

MERCED AREA GROUNDWATER POOL INTERESTS

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 20, 2008

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

At 10:12 A.M., Chair Eltal welcomed those present and called the meeting to order.

The sign in sheet showed the following present:

Position/Organization	Name
Chairman/Merced Irrigation District	Hicham Eltal
Chair/Merced Irrigation District	Hicham ElTal
Vice Chairman/Secretary/ Stevinson Water District	Bob Kelley
CA Dept. of Water Resources	Ben Igawa
CA Dept. of Water Resources	Tom Lutterman
Dauids Engineering	Grant Davids
Geomatrix Consulting	David Bean
Interested Party	Maureen McCorry
Interested Party	Joe Mitchell
Le Grand-Athlone W. D.	Kole Upton
Magneson Dairy	Charles Magneson
City of Merced	Dave Tucker
Merced County Farm Bureau	Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo
San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center	Lydia Miller
San Joaquin Valley Conservancy	Bill Hatch
Winton Water and Sanitary District	Johnnie Baptista

ROLL CALL

See above.

WRITTEN PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

None

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Eltal stated there were no written petitions and invited oral communications at this time. Mr. Mitchell suggested to the MAGPI Board that climate change and its impact be addressed as a future agenda item.

BOARD ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

BOARD CONSENT CALENDAR

Chair Eltal requested suspending approval of the January 30, 2008, minutes until the next board meeting due to the absence of the regular recording clerk.

REPORTS

1. Review MAGPI 2008 through 2010 activities plan.

Mr. Davids reviewed a table entitled MAGPI Activity and Funding Overview, describing it as MAGPI's "roadmap" for the next three years. He briefly described the five principal activities and called attention to the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP), which will be MAGPI's main planning effort. The IRWMP will embody MAGPI's vision for the action plan and how to move ahead on water related projects in the Eastern Merced County area.

Mr. Davids stated that in order to implement the IRWMP, the Groundwater Management Plan (GWMP) must be updated (ten years out of date). He stated that another important activity is development of a regional hydrologic model which is needed to provide a consistent quantitative analytical framework (simulation tool) that allows analysis on the impact of policies and programs that may be implemented.

Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Davids discussed timelines for the CEQA process.

At 10:15 A.M. Bill Hatch and Diana Westmoreland Pedrozo arrived.

Chair Eltal discussed funding opportunities under the IRWMP and stated that the funding would come from the State. He stated Merced Irrigation District (MID) and the City of Merced had contributed \$500,000 each as local cost share to acquire an equal amount in State funding. These funds will be used for development of the regional hydrologic model.

Chair Eltal stated that the GWMP and development of the regional hydrologic model are both the focus of MAGPI activities in the following months. He stated that the IRWMP is a process supported by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to encourage coordinated water resources planning at the regional level. He stated the IRWMP will involve MAGPI member agencies and possibly other entities within the Eastern Merced County region to be identified.

Mr. Mitchell inquired how the CEQA process would work. Mr. Lutterman explained that in other regions programmatic CEQA documents had been prepared for the IRWMP and that supplemental, project-specific CEQA documents would be prepared by proponents of projects

included in the IRWMP. Mr. Davids commented that although MAGPI will be the sponsor of the IRWMP, it is anticipated that individual projects would be implemented by MAGPI member agencies or possibly other entities. Chair Eltal stated that at this time MAGPI is concentrating on updating the GWMP and that as work begins on the regional hydrologic model, it will be discussed further.

Mr. Mitchell stated that goals and objectives have been determined without knowing the end results. Chair Eltal stated that the proposal is not concrete and can be amended based on additional information. Mr. Davids stated the GWMP is a local plan that helps qualify funding, whereas the IRWMP is a regional plan that serves different purposes. Mr. Davids stated the GWMP describes the condition of the basin, sets non-quantitative basin management objectives and needs to be linked to the IRWMP. Mr. Upton stated that knowledge of projects to be done to conserve groundwater must be determined based on the status of the basin. Mr. Tucker stated the model will be a helpful tool as we move forward.

Ms. Miller expressed concern that the GWMP could be used inappropriately by agencies as a policy document related to land use planning. She also expressed her opinion that the document should not become effective until a public review and CEQA process have been completed. Mr. Davids stated that because the GWMP is only a plan establishing broad objectives and monitoring protocols it is not subject to CEQA, but that language could be included in the GWMP to clarify its function and prevent inappropriate uses. Mr. Davids stated that the IRWMP will be used to implement projects and would be accompanied by a CEQA document. There was discussion regarding measures that could be taken to ensure that information contained in the GWMP is used appropriately.

