



RAW NOTES

MADERA SUBBASIN JOINT GSP SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT (SGMA) TECHNICAL WORKSHOP AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2019
Time: 6:00 - 8:30 pm
Location: Madera County Government Center
Board of Supervisors Chambers
200 West 4th Street
Madera, CA

IN ATTENDANCE

Subbasin Joint Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Coordination Committee

- Brian Davis, Madera Irrigation District
- Dina Nolan, Madera Irrigation District
- Greg Young, Madera County
- Keith Helmuth, City of Madera
- Melanie Aldridge, Madera Water District
- Phil Janzen, Madera Water District

GSP-Related Staff

- Bryan Thoreson, Davids Engineering
- Julia Van Horn, facilitator, Sacramento State University
- Malka Kopell, facilitator, Sacramento State University
- Pete Leffler, Luhdorff & Scalmanini
- Stephanie Anagnoson, Madera County
- Jeannie Habben, Madera County

Workshop Participants

- Al Sheeter, Mordecai Ranch
- Al Solis
- Angela Islas, Self-Help Enterprises
- Bev Walsh, Self-Help Enterprises
- Bill Diedrich, farm
- Brad Samuelson, WLS
- Brian Davis, MID
- Brian Glover, Assessor
- Carl Janzen, MID
- Christina Beckstead, Madera County Farm Bureau

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- Devin Aviles, Agri-World Cooperative
- Gary Foth
- Geoff VanDenHeuvel, Milk Producers Council
- Gloria Esquivel, resident
- Greg Rodgers
- Jason Howard, Gunner Ranch/VCH
- Jerry Kazynski, Madera County GSA
- Leonard Garoupa, Children's Hospital
- Madeline Harris, LCJA
- Michael Peters, Kaweah Pump
- Michael Roberts, UMass
- Mike DeLaGuerra
- Phil Pierre
- Rick Iger, Clayton WD
- Sarbjit Johal, SEMCU
- Thom Walsh, resident

MEETING OBJECTIVES:

- Review the draft Madera Subbasin Joint GSP
- Gather comments on the draft Madera Subbasin Joint GSP

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1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND AGENDA REVIEW

Coordination Committee Chair Phil Janzen, Madera Water District, opened the meeting. Coordination Committee members introduced themselves. Mr. Janzen reviewed the meeting agenda.

Mr. Janzen noted that he would have to leave the meeting at 7:00 p.m., at which time Brian Davis, Madera Irrigation District (MID), would lead the meeting.

2. DISCUSSION OF COORDINATION COMMITTEE CHARTER

Mr. Janzen reviewed the Coordination Committee's Charter, which states: "On or before October 2019, the Coordination Committee will evaluate the effectiveness of the Coordination Committee for coordination purposes and determine whether to form an alternate group. Unless the GSAs chose otherwise, the Coordination Committee shall remain active throughout the coordination of Madera Subbasin GSAs for GSP development and implementation."

Mr. Janzen recommended that the Coordination Committee continue to serve in its current role and format. He invited discussion by Coordination Committee members. Dina Nolan, MID, suggested continuing the Coordination Committee through the adoption of the Coordination Agreement by the seven Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the Madera Subbasin. At that point, a Coordination Workgroup would take over and the Coordination Committee would dissolve.

Mr. Davis moved to move forward with the current formation of the Coordination Committee. Mr. Janzen

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seconded the motion. The floor was opened for comment; none was made. The motion was carried unanimously.

3. SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT MADERA SUBBASIN JOINT GSP

Technical Experts, Madera Joint GSP

Malka Kopell, facilitator from the Consensus and Collaboration Program at California State University, Sacramento, reviewed the Joint Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) comment period. The Joint GSP was released for public review and comment in early August 2019. Comments will be accepted through November 9, 2019. Comments can be submitted in writing via a form on the Madera County Water website (https://www.maderacountywater.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Madera-SB-GSP-Comment-Form_DRAFT-1.pdf). Attendees at this and previous subbasin-wide meetings were also encouraged to provide comments directly to the GSAs, who are the decision-making bodies that review the GSP, at GSA board meetings. Finally, the current meeting was held to give stakeholders an opportunity to share comments orally or in writing to a regional body. Ms. Kopell emphasized that the Coordination Committee is not a decision-making body. However, it can make recommendations to the GSAs, and GSA representatives on the Coordination Committee will share the comments made at this meeting with their respective boards.

