THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
NORTH KINGS GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY
JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR
JANUARY 25, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.
2907 SOUTH MAPLE AVENUE – FRESNO, CA

TELECONFERENCE / IN-PERSON MEETING

AGENCIES – DIRECTORS / ALTERNATE DIRECTORS PRESENT
Fresno Irrigation District – Chairman Jerry Prieto, Jr.
County of Fresno – Director Brian Pacheco
Bakman Water Company – Director Steve Pickens
City of Clovis – Director Matthew Basgall
At-Large Seat 7 (Fowler Packing) – Director Kyle Moeller
City of Fresno – Alternate Director Brock Buche
Garfield Water District – Director Karl Kienow

BOARD SEATS ABSENT
None

MEMBER STAFF PRESENT
Executive Officer Kassy Chauhan – North Kings GSA
Legal Counsel Kevin Dale – Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud, & Romo (via teleconference)
City of Clovis Representative / NKGSA Advisory Committee Chairman – Scott Redelfs
Fresno Irrigation District Representative / NKGSA Fiscal Agent – DeAnn Stork

OTHERS PRESENT (who wanted to be identified for the record)
None

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Prieto at 6:00 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Prieto led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Chauhan reviewed the teleconference procedures that needed to be adhered to since meeting attendance was being offered virtually to members of the public. Ms. Chauhan welcomed the participation from anyone participating from the public.

3. REVIEW AGENDA
(Additional Agenda Items – Requires Majority Approval of Board - §54954.2(b)

No changes to the agenda.

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4. REVIEW OF FUTURE MEETINGS

No changes to future meetings.

5. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS (for items not on agenda) – 3 Minutes Maximum Per Person, 10 Minutes Maximum Per Subject

No public presentations.

6. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Any Board Member who has a potential conflict of interest may now identify the item and recuse themselves from discussing and voting on the matter. [FPPC §18705]

None stated.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

a. Discussion/Possible Action on Board Meeting Minutes – November 16, 2023

There were no corrections or suggestions to the November 16, 2023, meeting minutes.

M/S/C (Pickens/Buche) That the Board of Directors approved the minutes of the November 16, 2023, Regular Board meeting as presented by the following vote: (Ayes – Pickens, Prieto, Jr., Buche, Moeller, Basgall, Pacheco; Nays – 0; Absent – 0; Abstain – Kienow)

b. Kings Subbasin Coordination Update

- Continuing work on three Primary Data Gap Studies
  - Well Mitigation Program, Confined Aquifer, and Interconnected Surface Water
- Well Mitigation Program
  - Ongoing evaluation to determine the number of wells requiring replacement or funding if the water level continues to decline
  - Potentially 1,100 to 1,500 wells could go dry if the water table falls below the minimum threshold

    - Significant effort is being invested in developing the Well Mitigation Program at the Basin level
        - Initial version or draft of the document is expected to be circulated to the GSAs for their Technical Committees to review and comment on late February to early March
    - Initiated Interbasin Interconnected Surface Water effort with Madera for San Joaquin River
        - Main concern is pumping groundwater around the river causing increased seepage
        - Continuing to meet with Madera Basin, Mendota Basin, the Bureau, Friant Water Authority, and San Joaquin Restoration Program Committee
- Other GSP corrective actions will follow 3 studies
    - March to April - start focusing on other issues as well, including, minor water quality issues, project level updates, and some general updates with the water budget
- Basin level approach identified, then bring to Technical Committees
- Revised GSPs will be publicly noticed again and re-adopted by Boards
    - Review GSP in late summer
    - Noticing/posting and public comment period of GSP in the fall
    - Board to re-adopt GSP in December
    - Resubmit GSP to the State in January
- Water Allocation Framework discussions ongoing
    - North Fork Kings Basin is the lead
    - Framework must be consistent throughout the Kings Basin

A Director inquired if the framework is going to recognize the variability of water production throughout the areas. Mr. Samuelian explained that the Kings Basin is looking into three major factors, the mountain runoff, river seepage, and precipitation while creating the framework.

