

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
BOARDS OF DIRECTORS
GRASSLAND WATER DISTRICT
GRASSLAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
GRASSLAND GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY**

Los Banos, Merced County, California

February 11, 2025

The joint special meeting of the Boards of Directors of the Grassland Water District, Grassland Resource Conservation District and the Grassland Groundwater Sustainability Agency was called to order by GWD President Pepper Snyder, February 11, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. at the Grassland Water District Office, 200 W. Willmott Avenue, Los Banos, CA.

A quorum of each Board will be present at the meeting. Members of the Board may also be participating remotely from the following locations: • 8450 N Poplar Avenue, Fresno, CA 93711

GWD DIRECTORS PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Pepper Snyder, Bob Nardi, Keith Frost, Jeff Kerry.

GWD DIRECTORS ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Fritz Reid

GRCD DIRECTORS PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Dennis Campini, Mark Erreca, Dan Whitehead (via teleconference).

GRCD DIRECTORS ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Dale Boust

STAFF PRESENT: Ric Ortega, General Manager; Giona Boffa, Administrative Specialist; Ken Swanson, District Engineer/Watermaster; Ellen Wehr, General Counsel; Becky Sisk, Minutes Scribe

GUESTS/ PARTNERS/ CONSULTANTS: Lara Sparks, CDFW; Gerald Pfeiffer, Webfoot Duck Club; Katheryn Pitkin, USFWS.

CORRECTIONS OR ADDITIONS: Mr. Ortega added Resolution 2025-002 to GGSA agenda and removed from GWD agenda Resolution 2025-002.

GRASSLAND GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

SGMA UPDATE:

Mr. Ortega reported that GWD worked with Merced County and the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors on a Pumping Reduction Plan. The plan aims to address localized overdrafts in Zone 2 which includes the Grassland GSA (GGSA), Merced County Delta Mendota GSA and SJREC GSA over a five-year period 2026-2030. This will be included in the annual report along with a well mitigation plan that they are still working on finalizing with landowners and State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) staff. The probationary hearing for the Delta Mendota Subbasin has been delayed and will be postponed for a few months from June to early fall 2025. Merced county has also agreed to move away from the acreage-based cost allocation to a pumping based cost sharing of coordination costs and costs associated with the development of the 2024 single GSP and annual reporting. Staff will work with the county to amend the cost share agreement with Merced County in the coming months.

GGSA RESOLUTION 2025-001 ADOPTING THE DELTA MENDOTA SUBBASIN ZONE 2 (GRASSLAND GSA, MERCED COUNTY DELTA MENDOTA GSA, AND SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTOR GSP GROUP) PUMPING REDUCTION PLAN FOR THE DELTA MENDOTA 2024 GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

A motion was made by Director Nardi, seconded by Director Frost and unanimously passed resolution. Director Reid, GWD and Director Boust GRCD were absent.

GGSA RESOLUTION 2025-002 AUTHORIZING ADDENDUM NO. 22 AND NO. 23 TO CONSULTANT SERVICES AGREEMENT NO. 17-081 WITH PROVOST & PRITCHARD CONSULTING GROUP

A motion was made by Director Frost, seconded by Director Campini and unanimously passed resolution. Director Reid, GWD and Director Boust, GRCD were absent.

GGSA closed at 3:10 p.m.

GRASSLAND WATER DISTRICT

GRASSLAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

PUBLIC PARTISIPATION: Sean Allen, retired CDFW, thanked the board and staff who he has worked with during his 37 year career. He also thanked the GWD for the use of the facilities for his retirement luncheon.

GWD APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Director Nardi, seconded by Director Kerry and unanimously passed to approve minutes from the meeting on January 14, 2025. Director Reid was absent.

GRCD APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Director Erreca, seconded by Director Whitehead (via teleconference) and unanimously passed to approve minutes from the meeting on October 8, 2024. Director Boust was absent.

