



MEMORANDUM

TO: SLDMWA Board of Directors, Alternates

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

DATE: April 8, 2021

RE: Activity Agreements – Staff Report for March 2021

This memorandum serves as the Staff Report for March 2021 regarding specified¹ Water Authority activities not separately addressed on the Board meeting agenda.

1. Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Activity Summary

San Joaquin River Funding Area (SJRFA)

Work continues to implement the SJRFA Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP). SLDMWA staff, in consultation with the IRWM Technical Advisory Committee, advanced the City of Newman Newman Environmental Wetland System (NEWS) project to be the recipient of the Proposition 1 Phase 2 DACIP grant recipient for the SJRFA. The project continues to move forward and staff is coordinating between the City of Newman and Contra Costa Water District, who acts as the grant administrator for the DACIP grant. Current work is focused on securing environmental documents and permits; and the project's design, construction and landscape plans are all in progress.

Tulare-Kern Funding Area (TKFA)

SLDMWA completed a grant agreement with DWR for Proposition 1 Round 1 funding for the Westside San Joaquin Region. It includes funding for four projects within the SJRFA and one project within the TKFA. A kick-off meeting with the project proponents is scheduled later this month.

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

SLDMWA staff is finalizing an informational sheet which will be used to highlight the accomplishments of the Westside-San Joaquin IRWM Region, which includes bringing more than \$31.4 million in state funding to the region for projects and leveraging nearly \$110.1 million in local capital. These advocacy pages will be used to increase public awareness of the benefits of

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).

the IRWM program to the region and to promote continued funding of the IRWM program to policymakers.

SLDMWA staff participated in the IRWM Roundtable of Regions regular and DACI working group meetings, where topics included a presentation on the Water Resilience Portfolio by the California Natural Resources Agency and an update on the timeline for Proposition 1 Round 2 grant funding. DWR anticipates releasing a final proposal solicitation package (PSP) for this funding in late 2021, with award announcements anticipated in 2022. SLDMWA staff will issue a “Call for Projects” to update the Opti database with current projects and update project ranking criteria in advance of the grant submittal deadline.

2. Sustainable Groundwater Management Activity (SGMA) Activity Summary

Northern and Central Delta-Mendota Regions

County representatives in the Northern and Central Regions continue to discuss a process for having GSAs provide input on well permit applications within the GSA boundaries. GSA representatives in Stanislaus County are waiting to do a preliminary trial of their review process once a new well application is received by the County. A similar meeting for Merced County was held in early February. Merced County officials intend to hold meetings with individual GSAs as they look to possibly rewrite the county’s well ordinance. The ordinance rewrite could occur as soon as the middle of the year. Fresno County officials are reviewing a legal decision before deciding how to proceed on this topic.

The Northern and Central Management Committees held their regular monthly meeting at the end of March. During this meeting, the Committees reviewed and provided approval for the Subbasin’s Consolidated Water Year 2020 (WY2020) Annual Report. A summary of Subbasin conditions indicate that during WY2020, the Subbasin experienced a slight reduction in groundwater storage. Groundwater quality monitoring throughout the Subbasin showed sustainable conditions at most sites. However, several groundwater quality sites could not be sampled due to access issues, lack of pumps, or miscommunication. Several GSP groups have adjusted their groundwater quality networks to account for sites that could not be accessed or sampled this past year. Additionally, the Northern and Central Regions continue to collect and share data for the Regions’ well census and inventory project, which aims to locate and identify wells that may support ongoing monitoring efforts.

Staff and consultants are scheduling meetings with Northern and Central GSA representatives to go over the agencies’ first quarter 2021 Tracking Tool for GSP implementation. The tools help GSAs and member agencies stay on track with monitoring, SGMA compliance and GSP implementation tasks.

General SGMA Activities

The Delta-Mendota Subbasin's Consolidated Water Year 2020 (Oct. 1, 2019 - Sep. 30, 2020) Annual Report was submitted to the Department of Water Resources on April 1, 2021, meeting the state's submission deadline. The Coordination Committee held a special meeting in late March for final review and approval of the Annual Report. The various Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) are in the monitoring window for the Seasonal High Groundwater levels, which closes at the end of April.