- Collected fall water level readings
- Annual Report for WY22-23 being prepared
    - Present draft copy to the GSA in February
    - Report due April 1st
- Tracking State Board process for other basins
    - Madera Basin was approved by DWR in December 2023

c. Fall 2023 Groundwater Level Conditions Report (Chauhan/Samuelian)

Mr. Samuelian presented a map that focused on the sustainable management criteria (SMC) wells. The NKGSA has 33 SMC wells. The DWR will use these wells as the basis for grading the NKGSA and their sustainability efforts.

Mr. Samuelian presented a map illustrating all the wells from which data is collected, highlighting the groundwater level changes from one year to the next. He also noted that the absence of data for some wells indicates that readings were not obtained either this year or last year. Mr. Samuelian stressed the importance of consistently obtaining accurate data from these wells to ensure the reliability of the assessments. Mr. Samuelian also mentioned that according to the DWR, failure to submit data for an SMC well essentially means it failed. Additionally, in the GSP, it is stipulated that if 15% of our wells in the basin exceed our, DWR will institute management actions such as cessation of pumping.

Ms. Chauhan stated that the map generally reflects positive water level results from the fall readings. She acknowledged that while there are valid reasons for missing data in some areas, the DWR expects readings consistently. Ms. Chauhan stated that there is a need for improvements and recommendations will be presented to the Board.

d. Discussion – Groundwater Level Monitoring Network Improvements (Chauhan)

- Improvements Needed
    - Provost & Pritchard Evaluated Monitoring Network Needs
        - Presented to Technical Workgroup, January 24, 2024
            - Proposal to add Data Loggers and Telemetry to up to 10 monitoring wells – FY 2023-2024
            - Add up to 48 New Dedicated Monitoring Wells
                - Group and prioritize the wells based on available funding over three-to-five-year period
        - February 2024 – Present to Advisory Committee at the February 9th meeting with recommendation for full Board consideration at the February 22nd Board meeting

Ms. Chauhan stated that she had a meeting with Provost & Pritchard and FID's technician responsible for obtaining readings, focusing on ensuring consistent readings from all 33 wells in our network. Two options emerged from the discussions:

The first option involves adding data loggers and telemetry to the wells, ensuring robust and frequent data collection. With this option, we would have access to real-time data from the office and would have the ability to analyze the data as needed.

The second option, which is more long-term, involves the development of a dedicated monitoring network. This approach aims to address existing issues such as access concerns and reliance on existing agricultural wells, by establishing dedicated access easements. Currently, there are 10 existing wells that are dedicated monitoring wells, so another 48 wells would need to be added.

These options were presented to the Technical Workgroup who supports bringing a proposal before the Advisory Committee at the February 9, 2024, meeting, with the recommendation for full Board consideration at the February 22, 2024, Board meeting. However, while the Technical Workgroup supports the development of a dedicated monitoring network, it acknowledges that it entails significant costs, with each new well estimated at $75,000. This option would involve prioritizing the different townships need for the construction of dedicated monitoring well over a 3-to-5-year period.

A Director inquired about the feasibility of using an abandoned well as a SMC well. Ms. Chauhan explained that she maintains a log of abandoned wells and their destruction schedules. If such a well is located in an area requiring additional data, she can readily identify the property owner and initiate communication.

President Prieto, Jr. inquired about the size of the casings. Staff explained that they prefer them to be 4-inch casings.

Director Buche inquired whether the NKGSA committed to having 58 monitoring wells in the GSP. Ms. Chauhan stated that the requirement is two monitoring wells per township so we will be a little over the requirement. However, it will help with overall management because of how much area the NKGSA covers.

e. Water Conditions Update (Claes)

Ms. Chauhan noted that Mr. Claes is currently absent as he is attending the Mid-Pacific Water Users Conference in Reno, so she will provide the update on his behalf.
CVP & San Joaquin River Conditions

- Millerton Lake Storage: 275,000 af (92% of avg)
- Friant-Kern Canal: beginning slow refill after shutdown

Kings River Conditions

- Pine Flat Storage: 630,000 af (163% of avg)
  - Due to carryover from last year
- FID Storage: 48,000 af

Initial Runoff Forecasts to come out early February, which will provide insights into the anticipated water year and its conditions.

