# MEETING MINUTES

## MIUGSA Stakeholder Guidance Committee Meeting #4

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| **Date:** | 3/9/2022 |
| **Attendees:** | Olsson: Jim Schneider, Stacey Roach, Haley Engstrom, Mallory Morton<br>MID: Hicham ElTal, Matt Beaman, Jennifer McMaster<br>SGC: Galen Miyamoto, Tom Dinwoodie, Maxwell Norton, Joe Scoto, Ben Migliazzo, Todd May, Arlan Thomas, Stu Nakashima, Breanne Vandenberg, Bob Weimer, Joe Sansoni, Olivia Gomez, Jean Okuye, Galen Miyamoto, Greg Olzack, Daniel Chavez, Justin Vinson, Ken Elwin<br>Online: Lacy Carothers, Lisa Kayser-Grant, Susan Walsh |
| **Project #** | 021-03426 |

## MIUGSA GSP IMPLEMENTATION – SGC MEETING #4

1. **Welcome/Introductions/"Parking Lot" [Meeting commenced at 10:06 PST]**
   - Matt Beaman welcomed the stakeholder group and members of the MIUGSA Board of Directors. Several board members were introduced to the stakeholders.
   - Jim introduced the agenda for the meeting.

2. **Presentation/Discussion**
   - Review of Previous Materials (Jim Schneider)
     - A basic timeline of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act was presented and intended to inform the group the reason for the meeting.
     - Hicham noted that the California DWR has reviewed the GSP, and determined that the GSP was "incomplete". SGMA allows 180 days to resubmit a GSP after DWR makes its determination. The final submittal will be in July.
     - Jim reviewed the scope of Olsson's role in this implementation project with three tasks: water supply evaluation, public engagement, and recommendations.
       - Water Supply Evaluation: Water supplies come from precipitation, surface water deliveries from MID, native groundwater (naturally occurring), and the developed supply (seepage from imported water).
         - Precipitation is variable through time.
         - Surface water deliveries from MID average about 450,000 acre-feet (AF) per year but annually that number varies dramatically depending on climate conditions and can be challenging to manage.
         - MID also pumps groundwater into canals to supplement surface water supplies.
         - MID supplies are delivered along the canal system or seep into the ground. Less than 300,000 AF per year is delivered to farms, the rest is recharged.
         - Agricultural groundwater users in MIUGSA typically either use groundwater exclusively, or supplement their surface water deliveries with groundwater use. Over the last 30 years, approximately 20,000 to 30,000 acres have used groundwater exclusively.

- Users that supplement their surface water deliveries with groundwater pumping are able to use more water annually than those that only use groundwater.
- Comment from SGC member: How did you come up with the average for the exclusive groundwater use?
    - Jim replied that this is calculated based on the groundwater modeling that's performed. Matt confirmed. We are not directly measuring groundwater extractions at this time.

- Summary of Feedback (Jim Schneider)
    - Jim reviewed the Flexibility vs. Certainty quadrant map. The idea of this was to gauge the stakeholders' opinions on how certain they want the allocation to be up front and whether they want several flexible options to move water between years and fields.
    - Breakout groups and surveys were completed by the stakeholders to give their opinions on which quadrant they would like to land in for an allocation program. Collectively, the group would like to see High Certainty, and Moderate Flexibility.
    - Jim reviewed some terms and definitions for allocation program components.
    - Comment from SGC member: What do you mean by other entities in water trading?
        - Jim commented that the other entities could be quite broad. Hicham commented that it could be between local irrigators and cities as an example. Reminding that there is a groundwater ordinance that prohibits the export of groundwater outside of the county.
    - Jim reviewed the Natural Resources Districts in Nebraska that regulate groundwater pumping. Many have had allocations for almost 40 years.
    - Comment from SGC member: If a groundwater ordinance prohibits the export of groundwater outside of the county, we should reflect that in the language of the presentation under the trading definition.
        - Hicham commented that it should say "out-of-basin". Jim agreed to adjust for this comment.
    - Comment from SGC member: Who enforces these penalties in Nebraska?
        - Jim commented that there is not a state water board. They are governed by a locally elected board. General enforcement at the state level is done by the Legislature. Many board members serve for decades.
    - Comment from SGC member: Except for the last example, irrigated agriculture does not seem to be a large part of the overall area. What's the rest of the area used for?
        - Jim answered that much of the rest is made up of rangeland.
    - Jim reviewed the survey results from stakeholders on the various allocation plan components.
    - Comment from SGC member: Is salinity management a consideration in much of Nebraska?
        - Jim answered that it is not as big of a problem as nitrate leaching in Nebraska.
    - Comment from SGC member: To me, it would be feasible to trade water and provide surface water to areas where pumping would not be as desirable.
        - Jim answered that this could be accomplished through pooling. Hicham commented that most of the conversation today is geared toward naturally occurring groundwater supply (native yield), and not so much on developed imported surface water recharged in the aquifer. Once we establish our policies on native supply, we can discuss surface water. Trading can only occur between

willing users. We have some zones that identify where pooling can occur so that we don't exacerbate existing issues. Jim pointed out that for these natural resources districts (NRD) examples, they have something in their rules called "variances." A variance means that anyone can come in and ask for a variance in the rules and they are considered on a case-by-case basis before the board. Since this program for MIUGSA is just beginning, variances could be something considered down the road and should not be the focus now as the program is getting off the ground.