A kickoff meeting will be scheduled this month with GSI Environmental Inc. to begin a subsidence characterization and project feasibility study for the Subbasin. The consulting team will meet with the Subbasin Technical Working Group to discuss data needs and possible data sources. The study will be supported by funds from the Subbasin's Proposition 68 Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) grant.

The second of three planned inter-basin coordination meetings is scheduled later this month. The Subbasin's Facilitation Support Services (FSS) program provides support for inter-basin coordination efforts through a program with DWR and facilitators from Stantec. Representatives from the Delta-Mendota Subbasin are meeting with counterparts from the Chowchilla, Madera, and Merced Subbasins. The first meeting focused on defining SGMA terminology of regional importance; and identifying discussion topics for future meetings. Each Subbasin is expected to make a short (15-minute) presentation to include information on subsidence rates and impacts, key areas that must be addressed, and how subsidence is reflected in the Subbasin's GSP.

Staff participated in informational workshops and webinars including the Flood Managed Aquifer Recharge (FloodMAR) Network, and on the California Groundwater Update (Bulletin 118) 2020 Update.

3. Drainage Activity Summary

Grassland Basin Drainage Management Steering Committee Activity Summary

- Drainage Management Plan Revision – The Grassland Basin Drainers (GBD) were required to submit a Drainage Management Plan to the Regional Board on December 6, 2021. This was an update to the 2003 Westside Regional Drainage Plan. The Regional Board sent the Plan out for public comment, hosted a public meeting and subsequently requested a revision to the Plan by May 31, 2021, addressing control and treatment, operation and maintenance procedures, critical milestones, compliance with boron and molybdenum objectives and the long-term approach.
- Wetland Mitigation Fund – the GBD have been working with the local wetland managers and Reclamation to develop projects to fund wetland area improvements using funds accumulated during the 2009 Use Agreement. The funds amounts to \$435,245. Currently, the process is waiting for Reclamation to receive approval from the Oversight Committee. A Memorandum of Understanding will need to be developed and approved by the Authority at a subsequent meeting.

- Threat to Fish Report – The GBD are required to submit a report on July 31, 2021 under Section 13267 of the California Water Code that would include all data available on fish tissue sampling since the beginning of the Grassland Bypass Project since 1996. The request focuses on selenium and was in part triggered by deformed split tail found at the federal pumps in 2011. Consultants have been retained and some sampling is to occur this spring to augment this report.
- Mud Slough Mitigation Project – the project to restore Mud Slough (north) flows to the Newman Lake north of Highway 140 is ongoing. A CEQA Initial Study is being developed for the project and will be circulated for public comment in late April/ early May. Once the public comments are reviewed and addressed, it is anticipated that the Authority will be asked to approve the project in June 2021. After CEQA approval permits will be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board, the Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Other ongoing activities – continue to review GBD invoices, manage storm flow activities, prepare annual monitoring reports, and data management and management of the Third Party Group for the Grassland Drainage Area Coalition to implement the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority Activity Summary

- Continue management of the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition to comply with the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Follow up calls and emails were answered to assist farmers in completing their paperwork requirements. Manage field monitoring program and provide update of the management plan to the Regional Board. Review invoices from consultants and prepare letters to administrative staff. Continue to update membership database. Prepare video for annual outreach and management plan compliance.
- Assist grower members in completing the required reporting forms.
- Participate in group conference calls regarding surface and groundwater management plans, groundwater protection formulas and the CV Salts prioritization and optimization studies. Prepare outreach plan. Meet with Regional Board and consultants on status of compliance issues including monitoring and management plans.
- Prepare mailing to farmer members regarding the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan and nitrogen application reporting. Manage consultants revision of the web portal so farmers could report on line.
- Prepare annual San Joaquin River chlorpyrifos and diazinon report. Manage ongoing monitoring.
- Management continued for the Prop 84 Real Time Management Program Grant for compliance with the San Joaquin River Salt and Boron TMDL. Follow up and direct field work in northerly stations.