Ms. Chauhan presented the Tulare Basin 6-Station Precipitation Index for Water Year 2024. As of October 2023 to date, the region has received a combined total of 4.9 inches of rain, compared to 13.9 inches which is average for this time of year. Unfortunately, as of now, we are well below the average.

Ms. Chauhan presented a chart showing the snow water content for the Southern Sierra. The chart indicates that the current snow water content is approximately 20% of the April 1 average, tracking just above 2015, which was a very dry year. However, the positive aspect is that reservoirs across the state are full, and storms are forecasted for next week.

f. Advisory Committee Update (Redelfs)

Mr. Redelfs reported that the Advisory Committee met on Friday, January 12th, and took the following recommended actions.

Recommended Actions:

- Approval of Expense Reports for October and November 2023
- Approval of the Financial Statements as of November 30, 2023

Ms. Chauhan expressed appreciation for the strong participation at the Advisory Committee meetings. She extended her gratitude to those who reached out to their staff, encouraging them to engage in the meetings.

g. Technical Workgroup Update (Claes)

Ms. Chauhan stated that she will cover this item in Mr. Claes absence.

Ms. Chauhan stated that the Technical Workgroup began meeting in December and is set to meet every three weeks. The group is concentrating on studies by Provost & Pritchard which are mandated in our GSP and corrective actions outlined in the DWR letter. Much of their time has been dedicated to the Domestic Well Mitigation Program, with plans to develop a pilot program for consideration and presentation to the Advisory Committee. The workgroup is also working on the improvements to the well monitoring network, which includes the addition of data loggers and telemetry as well as establishing a dedicated monitoring network.

h. Well Intake Portal Update (Chauhan)

- Break 9 Developed Tool
  - External Beta Testing – November 2023
    - Small External Beta Test Group – Various Size Landowners
    - Identifying Potential Data Sources for Well Information – To be Imported
  - Revisions to Address Feedback from External Beta Testers – January 2024
  - Full Launch – Soft – February 2024
    - Well Intake Portal Campaign – April through December 2024

Ms. Chauhan reported the completion of beta testing for the well intake tool, with good feedback from the testers. The tool is now transitioning from the developer's website to the NKGSA website, with plans for a soft launch once complete. The full launch is scheduled for the second quarter of this year. Additionally, North Fork Kings is planning to launch their well intake tool around the same time as NKGSA.

i. Well Permitting Update (Chauhan)

Ms. Chauhan provided an update on the number of permits issued, noting about a 25% decrease compared to last year. In 2022, there were 400 permits issued, and in 2023 there were 293 permits issued.

Ms. Chauhan mentioned that she maintains a log of all relevant information from the applications and utilizes a GIS map to visualize activity and identify any hotspots. She added that the Technical Workgroup is in the process of creating a policy to establish a minimum depth requirement for new wells to prevent shallow drilling.

All Well Permits Issued	Number
January	23
February	17
March	25
April	23
May	35
June	33
July	19
August	16
September	22
October	20
November	23
December	37
Total in 2023	293

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS (Stork)

a. Discussion/Possible Action – Approval of the Expense Reports for October and November 2023

Mrs. Stork reported that all items listed on the expense reports are routine expenditures. Insurance premiums and standard bills have been paid as usual.

M/S/C (Buche/Kienow) That the Board of Directors approved the Expense Reports for October and November 2023, as presented by staff, by the following vote: (Ayes – Pickens, Prieto, Jr., Buche, Moeller, Basgall, Pacheco, Kienow; Nays – 0; Absent – 0; Abstain – 0)

b. Discussion/Possible Action – Approval of the Final Financial Statements as of November 30, 2023 (Stork)

Mrs. Stork presented the financial statements as of November 30, 2023. Mrs. Stork clarified that she is not presenting October's financial statements separately because October is included in these financials, July through November.

