

# MID-KAWEAH GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY BOARD

## SUMMARY MINUTES

October 8, 2019 – 3:00 p.m.

Tulare Public Library & Council Chambers  
491 North M Street – Tulare, CA 93274

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dennis Mederos, David Martin, Randy Groom<sup>(Alt.)</sup>, David Bixler,  
Howard Stroman, Greg Collins

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Nelsen

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Randy Groom

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Hendrix, Valerie Kincaid, Aaron Fukuda, Rob Hunt, Trisha Whitfield,  
Andrew Bettencourt, Roxanne Yoder

OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Moyle (Stantec), Blake Wilbur (Chair, Advisory Committee)

### 1. CALL TO ORDER REGULAR SESSION:

Chair Mederos opened the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chair Mederos called for comments from any members of the public present at the meeting. None were forthcoming.

### 3. GENERAL BUSINESS

#### a. Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting on September 10, 2019

It was moved by Vice Chair Martin, seconded by Director Stroman, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2019 meeting.

#### b. Financial Report

##### i. Financial Statements – Year-to-Date

P. Hendrix provided an overview of the financial statements for the Board's review and consideration. It was then moved by Director Bixler, seconded by Alt. Director Groom, and unanimously carried to approve the report as submitted.

#### c. GSP – Status

##### i. Public Comments Received To-Date – Summary

P. Hendrix introduced the item and C. Moyle provided a PowerPoint Presentation for the Board's review and consideration related to the public comment process concerning the GSP. He summarized the comments with noting that 12 comment letters were received totaling 180 pages in length.

Highlights included the following issues: Interconnected surface waters, declining water levels, water quality and consideration of small-system and domestic users. A copy of the presentation is to be distributed to the Board.

ii. GSA Member Comments – Overview

Director Collins presented a comment statement, entitled “Tragedy of the Aquifer” for the Board’s review and consideration.

*Tragedy of the Aquifer*

*Think of the Kaweah Watershed's ground water system as a bank account. Water flows from the Sierra Nevada and replenishes that bank account by percolating into the aquifer - a deposit into the ground water account. When Visalia, Tulare and the farmers in the Kaweah Watershed need water for agriculture and domestic uses they make a withdrawal from this ground water bank account. Since 1987, that account has dropped 120 feet in Visalia. In other words, withdrawals are exceeding deposits.*

*Withdrawals from the ground water bank account fall into two general categories – urban and agriculture. Urban withdrawals account for 5 to 7 percent of the take while farming interests account for the balance of the withdrawals.*

*In addition to deposits made into the ground water bank account from the adjacent Sierras, outside deposits from the Friant-Kern Canal are also made. The size of these deposits (measured in acre-feet) range from year to year. Yet, even with this outside deposit, which has been in place since the early 50s, the ground water depth continues to decline.*

*Visalia has been on the cutting edge of replenishing its underlying aquifer by working with the Tulare Irrigation District to replenish the aquifer by percolating surface water (provided by TID) into basins upstream from Visalia while providing clean, treated water from the wastewater treatment plant to farmers downstream from Visalia. In good water years (2017 and 2019), the volume of water recharged equals the amount of water consumed by Visalians, approximately 35,000 acre-feet per year. In other words, deposits equal withdrawals. In drier years, withdrawals exceed deposits, especially during very dry years (e.g 2012 to 2016). Over time, Visalians need to recharge more water into the aquifer than it consumes on an annual basis just to make up for the dry years.*

*Failure to understand the trend in our water bank account, failure to understand that we in the San Joaquin Valley live in a desert, and failure to act in a concerted and thoughtful effort to conserve water and replenish our groundwater system, Visalia and the farmers in the Kaweah Basin are destined to suffer a "collapse" in our water bank account - bankruptcy. This collapse has already been experienced by many rural communities, resulting in a loss of domestic water, and in the agricultural community where land has been fallowed, new wells have been dug and existing wells extended deeper.*

*To avoid the tragedy of a collapsed aquifer, Visalia needs to be the voice for change - drought tolerant landscapes, increased recharge basins and the search and implementation of new*

*strategies that will replenish our aquifer bank account. But sadly, Visalia represents only a small percentage, about 3 percent, of the water consumption in the Kaweah Watershed.*

*Here are my suggestions to replenishing our water bank account and striving for a more sustainable state in our management of our ground water system.*

- 1. Require all cities in the basin to reduce their water consumption by 5 percent annually. This should be measured in gallons per capita per day (gpcd).*
- 2. Approve a well tax for the entire Kaweah Watershed. These funds could be used for a myriad of water conservation strategies – better irrigation technology, land retirement, periodic conversion of cropland from irrigated to dryland.*
- 3. Continue to construct ground water recharge basins throughout the Kaweah Basin.*
- 4. Determine if Visalia could use all its storm water basins for recharge during the non-rainy part of the year.*
- 5. Purchase land that is marginal for agriculture and place them under a habitat preserve.*
- 6. Encourage conversion of crop land to solar farms.*
- 7. Work with SRT to expand their footprint by purchasing land adjacent to their preserves and converting them to natural habitat.*

A. Fukuda then provided information regarding the Tulare ID's use of a hydrogeologist to conduct a peer review of the GSP.

iii. Process Leading to Final GSP

This item was covered via the PowerPoint presented by C. Moyle. He discussed regulatory requirements for consideration of public comments, comment segregation into three priorities, upcoming recommendations by the Advisory Committee, legal counsel input, and board approval of changes to the GSP.

iv. Grant Funds

P. Hendrix provided an informational update on the Prop 1 grant reimbursement request and the Subbasin's intended application for a Prop 68 grant for past GSP preparatory costs.

d. Kaweah Subbasin Coordination

i. Coordination Agreement – Status

P. Hendrix provided a status update on the Coordination Agreement, noting that the local GSA managers have recently met to discuss the process leading to finalization of the Agreement.

ii. Assessment of Neighboring GSPs

P. Hendrix and A. Fukuda provided an assessment overview for the Board's review and consideration. Reviews are underway for both Kaweah Subbasin GSPs and adjacent subbasin GSPs.

e. Advisory Committee – Report by Committee Chair

- i. GSP Comment Review – B. Wilbur provided a report for the Board’s review and consideration, summarizing the special meetings of the Committee in October to conduct a thorough assessment of key public comments submitted on the draft GSP.

**4. BOARD/STAFF UPDATES, FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS OR OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST**

None provided.

**5. CLOSED SESSION**

Chair Mederos adjourned to closed-session discussions at 3:44 p.m. as noted by V. Kincaid

- a. Gov’t Code §54956.9 – Anticipated Litigation

**6. RECONVENE FROM CLOSED SESSION**

Chair Mederos reconvened from closed session at 4:47 p.m. V. Kincaid advised there were no actions taken in closed session.

**7. ADJOURNMENT** Next Regular Meeting – November 12, 2019

Chair Mederos adjourned the meeting at 4:47 p.m.

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Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Board Chair

Attest:

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Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Board Secretary