



MEMORANDUM

TO: SLDMWA Board of Directors, Alternates

FROM: John Brodie, Water Resource Programs Manager
Joe McGahan, Regional Drainage/Westside Watershed Coalition Coordinator

DATE: November 10, 2022

RE: Activity Agreements – Staff Report for October, 2022

This memorandum serves as the Staff Report for October 2022 regarding specified¹ Water Authority activities not separately addressed on the Board meeting agenda.

1. Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Activity Summary

General Westside-San Joaquin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP)

Project proponents should know by the end of this month whether grant applications submitted in August will be approved for funding. Del Puerto Water District is seeking an available \$950,000 in the San Joaquin River Funding Area for a Decision Support Tool that will assist with water storage projects. Westlands Water District submitted applications for two projects in the Tulare Kern Funding Area: one for an aquifer storage and recovery well project and a second for an above ground storage project.

Staff is investigating possible enhancements to the Opti Project database, including a map layer that shows completed or in-progress work. Staff continues to update projects already submitted, and local project sponsors continue to add proposed items for consideration. A comprehensive call for projects and a re-ranking and prioritization of all projects is anticipated for next fiscal year.

2. Sustainable Groundwater Management Activity (SGMA) Activity Summary

Coordinated Activities

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) have until the end of this month to submit fall water level data to DWR's SGMA portal. Measurements should have been collected in September and October. The data will be used in the Subbasin's Consolidated Annual Report for Water Year 2022. Work on the Annual Report is underway, and must be submitted to DWR by April 1, 2023.

¹ For the sake of completeness, this includes those Activity Agreements that have been approved by the Board of Directors, but not yet signed by all interested members and/or participants (i.e., the Los Vaqueros Expansion Project Activity Agreement, the Exchange Contractors 2019-2023 Transfer Program Activity Agreement, and the Westside-San Joaquin Integrated Regional Water Management Activity Agreement).

General SGMA Activities

DWR updated its timetable for evaluation of the Subbasin's amended Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). Evaluations and final determinations on the amended Plans, submitted in July, were originally anticipated by the end of this calendar year. DWR's SGMA staff now says those determinations will not be released until the first quarter of calendar year 2023.

Work is underway for projects funded by the \$7.6-million-dollar grant awarded to the Delta-Mendota Subbasin from the state's SGMA Implementation Grant Program Round 1. Grant-funded activities include water supply reliability and groundwater recharge projects, additional monitoring and data collection, and funding for mandatory 2025 Groundwater Sustainability Plan updates. Del Puerto Water District served as the lead applicant on behalf of the Subbasin, and signed the grant agreement with DWR in October.

Subbasin GSP groups are preparing a request for \$20 million in the SGMA Implementation Grant Program Round 2. Proposed activities include additional water supply reliability and groundwater recharge projects in addition to enhancing monitoring and data collection efforts that will be started with Round 1 funds.

3. Drainage Activity Summary

Grassland Basin Drainage Management Steering Committee Activity Summary

- GBD Budget

Work was initiated to develop the FY 2023-2024 GBD Activity Agreement budget.

- Regional Board Grassland Bypass Project Stakeholder Meeting

A Regional Board meeting is scheduled for January 2023. Participated in development of agenda and timeline.

- Legal Issues

Ongoing support is provided to support the legal issues that the Authority is involved in.

- Mud Slough Restoration Project

The Water Authority adopted CEQA for the project in December 2021. There were comments received on the project from the State Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and a group of commenters led by the Planning and Conservation League (PCL). A meeting is being scheduled with CDFW to review and move the project forward.

- Grassland Water District Monitoring Wells

A total of 10 observation wells are planned to be installed to monitor groundwater levels and quality within the San Joaquin River Improvement Project and in a portion of Grassland Water District to the north. Work continues on permitting issues from Merced County and landowner issues.

- Compliance Monitoring

Work is continuing to comply with the monitoring requirement of the 2019 Revised WDRs and the December 2019 Use Agreement. This monitoring includes particulate sediment and fish collection and analysis to continue to analyze possible impacts of very infrequent discharge from the Grassland Bypass Project to Mud Slough and the San Joaquin River.

- Grassland Drainage Area Coalition

Work continues to provide coverage for farmers within the Grassland Drainage Area for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Reporting forms are being prepared to send to farmers in late 2022 for reporting 2022 nitrogen application.

- Work is ongoing to support the Prop 84 Grant administered by Panoche Drainage District for improvements to the San Joaquin River Improvement Project.

San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority Activity Summary

- Prepare and lead San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority Board meeting

Topics included development of plan to comply with CVSalts Nitrate Control Program through a management zone. Research of various means to comply are being researched.

- Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition

Work continues to provide coverage for farmers within the Grassland Drainage Area for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. This includes managing the monitoring program, assisting farmers with the necessary reporting to comply with the program and preparing reports for the Regional Board. Forms are being prepared to send to growers for reporting 2022 nitrogen application.

- Groundwater Protection Formula, Values and Targets

Coalitions are developing a methodology to establish nitrogen loading values and targets as required by the WDRs. Ongoing work includes meeting with other coalitions and staff developing the values and targets along with supporting that work through the SJVDA budget.

- Management Zones

The Central Valley Basin Plan's Nitrate Permitting Strategy divided the Central Valley into Priority 1, Priority 2 and non-Prioritized basins. The Westside Coalition is in Priority 2. Priority 1 basins have developed and begun to implement their nitrate programs. The Regional Board is expected to issue notices to comply to Priority 2 basins in early 2023. The Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition is in a Priority 2 basin and therefore is expected to receive a Notice to Comply from the Regional Board in 2023. The Westside Coalition is working to develop a plan to help form a Management Zone to comply with the requirements. The Management Zone will incorporate all dischargers of nitrate to groundwater, including municipal wastewater plants, dairies and industrial dischargers. The Management Zone must identify domestic wells that are high in nitrate and develop and plan to provide alternative water. This added program will significantly increase the SJVDA budget to support this work and is being supported through the SJVDA budget.

- Salt Control Program

Phase I of the Salt Control Program involves the development of a Prioritization and Optimization Study (P&O Study). Consultants are compiling data to characterize current salinity conditions of both surface and groundwater across the Central Valley. Phase I of the Salt Control Program is expected to last years. This work is supported through the SJVDA budget.

- Prop 84 Real Time Program Grant

Work continues on upgrading various monitoring stations and gathering monitoring data. Remaining tasks include maintaining the stations and modeling to determine and manage salt discharges to the San Joaquin River.