Technical experts for the four participating GSAs gave brief presentations reviewing key components of the Joint GSP. For details, see the draft Joint GSP at <https://www.maderacountywater.com/madera-subbasin/> and the video recording of the meeting at http://maderacountyca.igm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=2628.

Melanie Aldridge, Madera Water District, reviewed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act's requirements for development of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs), how the Madera Subbasin Joint GSP was developed, and outreach efforts carried out throughout the GSP development process. The Joint GSP was developed with support from grants provided by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Keith Helmuth, City of Madera, reviewed relevant characteristics of the Madera subbasin, including agricultural acreage, consumptive water use, the current 165,900 acre-foot (AF) shortfall between groundwater extraction and groundwater recharge in the subbasin, and planned water supply projects to close the deficit.

Greg Young, Madera County, reviewed possible demand management actions to reduce consumptive use. Significant reductions in consumptive use will be concentrated within the Madera County GSA. The specific demand management actions have not yet been defined and will be hammered out with advisory input from the Madera County GSA Advisory Committee. Potential options, which could be carried out independently or in concert with one another, include establishing groundwater allocations, creating a water market for allocations, creating conservation easements, and/or charging extraction fees. The Madera County GSA will consider administrative considerations and economic repercussions in evaluating which strategies to pursue.

Under the GSP, recharge projects aim for an average net benefit of 60,000 AF per year, with variation based on each year's rainfall. Demand management will reduce consumptive use by 105,900 AF per year by 2040.

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90,000 AF of reduced consumptive use will be within the Madera County GSA, and the remainder will likely come from areas moved from production to recharge projects.

Groundwater extraction will decrease over time during the implementation period from 2020 through 2040, with some continued use of existing stored groundwater throughout that period. With the planned projects and management actions, there is likely to be a continued, but not extreme, lowering of groundwater levels in the interim, before groundwater levels rebound during the sustainability period beginning in 2040. A mitigation program is under consideration for drinking water wells impacted by the continued lowering of groundwater levels. The subbasin is applying for a grant to complete a comprehensive inventory of domestic wells in the subbasin. There are various possible mitigation actions and types of support being considered for impacted drinking water wells. Well owners are likely to be required to sign up to participate in the program ahead of time.

Ms. Nolan reviewed next steps:

- Public comments on the Joint GSP draft will be taken through November 9, 2019
- Public comments may be provided verbally during this workshop as well as during board meetings of the individual GSAs, or in writing at any time during the comment period.
- The GSP preparation consultants will develop revisions to the plan throughout November 2019.
- GSAs will approve the final GSP Coordination Agreement in December 2019, at their respective board meetings.
- The subbasin's four GSPs (this Joint GSP and three others prepared by other GSAs) will be submitted to DWR on January 31, 2020.
- DWR will carry out its own 60-day public comment period.
- DWR will evaluate and approve the plan(s).

4. DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT GSP

Question and answer period regarding the draft Joint GSP

Participants were given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions about the draft Joint GSP.

- What is the final date to submit public comments?
 - November 9, 2019.
- Can written comments be submitted as a text document or must they be submitted using the comment form?
 - The comment form is not required; written comments may be submitted as letters or other text documents.
- Why does the water budget in the GSP exclude 2015 data? How would that data change the water budget?
 - It is based on data from 1989 through 2014, because at the time that the water budget was developed the 2015 data was limited. Additionally, the period through 2014 is more representative of the longer historical period. If 2015 data were included, it would have lowered average precipitation because it was a dry year; however, since the water budget is based on an average of all the years, it would be a small difference.
- Appendix 3D estimates the cost of a mitigation program at \$277,000 per year. When administrative costs, as estimated in the plan, are removed that leaves only \$127,000 per year for actual well

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mitigation – covering only about four wells per year. What was the process for determining the cost estimate for the mitigation program?