GWD PAYMENT OF BILLS: A motion was made by Director Nardi, seconded by Director Frost, and unanimously approved to pay February 2025 bills. Director Reid was absent.

GWD FINANCIAL REPORT: Giona Boffa, Administrative Specialist, reviewed the Financial Report for February 2025.

A motion was made by Director Frost, seconded by Director Nardi and unanimously approved to accept the financial report for February 2025. Director Reid was absent.

GRCD FINANCIAL REPORT: Giona Boffa, Administrative Specialist, reviewed the Financial Report for February 2025.

A motion was made by Director Erreca, seconded by Director Whitehead (via teleconference) and unanimously approved the financial report for February 2025. Director Boust was absent.

GRCD RESOLUTION 2025-001 ADOPTING THE GRASSLAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

A motion was made by Director Erreca, seconded by Director Whitehead (via teleconference) and unanimously approved resolution. Director Boust was absent.

CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Mr. Swanson P.E., District Engineer/ Water Master reported on the following:

CVP WATER SUPPLY REPORT: Current storage in Shasta is 4.55 -million-acre feet (MAF) or 133%, which is above the fifteen-year average of 3.007 MAF. Precipitation to date is 55.08 inches which is 158% of the seventy-year average of 34.94 inches. Inflows into Shasta to date is 3,021 TAF which is 168% of the 1,799 TAF average. It is tracking right on track with 1983 which was the wettest year on record. Shasta is currently releasing 60,800 CFS which is 121 TAF a day, which is almost our IL2 yearly allocation of 125 TAF for the year.

LOCAL CONDITIONS: Locally we are very dry. Precipitation last month was 1.01 inches, to date it is 2.37 inches which is 24% of the season average of 10.04 inches.

GWD WATER SUPPLY: GWD is at the end of the water supply year with only a couple of weeks left and there is about 18 TAF of water left. GWD requested 12,500 AF to be rescheduled into water year 2025 and will reallocate 2,000 AF to CDFW which will leave 3,000 AF for use through the remainder of February. He also noted that CalTrans needs to do an inspection on the bridge on Santa Fe Grade at the cross channel, and that staff will drop the level of the SFC on February 19 and refill on February 25.

GENERAL MANAGER' S REPORT

Ric Ortega, General Manager, reported on the following:

CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT OPERATIONS/WATER SUPPLY: Mr. Ortega reported that the Federal Jones Pumping Plant averaged 3,200 CFS in January, generating about 185,000 AF moved South of the Delta. The federal share in San Luis Reservoir was a 615,000 AF, about half compared to 840,000 AF January of 2024. Friant Dam continues to release flows for the San Joaquin Restoration Program averaged 430 CFS with 9,200 AF hitting the Mendota pool.

MAINTENANCE REPORT: Mr. Ortega reported that they met with B&K Valves today regarding the sixteen radial gates, 15 to be installed in the south grasslands next season and one to be installed at the San Luis Canal 3 weir. These radial gates will all allow for more precise and more efficient water delivery on major arteries. He worked with CDFW staff to amend the agreement with GWD to allow for the remaining \$1.158M in drought relief well rehab funding to be used in this manner and for work to be done outside of the GWD boundaries. He also noted that this summer they will excavate the San Luis Canal from HWY 152 to Henry Miller Ave and rehab the Agatha headworks with WCB CREP funding. We are also working with DU to replace the Mud Slough siphon under the Arroyo and Agatha canals this summer. Lastly, they're hoping to break ground on the intertie pipeline and on the holding reservoirs with the city of Los Banos this summer.

CONTRACT RENEWEL: Mr. Ortega reported that formal negotiations have been completed, and a final technical session is scheduled for February 21, 2025. They still need to work through NEPA with USBR and ESA compliance with the USFWS in the coming months.