2. Status Report on GWMP Update

Chair Eltal introduced Mr. Bean of Geomatrix, who discussed the Merced Basin GWMP update. Chair Eltal stated that time is of the essence for this process. He stated that if MAGPI is to be successful in receiving IRWMP funding from DWR, then the GWMP needs to be completed by June or July 2008. Mr. Bean discussed collection of data. Mr. Bean stated that Chair Eltal intended to form a technical committee to spearhead the GWMP update and develop basin management objectives and amendments or modifications for consideration by the MAGPI Board. He stated a MAGPI website is also being developed as part of public outreach efforts. In response to several questions regarding collection of data and its use, Mr. Davids clarified that the GWMP would contain a compilation of historical data to define the condition of the basin. The same data will also be used as part of the development of the groundwater model.

Mr. Bean continued his presentation discussing information gathering, a component review, and a conceptual review of the MAGPI website. Mr. Baptista stated that the GWMP update page of the website would be a good place to indicate that it is a study and not to be used for development. There was general discussion regarding various information to include on the website.

3. Status Report on Groundwater Model Development

Mr. Davids explained that MAGPI's plan is to fund development of a regional hydrologic model with a combination of local and DWR funding and that DWR had committed \$500,000 for this purpose. In order to acquire the DWR funding, on February 19 MAGPI submitted to DWR the scope and budget previously reviewed by MAGPI.

4. Status Report on IRWMP grant process and other items of interest

Chair Eltal introduced Mr. Lutterman of DWR. Mr. Lutterman summarized the status and schedule of funding under Proposition 84. He explained that the schedule is uncertain and that his best estimate was that DWR would issue the proposal solicitation package (PSP) in July 2008. Mr. Mitchell asked what the implication is if the State portion of the IRWMP funding does not come through and who would be responsible for covering the shortfall. Mr. Davids explained that IRWMP grant funds do not require a local cost share and stated that if MAGPI is not successful in acquiring IRWMP grant funds, it would not necessarily need to proceed with development of an IRWMP. Mr. Lutterman stated that under Prop 84 \$58 million has been earmarked for the San Joaquin Valley region for implementation of IRWMP projects.

Mr. Lutterman mentioned that grant funds may be dispersed on a first come, first serve basis. There was considerable discussion about what this meant. Mr. Lutterman was asked to clarify this aspect of funding at a future meeting.

Chair Eltal asked about the status of AB303 grant funds. Mr. Lutterman stated that proposals are currently being reviewed and that DWR was overwhelmed with the large number of proposals.

5. Review of static groundwater levels reported by participating MAGPI member agencies.

6. Review of draft State Water Plan revisions regarding groundwater.

Chair Eltal asked that items 5 and 6 be deferred to a later time so action items could be addressed.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. MAGPI ad hoc Technical Committee

Chair Eltal initiated discussion regarding formation of an ad hoc Technical Committee (TC) to move forward with the GWMP update. He observed that the TC would need to meet once or twice a month depending on the progress of the process. Chair Eltal expressed his preference to have at least one board member from each type of agency (irrigation, urban, etc.). Messrs. Kole, Baptista, Kelley and Tucker volunteered to participate as members of the TC. Ms. Miller expressed concern regarding formation and role of the TC. Mr. Mitchell commented that it is harder for interested parties to maintain their involvement with a TC. Ms. McCorry expressed her concern that the TC would be comprised of MAGPI members only, thereby excluding members of the public. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the function and

formation of the TC. It was agreed that a member-at-large would be included on the committee; however, the at-large member was not identified. It was also agreed that TC meetings would be noticed so that interested parties could attend.

REPORTS CONTINUED

5. Review of static groundwater levels reported by participating MAGPI member agencies.

Chair Eltal presented slides displaying graphs of recent groundwater levels. He stated that they are December readings for the wells that have data. Various observations and interpretations were made by meeting participants.

6. Review of draft State Water Plan revisions regarding groundwater.

Chair Eltal discussed recent legislative activities related to groundwater and management of groundwater basins. He explained that there are three legal structures for managing a basin: 1) an MOU; 2) JPA; and 3) adjudication. Mr. Mitchell asked if basically MAGPI is going to become a JPA. Chair Eltal stated that MAGPI does not have full presentation and it is a fully political process to achieve the desired JPA status for the basin. Mr. Upton stated that he would prefer to work with his neighbors instead of having a judge determine how a basin should operate.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Eltal adjourned the meeting at 12:23 P.M. He reminded the group that TC meetings will be noticed and the first would be scheduled for early March, likely the 12th or possibly the 5th. He stated that the website should be up and running with the address potentially being MAGPI-gw.com