- An economist was hired to do the analysis that led to those estimates; consultants present were not able to provide detail about the calculations. Stephanie Anagnoson, Madera County, offered to put the commenter in touch with the economist who did the analysis so that further details could be provided. Additionally, it was noted that the number in the plan is a rough estimate, based upon a limited database of existing drinking water wells, and that a grant application is in development to support developing a better inventory of the relevant wells in the subbasin.
- Would the demand reduction in the Madera County GSA target only agricultural users or would demand reduction apply for non-agricultural users as well? The GSP should make this explicit.
 - The demand reduction outlined in the GSP models only agricultural reduction in the Madera County GSA. However, some specifics will not be determined until implementation takes shape.
- Are the categories of water use in the Madera County GSA besides agricultural and *de minimus* (domestic well pumping 2 AF or less)?
 - The majority of water used in Madera County goes to agriculture, however there are some other uses such as small water systems that are not considered *de minimus*.
- The State Water Resources Control Board has adopted the Central Valley Regional Water Control Board's basin plan amendments, which will lead to water quality management zones in the near future. The GSP should contain provisions for the possibility that other entities (such as water quality management zones) may be formed with significant overlap in their jurisdiction and purpose, and GSAs may need to collaborate or merge with such entities.
- Table 1 in the executive summary of the GSP mentions a confidence interval of 25% on either side of estimates, such as estimates of extraction and inflows. Is this a genuine representation of the uncertainty in the estimates and calculations in the GSP? How can the GSP be interpreted in this light? It is important to be careful about implementing actions that could cause economic damage based upon such uncertain numbers.
 - Yes, this is an accurate reflection of the level of certainty of the water measurements presented. For example, there are no actual measurements of pumping, so these numbers are estimated based upon assumed evapotranspiration of crops being grown. The plan provides the best estimates, based on best practices, given available data. During the implementation period, water levels will continue to be monitored so that adaptive management can be carried out based upon actual conditions, whether lower or higher than the estimates.
- Given current overdraft levels and assuming a linear decrease in water use due to demand management actions, the subbasin will reach 1 million AF of overdraft over the 20-year implementation period.
 - The planned demand reduction will be incremental rather than linear, starting with only several thousand AF reduction in the first year and ramping up to 90,000 AF reduction from 2020 levels by 2040 – leading to higher overdraft over the implementation period.

5. WRITTEN COMMENTS

Participants were given time to develop comments about the draft Joint GSP and engage with staff and GSP preparation consultants. Participants were able to submit their written comments at the meeting or at any

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time after the meeting ahead of the November 9, 2019 comment period deadline.

6. VERBAL COMMENTS

Participants will be given an opportunity to verbally present their comments about the draft Joint GSP.

Participants were invited to share verbal comments. These could be the same as comments that had been or would be submitted in writing.

Jason Howard presented a verbal review of a letter submitted to the Joint GSP on behalf of Gunner Ranch West. The comment requests that management areas be formed within the Madera County GSA to tailor allocations and other demand reduction efforts based upon the geologic, and therefore groundwater, variability within the GSA. Mr. Howard requested that the GSP state explicitly that non-agricultural users will not be the focus of demand reduction.

Madeline Harris, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, said that the GSP, as written, prioritizes agriculture as the highest use of water, whereas State law requires the human right to water be protected as the highest use of water. The mitigation program, while an important consideration, is not sufficient. Ms. Harris said that the plan does not adequately lay out how projects and management actions will balance the overdraft and protect domestic well users. Communities that rely on domestic wells will bear the economic burden of continued overdraft by losing their source of drinking water.

7. NEXT STEPS

The next meeting of the Madera Subbasin Joint GSP Coordination Committee will be held December 2, 2019 at the Madera County Board of Supervisors Chambers.

Members of the public may submit written comments to the Joint GSP, or verbal comments to their GSA board, by November 9, 2019.