WATER SUPPLY PROJECTS

NORTH GRASSLANDS INTERTIE: Mr. Ortega reported that the USFWS conducted a cultural survey and GWD's contractor Eric Hansen completed the biological survey of the project site. GWD received the biological report and will send it to USFWS and USBR to keep the process moving forward. CVJV USFWS staff will provide the coverage of the expanded project now that additional funds are available, and the project has grown in scope and scale. They also met with USBR NEPA staff to allow for an amendment to our exchange agreement with USBR and San Luis Water District (SLWD). USBR is comfortable with a note to file since the amendment is only to increase the funding cap to allow for SLWD to invest another \$1.3M and up to \$800,000 per year on O&M. The goal is to get through NEPA in March and execute the funding agreement with USFWS shortly thereafter. This will allow DU to go to bid with the goal of breaking ground in the summer. GWD appreciates the HLCC, Ingomar

and Turlock clubs' close coordination and cooperation as we move this critical water supply project forward. GWD provided draft easement agreements to the clubs and hope to execute those soon. Mrs. Wehr is drafting a letter to DU explaining the availability of funding and the pending federal approvals and agreements. In addition to SLWD funding GWD has a \$3.5M award from the USFWS that we need to get under contract.

LOS BANOS CREEK RESERVOIR: Mr. Ortega reported that Mrs. Wehr has been working with USBR on the water rights front. Mrs. Wehr reported that she drafted a petition to the State Water Board to amend Reclamation's CVP water right permits and include new storage and diversion rights at Los Banos Creek Detention Reservoir and downstream. The petition will be filed by Reclamation this week, and she is meeting with the State Water Board to follow it through the approval process.

They are also working with USBR to amend the Level 2 Exchange Agreement with SLWD to accommodate SLWD to cover GWD's cost share of construction and operation of the project. There are grant funding deadlines they are trying to adhere to with construction being complete by the end of February 2026. From an operations standpoint, the goal is to have the facilities operational by mid-March 2026 to enable filling of the reservoir by the end of July. Due to the amount of time it will take to convey the 8,000 AF of water into reservoir, deliveries into the reservoir need to start by March 15th which fits into the existing flood control diagram of when water can be stored in LBCDR.

LEGAL UPDATE

Ellen Wehr, General Counsel, reported on the following:

LEGISLATION: Mrs. Wehr reported that she is tracking Executive Orders from the new administration closely regarding California water, the orders are focused on improving water supply for the San Joaquin Valley which could benefit the refugees from those improvements. She will be coordinating with the contractor contacts and political contacts in Washington D.C. A freeze on federal grants for all federal departments was quickly lifted and did not affect GWD. There is still a risk that grants, and funding agreements will again be frozen.

SGMA: The group of GSA's who have been subject to longstanding litigation against the groundwater plans has a renewed effort to file a complaint that challenges the new plan and collectively filed a motion to dismiss so that will go to hearing this month. She is organizing participation with the State Water Board who is reviewing the Kern subbasin groundwater plan for determining to putting that subbasin on probation. They are trying to protect the easement lands that pump groundwater in the Kern and are trying to emphasize the importance that SGMA not be implemented that will result in a loss of wetlands.

SURFACE WATER: GWD will continue its outreach to the State Water Board and attempt to improve the Delta "Water Quality Control Plan" update by strengthening the proposed wildlife refuge carve out from curtailments during drought. Refuges are among the only water users proposed for such a carve out, which is a significant achievement.

CALIFORNIA WATER COMMISSION: Mr. Ortega reported that he provided comments at the California Water Commission meeting, emphasizing the continued need for the state to invest in the CVPIA Refuges. Nearly a billion dollars of state funding was awarded for this purpose and the failure of one project cannot be the end all. They have had a few meetings with the Sites reservoir project staff and some of the directors to strategize on how GWD can support funding that will provide a refuge water supply benefit.

