

### Groundwater Sustainability Planning is Underway in the Merced Subbasin

Groundwater is a critical resource for all of us. It is a resource that we don't see, but we rely on it extensively for drinking water and growing crops. Over the last few decades, as demand for groundwater has increased, more water is being drawn out of the ground than is being replenished. And, if there is little to no rain, then there is less water returning to the groundwater below.

In 2014, California passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) to begin identifying ways to bring groundwater levels and usage into balance. Under SGMA, 21 groundwater basins and subbasins in California were declared "critically overdrafted" by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). The Merced Groundwater Subbasin has been designated as critically overdrafted and as a high-priority basin.

SGMA requires that local and regional authorities in the medium- and high-priority groundwater basins form a locally-controlled and governed Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), responsible for developing and implementing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). As a critically overdrafted basin, the Merced area must complete the plan by January 31, 2020. SGMA protects existing surface water and groundwater rights.

In 2017, water management and land management agencies within the Merced Subbasin (see map, page 2) formed three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies:

1. Merced Subbasin GSA,
2. Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA, and
3. Turner Island Water District GSA.

The three GSA Governing Boards agreed to work together to develop one comprehensive GSP for the Merced Subbasin - the area encompassing all three

GSAs. The unified GSP will be referred to as the Merced Subbasin GSP.

To develop and implement a GSP that supports long-term sustainability for the entire Merced Subbasin, the GSA Governing Boards have agreed to coordinate necessary decisions, funding needed, and the approval process. Information about Governing Board members, meetings, and actions taken related to the GSP are posted on the GSP website, at [www.mercedsgma.org](http://www.mercedsgma.org).

#### GSP Coordinating Committee

The governing boards of the three GSAs formed a Coordinating Committee comprised of governing board members and senior staff from each of the three GSAs to coordinate GSP planning activities and public outreach.

The Coordinating Committee meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month starting at 1:30 pm at the Castle Conference Center at Castle Airport, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA 95301. Meetings are open to the public, include public comment time, and are noticed at least 48 hours prior to each meeting at [www.mercedsgma.org](http://www.mercedsgma.org). Meeting agendas and minutes are also available online.

#### GSP Stakeholder Committee

A 23-member **Stakeholder Committee** was appointed by the three GSA Governing Boards. The committee serves as representatives of the broader Merced Subbasin community to provide input to each of the three GSA Governing Boards and the Coordinating Committee regarding the development of the GSP.

The Stakeholder Committee will review the information developed by the GSP technical team on groundwater conditions, management issues and needs, and projects and management actions to improve groundwater sustainability in the Merced Subbasin. Members will assist in engaging

stakeholders within the Merced Subbasin in the GSP development process. The Stakeholder Committee is advisory to the three Governing Boards and is not a decision-making body.

The Stakeholder Committee meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month starting at 9:30 am at the Castle Conference Center at Castle Airport, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA 95301. Meetings are noticed at [www.mercedsgma.org](http://www.mercedsgma.org), are open to the public, and include time for public input. Meeting agendas and minutes are available online.

## What is a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)?

The **Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)** will provide a detailed “roadmap” for how the Merced Subbasin will achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. The GSP will be developed with the farmers, ranchers, business owners, and residents within the Merced Subbasin. The GSP will identify how everyone will manage groundwater to avoid the undesirable results of groundwater overdraft.

Undesirable results include significant and unreasonable impacts associated with lowering of the groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater water storage, land subsidence (settling or sinking), depletion of surface water, and degradation of groundwater water quality. In accordance with SGMA, the Merced Subbasin GSP will include:

**1. Basin Settings** is a detailed description of the Merced Subbasin, including major streams and creeks, geologic faults and formations, soil types, groundwater monitoring wells, groundwater production wells, precipitation data, surface water data, land use designations, river flows, and groundwater level trends.

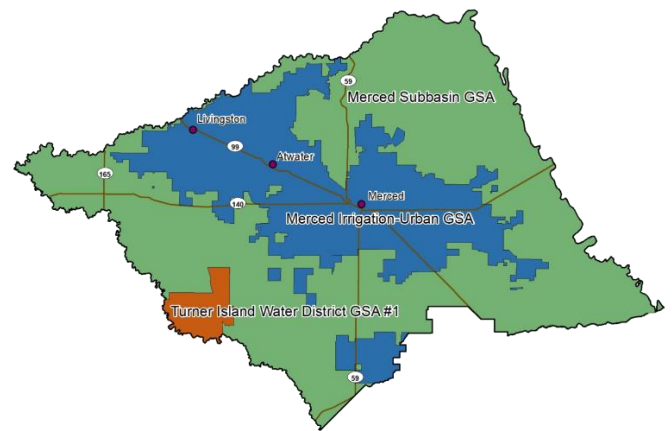
**2. Hydrogeologic Conceptual Model.** The hydrogeologic conceptual model is a simplified, conceptual representation of the Merced Subbasin physical characteristics such as geology, regional hydrology, land use, and surface and groundwater conditions.

**3. Monitoring Network.** A monitoring plan will be developed to expand groundwater monitoring throughout the Merced Subbasin and a data

management system will be established to track monitoring data into the future.

**4. Sustainability Goals and Objectives.** During development of the GSP, the Governing Boards, Coordinating Committee, Stakeholder Committee, and members of the public will work together to develop measurable goals and objectives for managing the Merced Subbasin.

**5. Projects and Actions.** The GSP will identify projects and management actions that will be needed to achieve or maintain sustainable groundwater conditions in the Merced Subbasin by 2040.



**Merced Subbasin & Groundwater Sustainability Agencies**

## Get Involved, Help Shape the Future

1. Learn more about SGMA, groundwater management for the Merced Subbasin, and how to get involved, visit [www.mercedsgma.org](http://www.mercedsgma.org). On the website you can sign up for notifications about public meetings and the availability of documents and analyses for public review.

2. Attend a monthly meeting of the Stakeholder Committee (4th Monday of every month starting at 9:30 am) or a monthly meeting of the Coordinating Committee (4th Monday of every month starting at 1:30 pm). Meetings are open to the public and held at the Castle Conference Center, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA.

3. Attend a community workshop; sign up for email notices on the website.