Kings County. He investigated the period of January through March in several years to compare against conditions in 2021. He found that over that period in 2013 there were 67 permits issued, in 2014 there were 91 permits issued, in 2015 there were 91 permits issued, in 2020 there were 52 permits issued and in 2021 there were 54 permits issued. The information tended to indicate that from a historical perspective, issued well permits had not significantly increased to levels previously seen in other recent drought years.

Consideration of 2021 Efforts and Budget

Manager Mills discussed efforts that would contribute to the agencies 2021 Budget. The efforts included the 2019-2020 Annual Report, GSP Monitoring Costs, development of groundwater well registration and associated policies, consultant efforts related to a Proposition 218 Study / Engineers Report / Election, potential grant applications, addressing DWR's review of the Tulare Lake Subbasin GSP review and potential needed revisions and further negotiations on several other Tulare Lake Subbasin topics.

There was discussion of the potential management strategies such as setting an initial maximum groundwater pumping limit per acre and monitoring the effects of that effort over time to see if adjustments to the maximum are needed. Manager Mills did not have many specifics to discuss with the Board, but the general concept was supported in the discussion. Manager Mills relayed that given the drought conditions, it would be important to make progress on this in

2021. It was understood that this concept would be worked on as time permitted and brought back to the Board for further consideration.

UPDATE ON ONGOING EFFORTS

None.

SET NEXT MEETING DATE

The regular June Board of Directors meeting was tentatively set for June 8, 2021 at 1 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Mills
MKR MIN 210511