STORM WATER AND DRAINAGE

CITY OF LOS BANOS: Mr. Ortega reported that the City of Los Banos has allocated \$4M to match GWD \$1M in grant funding from DWR. The goal is to break ground in the summer-fall of 2025.

LEGISLATION

CAPITAL SOLUTIONS, Jeff More: Mr. More reported that he will be following closely the Executive Orders from the new administration and will reach out to the new staff in Washington D.C. to educate them on refuge water priorities. March 14 is the sunset of the continued resolution currently funding the government. He wants to make sure they work with staff that funding levels remain in place for conservation programs of interest to GWD. He feels there may be a government shutdown trying to work out the Budget Reconciliation and that the Farm Bill with the new tariffs may impact farmers.

SMITH POLICY GROUP, Mark Smith: Mr. Smith reported that at the federal level with the new administration that the High-Speed Rail may not receive federal funding. At the state level they continue to discuss the SGMA/wetland nexus and to develop a framework that provides some level of water supply reliability for wetlands in the San Joaquin Valley that are ground water dependent.

Bill introduction deadline for the state is February 22, 2025, they are already seeing the return of several key pieces of water legislation, including bills on water rights, water planning and resources. They will look through the bill proposals and bring to the board bills that fall within the lane line of GWD. Water continues to be a highly political issue, and he feels like that won't be slowing down.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: There is a Breeding Bird Committee meeting scheduled for February 19, 2025.

CORRESPONDENCE: No report

GEECe: Candace Sigmond, Grassland Environmental Education Center (GEECe) reported that she is receiving a lot of schools signing up for the education center. March through May is filling up quickly. She continues working on the Little Hands Exhibit for the Los Banos Spring Fair. She is invited to a lot of Ag and Carrer days and is working more with the SLEWS project (one is finishing up and possibly two to start in the fall). She has had schools from Patterson and Newman who typically do not come out to the center show interest.

AGENCY & ORGANIZATION REPORTS

CWA: Preston Brunk reported that they are currently working on pump refurbishment at Salt Slough Wildlife Area on pump LL2 and valve replacements with the drought relief funding, and with the Statewide Agreement a rehab on Mendota pump 1 and rewiring Mendota pump 8. They will be spraying units 10,11, and 18B. He is also working on NAWCA enhancement project, NAWCA proposal and a WCB proposal for Mendota, North Grassland, Los Banos and Volta Wildlife areas. They are taking applications for the Upland Management Agreement program for anyone interested.

CDFW: Lara Sparks announced that she will be the interim manager for the Los Banos Wildlife Management Area Complex. She also reported that the USDA nutria detector dogs will be available for three weeks so they can find the outer limits and corridor habitat for the Nutria in the area. There will be six new "Judas" Nutria for their Program which they are trying to get up and running. Judas nutria are trapped and radio collared then set loose and tracked to find groups of Nutria.

CDFW: Pat Cotta reported that the Junior and Veteran's hunts went very well. They had a good turnout, the hunters averaged 4 ½ to 5 birds. Since the season has ended it has quieted way down, they will begin working the ground and seeding. Pat provided season summary reports for this year and last year's harvest. He also noted that the youth bbq sponsored by the CDFW wardens, CWA, DU and the Grassland Fund was a huge success.

VALLEY ECO: No report

DUCKS UNLIMITED: No report

USFWS: No report

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, UPCOMING EVENTS

Ducks Unlimited Blackhawk Gala: Thursday, March 27, 2025, Blackhawk Auto Museum, Danville, CA, 5:30 pm

Grasslands Annual Meeting: TBD

DIRECTORS' REPORT: No report

ADJOURNMENT: 4:25 p.m.

GRASSLAND GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY



Pepper Snyder, Board Member

Dennis Campini, Board Member



Ricardo Ortega, Secretary

GRASSLAND WATER DISTRICT



Pepper Snyder, President



Ricardo Ortega, Secretary

GRASSLAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Dennis Campini, President

Keith Toon, Board Secretary