- Comment from SGC member: In terms of trading, we don't want to get too far into the weeds on that as the program starts. Trading will become self-limiting because the native yield is not that high.
- Comment from SGC member: Water marketing should not become a permanent part of the management of the land. If water management becomes lucrative, you end up distorting the real estate market and it ultimately ends family farming. Allowing land to become permanently fallowed lets them fill with noxious weeds.
- Comment from SGC member: I disagree, we will have to permanently fallow lands to stay in compliance and reduce pumping. If this drought continues, many farms do not have wells and fallowing will happen.
    - Hicham answered that's why, within MIUGSA, the MID developed water is crucial. About 120,000 AF of surface water is recharged annually even in dry years.

**[Break at 11:00 PST]**

**[Meeting resumed at 11:13 PST]**

- Recommendations (Jim Schneider)
    - Jim presented the recommendations for the allocation program, which are based on feedback gathered from the Stakeholder Guidance Committee over the course of the meetings and surveys and technical information from the Merced Water Resources Model (MercedWRM).
    - A maximum allocation period of three years is recommended. The decision for allocation limit will be set by the Board at a later date.
    - Some amount of carry-over should be allowed.
    - Enforceable penalties should be drafted.
    - Pooling should be allowed in certain geographic zones.
    - The MIUGSA Board should have the power to set allocation limits during exceptionally wet or dry periods.
    - Trading should not be allowed at this time.
    - Comment from SGC member: When does the allocation period get determined?
        - Jim answered that an allocation period could be 2023-2025. The next allocation period would be determined a year before the next period begins (early Year 3).
    - Comment from SGC member: As the State law reads now, will local boards have flexibility to make modifications depending on what's working or not?
        - Hicham answered that it is the Basin's call and how well the GSAs are performing compared to the GSP.
    - Comment from SGC member: How were the zones developed?

- Jim answered that results from a recharge scenario in the MercedWRM was used to determine the zones. the aquifer retains water much better in Zones B and D based on the injection runs simulated by the MercedWRM.

- Comment from SGC member: Explain the zones a little further. What do each of the zones represent?
  - Jim replied that pooling be restricted to each of these zones. You cannot pool water allocated to acres in Zone A to Zone B.
- Comment from SGC member: Zone C near El Nido has some major issues with subsidence. You should consider another Zone E for El Nido to prevent transfers to that area.
  - Hicham answered that these areas are subject to change, but we want to know what issues you see with these areas initially. Olsson will make more detailed exhibits to help stakeholders see the zone boundaries in relation to city boundaries, waterways, roadways, etc.
- Discussion on Measurement Options
  - The pros and cons for pumping measurements were reviewed. (Flow Meters vs. Consumptive Use Satellite Data)
  - The vast majority of stakeholders recommended flow meters. Several respondents also were in favor of using consumptive use (CU) data to complement flow meters.
  - Jim mentioned that CU data is already available.
  - Hicham said that all systems have their limitations, for example the evapotranspiration/CU data is calibrated based on weather station data and is not always totally accurate for the entire Basin.
  - Comment from SGC member: What do the Nebraska NRD's use for their allocations?
    - Jim answered that they all use flow meters.
  - Hicham commented that ET data (METRIC) was used to calibrate the groundwater model. If a flow meter is used on a farm, the ET data can be used to identify water users that have very high CU in comparison with their flow meter reporting.
  - Comment from SGC member: How do you monitor every flow meter in the GSA?
    - Jim answered that the NRD's read the flow meter once per year after the irrigation season.
  - Jim pulled up the demo website for the Water Accounting Platform from EDF. They use monthly ET data. Flow meter data can also be incorporated into something like this accounting platform. This represents an example of a tool that we can use to implement this program. The group is doing this platform is looking for pilot programs and collaborating agencies. MIUGSA will be participating as a pilot partner, and it is grant-funded.
  - Comment from SGC member: There is a closely regulated program in Ventura County.
    - Hicham said that MIUGSA has more flexibility due to the surface water resources.
  - Jim: Meetings with the SGC could be arranged with this pilot platform as a topic during Summer 2022.
  - Comment from SGC member: Where is the data going to come from for the pilot platform?

- Hicham answered that it will mostly be fictitious. We may be able to use some real data, but it will all be anonymized.

- Jim: ET data for each parcel in California can be viewed on the OpenET Data Portal website. The user will need to create an account.
- Hicham commented that MIUGSA did some modeling regarding carry-over. MIUGSA is going to have to make assumptions for initial carryover policies. We want to encourage carry-over. Additionally, the GSA will need to consider separate rules and policiesfor carry-over of native groundwater and carryover of recharged water. We must encourage users to recharge.
- Comment from SGC member: Your recommendations show 1.1 AF/acre per year of native yield.
  - Jim confirmed. So, a three year allocation would be 3.3 AF/ac.
- Hicham asked for comment from the Board.
  - No other comments now.
- Comment from SGC member: Can I use the full allocation amount during Year 3 of the period? Can you do that in areas of cone of depression?
  - Hicham answered that yes, you can do that because we are only talking about native yield.
- Hicham asked whether the SGC was ok with three-year allocations?
  - Several members confirmed that three years still offers some ability to strategize.
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- Comment from SGC member: Has the MIUGSA experimented with injection wells like in Kern County?
  - Hicham answered no, it is extremely expensive. Dry wells are a current pilot project. A reverse leaching system could also be explored through grant funding.

- Next Steps
  - Hicham commented that the next steps will be for the MIUGSA and Olsson to draft rules. Once that is completed, we will meet again with the SGC.
  - Members of the committee requested a more detailed map of the zones that includes City labels and boundaries.

**[Formal Meeting Ended at 12:03 PST]**

**3. Optional Time for More Discussion**