



## Pixley Groundwater Commission May 26, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **Pixley Groundwater Commission** met by remote conference call on Tuesday, May 26, 2020. The meeting was held on Zoom. There was also a call in number. Before the meeting began there was some talk about COVID-19 and nobody present has either had the virus or direct contact or knowledge of anyone having the virus. Pixley Irrigation District General Manager **Eric Limas** started the meeting shortly after 10:00am. Limas presented a spreadsheet of the Spring 2020 Groundwater Elevations for PID. The average depth to groundwater was 197 feet, about 11 feet deeper than last year. Since 1989 it's dropped 80 feet if I could make out the very small numbers on the spreadsheet. Limas was asked if these averages are used for minimum threshold of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Limas said that figure is determined on a site by site basis as. As the data gathered increases there will be more opportunity to have a basis to compare the averages with the representative monitoring sites.



Engineer **Dave DeGroot**, Four Creeks and hydrologist **Thomas Harder** developed the monitoring site locations. DeGroot explained the criteria taken into consideration for choosing the monitoring sites. He said this is based on the pre-SGMA results gathered by PID. **Commissioner Jim Morehead** asked if conditions are improving, or at least any reason for hope. Limas said PID's groundwater levels benefiting from recharge both on PID land and surrounding districts. He said the bigger non-drought spikes are not swaying as far. So that's a sign to bring hope a acceptable static level is attainable.

DeGroot put up a PowerPoint of the **PID GSA** Annual Report for water year 2019. He gave a brief overview of this first annual report. This is pre-SGMA, October 2018 through November 2019. This report was due in April of 2020 and doesn't include any results of SGMA implementation. But it was an opportunity to develop a template for the future. Groundwater elevations were evaluated based on the upper and lower aquifer levels. The upper is a first encounter with groundwater and the lower is the pumping zone. Groundwater extractions were measured but not consumptive use and not the Evapo-Transpiration numbers but rather gross in and out.

Surface Water Supply of stream diversions was measured as a part of the annual report. That was the total of imported supplies and precipitation which totaled 243,000 a/f of water available.

Groundwater Storage was shown in a map showing where the groundwater level increased and decreased through out the district. When averaged out it was a flat line. But when you go back and

average the loss about 57,000 a/f annual is lost pre-SGMA. In future annual reports the sustainable yield will be included.

One of the unintended consequences of SGMA is perhaps the hubris of the legislators thinking, "I decree, go forth and do." Every GSP started from scratch. There was limited data available and it will take time to refine these plans. It was pointed out the accuracy rate of some GSPs in their formative state is up to 25 percent plus or minus. That isn't a solid number to base long-term commitments in any realistic endeavor. Since the laws coming from Sacramento is extremely, very, very far from being based on reality as opposed to special interest pressure the best to be hoped for is the ingenuity and dedication of the folks working so diligently to comply with SGMA won't be micromanaged from afar. Meaning if the 20-year timeline of SGMA isn't tinkered with by outside wishes and stays grounded in fact the wide spread of the accuracy figures will be refined enough to allow making informed decisions.

Morehead asked DeGroot about groundwater drifting underground into the PID area and if that will harm the goodwill coordination agreement. DeGroot said he believes everyone understands the groundwater elevations balance out and the rate of flow will decrease and the plan in the Tule Sub Basin is working. Limas said if PID GSA shows it has eliminated its overdraft the concerns have been addressed and everyone should be heading in the right direction. Folks are paying attention. Limas said with all the available information he is encouraged at this point.

Next was the accounting software and Limas said the Cal Poly ET data has been submitted monthly. In April there was some unexpected cloud cover during the satellite pass over so land based data was incorporated. Cal Poly has had to go back and recalculate some figures. Land IQ is installing land based weather stations in the GSA. Land IQ indicated it uses more than one satellite source and land based data so it shouldn't have the problems Cal Poly is experiencing. Limas said he has more confidence in Land IQ. Sorry Cal Poly, I don't know if he wanted that included in this report. He encouraged growers to work with DeGroot who in turn can communicate with Land IQ. It was pointed out Cal Poly did some heavy research lifting to get satellite ET up and running and it's now time to let private enterprise to take on more of the market.

Next for discussion was moving water from one GSA to another back and forth within the sub basin. Harder was tasked with running various scenarios through a model to develop some considerations. Some growers in PID also grow in Porterville ID and there are many questions about physical as well as paper transfers. For instance if recharging in Porterville ID could help the subsidence on the Friant Kern Canal and recovery in Pixley ID won't exacerbate draw down from other GSAs this could be a win/win. Also, knowing how much water can be moved before any noticeable difference is made will be helpful. There is a real possibility of moving water that won't impact the GSP in any measurable amount but could benefit growers tremendously. It would be very good to know what amounts would need to happen to move the dial.

Eastern Tule GSA and the Friant Water Authority have been talking about subsidence mitigation for the FKC repairs. A parallel canal through the impacted area is the plan to fix the FKC capacity restrictions. There is still three feet of subsidence expects no matter what happens based on Harder's estimates. About 85 percent of the problem takes place in the ETGSA and that's why Friant is talking with them first but the entire sub basin will be involved. Government sourced financing is getting shaky with so much taxpayer dollars being spent on coronavirus. Additionally the value loss of water due to subsidence on the FKC is being figured. There is a preliminary construction schedule already in place but the detailed timing of when deliveries will be interrupted has yet to be decided. It takes a bit of doing to arrange an orderly shut down of a modern engineering marvel like the Friant Division of the Central Valley Project.

I had to step away for a moment and when I rejoined the meeting there was talk about how to work together to bring about the best results on the Friant Kern Canal and the sub basin. The next meeting of the Pixley Groundwater Commission is scheduled for July 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. And that was that. It's kind of nice to not have to go into a closed session after a meeting.

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**SGMA** The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 calls for the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Areas within Basins and Sub-basins to develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans.

**PID GSA** The Pixley Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency is in the Tule Groundwater Sub Basin DWR # 5-022.13