M/S/C (Moeller/Basgall) That the Board of Directors approved the Final Financial Statements as of November 30, 2023, as presented by Staff, by the following vote: (Ayes – Pickens, Prieto, Jr., Buche, Moeller, Basgall, Pacheco, Kienow; Nays – 0; Absent – 0; Abstain – 0)

c. Local Agency Investment Fund Update

Mrs. Stork noted that she received the fourth quarter interest payment and highlighted that the LAIF account is generating a significant amount of interest, especially compared to the savings account. Ms. Chauhan suggested considering transferring funds from the savings account to the LAIF account to capitalize on higher interest rates. A formal recommendation will be brought before the Board in a subsequent meeting.

9. EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT (Chauhan)

a. Kings Basin Special Studies Update

Ms. Chauhan stated that an update on the studies were discussed earlier and proceeded to provide an overview of the SGMA Implementation Projects.

b. SGMA Implementation Projects Update

- Biola Community Services District – Biola Recharge Project
  - Completed by 4/2024
- FID – Temporary Pumps at FMFCD Basins; Interconnect FMFCD Basins; Future Basins; Kenneson-Sanchez Basin this fall
- Pinedale County Water District – working with FMFCD
  - Water supply agreement with FID to put water into Basin DH

- City of Kerman – Lions Park Intertie and Meter
  - Materials have been ordered

- Malaga County Water District
  - FMFCD Basin Intertie Project and Water Supply Agreement

Ms. Chauhan reported that the construction of the Biola turnout is finished, marking a significant milestone. Currently, efforts are focused on finalizing this aspect of the project along with the associated grant. Concurrently, work is underway on the pipeline, which is funded separately by a different grant. Upon completion of the pipeline, the basin will be ready to receive water. Ms. Chauhan mentioned that Biola is a severely disadvantaged community but noted that it is poised to be the first to achieve groundwater sustainability.

Ms. Chauhan reported that FID's Kenneson-Sanchez Basin is currently under construction and is expected to be completed and able to take water for recharge this year. Additionally, FID is also working on temporary berms on acquired properties to facilitate recharge operations, as well as completing four interties with Flood Control basins.

Ms. Chauhan presented pictures of the Biola CSD turnout that was installed on FID's Herndon Canal and FID's Kenneson-Sanchez Basin which is currently under construction.

c. Outreach / External Affairs Update

- Social Media
  - Continue to be engaged and looking to do grower spotlights
- Website
  - Adding more information to the website regarding the groundwater levels throughout the NKGSA basin
- Email Distribution
  - Distributing more information by email

Ms. Chauhan announced that FID successfully secured a grant through NRCS, and they will be sending out information about this grant program to the NKGSA and FID stakeholders. The grant is tailored for FID growers and focuses on on-farm improvements.

d. Representative Monitoring Network Update

Ms. Chauhan noted that the monitoring network update was discussed earlier.

e. Miscellaneous

- Additional Water Supply
    - Big Dry Creek Reservoir Reoperation – Fresno County Stream Group Project
        - Agreement with ACOE
    - Friant-Kern Canal Turnout Project

Ms. Chauhan reported that FMFCD and Fresno County Stream Group are collaborating with Army Corps of Engineers to be able to conduct a study for the reoperation of the Big Dry Creek Reservoir. They are on the verge of finalizing an agreement with ACOE, with more details to be released on Monday. Following this time, they aim to schedule the signing ceremony with the Colonel from ACOE.

Ms. Chauhan stated that concurrently we are working on the Friant-Kern Canal turnout. Fresno County was able to secure funding and has contracted with Provost & Pritchard. Provost & Pritchard, Fresno County, and FID are working with the permitting agencies to initiate the project.

10. DIRECTORS REPORT

Director Pickens – nothing to report

Director Kienow – nothing to report

Director Prieto – nothing to report

Director Basgall – nothing to report

Director Moeller – expressed gratitude to Kassy and her team for their hard work.

Director Pacheco – expressed gratitude to Chairman Prieto, Jr. for cancelling the December meeting, acknowledging the busy period at that time.

Director Buche – nothing to report

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11. ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to discuss, Chairman Prieto adjourned the meeting at 6:54 pm.

Submitted by,

Kassy D. Chauhan

Kassy Chauhan, Executive Officer-Secretary/Treasurer