



## MEMORANDUM

TO: SLDMWA Board of Directors, Alternates

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

DATE: July 15, 2021

RE: Activity Agreements – Staff Report for June 2021

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This memorandum serves as the Staff Report for June 2021 regarding specified<sup>1</sup> 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 on the SJRFA Proposition 1 Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP) grant. The Newman City Council recently approved a Master Plan and Environmental Studies for the proposed Newman Community Conservation Area. The Newman Environmental Wetlands System (NEWS) will comprise 21 acres of the overall 78-acre site and is funded by the Proposition 1 DACIP grant. Tasks for this project are on schedule for completion prior to the July 2022 deadline.

Work is underway on all projects for the Proposition 1 Round 1 IRWM Implementation grant for the Westside-San Joaquin (WSJ) IRWM Region. The grant is administered through SLDMWA and includes funding for four projects within the SJRFA and one project within the Tulare-Kern Funding Area.

#### *Tulare-Kern Funding Area (TKFA)*

The City of Huron Groundwater Supply Well and Recharge Project was awarded Proposition 1 Round 1 funding funding in the TKFA. This project will construct new groundwater and monitoring wells for the City of Huron, a designated disadvantaged community (DAC). Drilling for the new wells began this week and is expected to be completed by the end of August. Supply well construction will generate approximately 766 acre-feet annually, reducing the community's need to purchase water by meeting more than 50% of its drinking water demands.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Westside-San Joaquin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP)**

DWR is contacting IRWM regions to request preferred timing for grant proposal deadlines for Proposition 1 Round 2 IRWM Implementation grant proposals. The options are March or September 2022, but could be altered pending DWR's need to disperse SGMA-specific funding contained in expected budget trailer bills.

SLDMWA staff continues to participate in the IRWM Roundtable of Regions (ROR), a statewide IRWM information and advocacy group. The ROR is working to place IRWM specific language into water-specific funding proposals.

## **2. Sustainable Groundwater Management Activity (SGMA) Activity Summary**

### **Northern and Central Delta-Mendota Regions**

Groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) continue to work with the consultant to verify wells identified in the Northern and Central Regions' Well Census and Inventory project. The purpose of the data gathering effort is to identify all wells within the Subbasin, classify them by aquifer, and define them as active or inactive. This information will be loaded into the Subbasin's Data Management System (DMS) for assistance with groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) implementation and expanding the Subbasin's monitoring networks.

The Northern and Central Management Committees held their regular joint meeting in late June. The Management Committees discussed the approaching deadline for uploading the Spring water level data, and the open window for conducting water quality monitoring. They also discussed the first consultation letters issued by DWR regarding GSPs submitted by four subbasins in January 2020.

### **General SGMA Activities**

A presentation and question and answer session on the GSP consultation letters and assessment process was hosted by DWR in late June. None of the four subbasins that received consultation letters have received official "Determination" letters from the Department yet. DWR anticipated that the next round of consultation letters will be issued near the end of the summer, and urged all interested parties to review the released comments for insights into how each of their GSPs might be reviewed by the Department.

Delta-Mendota Subbasin representatives participated in a third inter-basin coordination meeting through the Subbasin's Facilitation Support Services (FSS) program, which provides support for inter-basin coordination efforts through a program with DWR and facilitators from Stantec. Representatives from the Delta-Mendota Subbasin and peers from the Chowchilla, Madera, and Merced Subbasins further discussed the differences in sustainable management criteria (SMC) identified and used in the various subbasins and how to resolve those differences. Future meetings will seek to further those discussions. Staff prepared a request for a time extension for the grant that funds the FSS program, which was set to expire at the end of June. Staff will also seek to expand the scope to include FSS coordination with the Westside and Kings Subbasins.

SLDMWA staff continues to work with the consultant conducting the Delta-Mendota Subbasin Subsidence Characterization and Project Feasibility Study. Activities for this project are being paid for by a Proposition 68 SGMA Implementation grant. The focus of the early stages of this project remain on identifying and filling data gaps.

Madera County will soon join Stanislaus and Merced Counties in revamping their respective processes and requirements for well permit applications. The ordinances in Stanislaus and Merced Counties give GSAs input on applications including the power to approve or deny applications for new agricultural wells based on compliance with the GSP. The Madera County well permitting review process could begin next month.

Each GSP Group, member GSAs and districts completed uploads of required data to DWR's SGMA Portal. Spring water level data were uploaded along with SMC for all representative groundwater level monitoring sites. SLDMWA staff and consultants worked with each GSP Group to make sure these data were uploaded by the July 1, 2021 deadline. The end of the second monitoring phase of the Annual Report cycle now looms: water quality monitoring. The deadline to complete water quality monitoring is August 31.

Staff participated in informational workshops and webinars including the DWR's Flood Managed Aquifer Recharge Program; DWR's Q&A Session on GSP Consultation Letters; Collaborating across SGMA and IRWM; and Drinking Water Needs and Disadvantaged Community Engagement.

### **3. Drainage Activity Summary**

#### **Grassland Basin Drainage Management Steering Committee Activity Summary**

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. Field sampling occurred and the report is being prepared.

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 has been circulated for public comments. Once the public comments are received, reviewed and addressed, the Authority will be asked to consider approval of the project likely in September, 2021. After completion of the CEQA process, permit applications will be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board, the Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. CEQA documents were published at the State Clearinghouse, Merced County, Authority website and through mailings for public release on June 30, with comments due July 30.

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Other ongoing activities – continue to review GBD invoices, manage storm flow activities, prepare annual monitoring reports, support for ongoing litigation and data management and management of the Third Party Group for the Grassland Drainage Area Coalition to implement the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Work includes participation in activities for groundwater protection values.

**Grassland Basin Drainage Management Steering Committee 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 admin staff. Continue to update membership database. Prepare video for annual outreach and management plan compliance. Organize meetings for surface and groundwater management plan outreach. Assist grower members in completing the required reporting forms and self-certification requirements.

Participate in group conference calls regarding surface and groundwater management plans, groundwater protection formulas and the CV-Salts prioritization and optimization studies.

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.