



Groundwater sustainability discussed at MID workshop

For Immediate Release: September 13, 2019

Contact: Mike Jensen

209-354-2856

mjensen@mercedid.org

The Merced Irrigation District Board of Directors met today to discuss and receive an update during a public workshop on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (**SGMA**). Established by the state legislature in 2015, the law requires communities with overdrafted groundwater basins become sustainable by 2040. This means that a community is not taking more water than can be replenished back into the local groundwater basin. All groundwater pumpers in the basin are expected to cooperate and provide the best outcome.

The SGMA law both enables – and requires – local government to take actions to reach groundwater sustainability. ***If a community fails to address its challenges, or meet the set deadlines, the State of California is required to step in and manage a community's local groundwater.***

In accordance with the state mandate, the Merced Irrigation Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (**MIUGSA**) was established in spring of 2017. The agency is comprised of local government agencies within the Merced Irrigation District boundary and includes:

- City of Atwater (Municipal)
- City of Livingston (Municipal)
- City of Merced (Municipal)
- Le Grand Community Services District (Municipal)
- Merced Irrigation District (Ag and Domestic)
- Planada Community Services District (Municipal)
- Winton Water and Sanitary District (Municipal)

In addition to MIUGUSA, two other Groundwater Sustainability Agencies – or GSAs – have been formed to address groundwater for the Merced Groundwater Basin. They are: Merced Subbasin GSA and the Turner Island Water District GSA.

A draft [Merced Groundwater Sustainability Plan](#) for management of eastern Merced Groundwater was recently released and is open for public comments.

The eastern Merced Groundwater Basin is comprised of approximately 500,000 acres and generally defined by the boundaries of the Merced Irrigation District: to the north by the Merced River, to the west by the San Joaquin River; to the east by the Sierra Nevada foothills; and to the south by the Chowchilla River, less the area within the boundaries of Chowchilla Water District. MIUGSA occupies around 164,000 acres of the basin.

During the MID Board workshop today, there was discussion about the Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan. According to analysis in the document, the local groundwater is being overdrafted by about 200,000 acre feet per year. That's the same amount of water that would fill Lake Yosemite about 25 times.

Several projects have been identified in the draft sustainability plan to both monitor and support groundwater replenishment. Groundwater pumping reduction from both domestic and agricultural users is expected in the coming years to help comply with the state mandate.

Although the vast majority of MID's irrigation supplies are derived from Lake McClure, the District has a lengthy history of studying and researching local groundwater. The District has been a partner in several local studies and processes intended to support eastern Merced County's water supply, including groundwater. Most recently, the District and the City of Merced announced intent to develop MID sources of water for use by city residents. This would provide a tremendous benefit by reducing municipal impact on the local groundwater resources. At the same time, MID water flowing through groundwater replenishment basins and unlined canals continues to support local groundwater sustainability.

To learn more about MID's efforts to support local groundwater sustainability, click [here](#).

The next public meeting to discuss the draft Merced Groundwater Sustainability Plan is slated for 6 p.m. on Sept. 18 at the Sam Pipes Room in the Merced Civic Center, 678 W. 18th Street.

###