

## Kern Groundwater Authority GSA July 22, 2020

By Don A. Wright

**T**he Kern Groundwater Authority Groundwater Sustainability Agency held its Wednesday, July 22, 2020 meeting remotely from what sounded like a large underground cavern somewhere in Kern County. For some reason Zoom took up the entire screen so I had to phone it in. The continuity of the large underground cavern audio design was intact. **KGA** Executive Director **Patty Poire** and Vice Chairman **Dan Waterhouse** (I believe it was Dan) opened the meeting at 8:00am.

There was a quorum, I heard no public input, the minutes and the financial reports were all approved. Attorney **Valerie Kincaid** said she had no report beyond what is on the day's agenda. That led to other matters. The housekeeping items went quickly and the topic turned from organizational issues to groundwater.

### Dealing With DWR

Poire said the KGA's monitoring network has gone through some changes. Wells have been added and minimum thresholds have been changed. She said the KGA reached out to the Department of Water Resources for help with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. DWR was reasonable about allowing a time extension. Kincaid said there is no template of how DWR will review GSPs. Poire said Ag Liaison and Former California Secretary of Agriculture **Bill Lyons** visited the KGA and took a message back to the Governor and Sacramento. The message was don't have DWR review these plans in silence. Let it be a collaborative process with the GSAs. Lyons was successful. Also successful was the motion to approve the revised monitoring network.

KGA is using the CVII Sims groundwater model and when it started the White Wolf Sub Basin was included in the Kern Sub Basin. The Wolf submitted data and paid its fair share for the modeling. Now that White Wolf is a separate sub basin the KGA believes it would be best to establish a disclaimer to accompany any release of the data. Todd Groundwater prepared the model and developed the data. It has released this to DWR but any other releases of data from the KGA must be approved by Poire. She said this isn't a file that can be emailed. It's a pretty substantial gob of bits and bytes.

### Grants

There is a TSS Grant coming through Arvin Edison Water Storage District for well videos. If I understood this is something that can be applied to the entire sub basin. There was no comment. There is also a Prop 68 grant for data management services that doesn't require a match. Good for them. Poire said since the managers can't meet in person and have been swamped by seasonal reporting and the monitoring network. That work is wrapping up and data management can now take center stage. This will necessarily require stakeholder input. **Kim Brown** made sure that was included in the discussion. The question of putting out an RFP to develop the data management program has yet to be answered. Poire said there are some indications this could be north of a million dollars and it might be



Long stroke oilwell pump, Kern County

better to investigate at least part of it in-house. This is all speculation at this point. The managers will get a try at defining what they want from a system and bring it back to the member boards. Kincaid said the grant doesn't preclude finding a system already written and loading in local data. She said you have to be wise and do the best you can so you don't end up with a system that has to be revised every year.

## **The Blueprint**

The next item was a presentation of the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint. Austin Ewell was the speaker and thanked everyone for the opportunity to talk. The website is up and running now. He said the Valley is at a unique crossroad with SGMA. There is a need to define what the future holds. The Friant Water Authority saw this as game changer and started the process of pulling the entire Valley together; geographically, economically and socially. There are more than 70 members from academia, municipalities, industry and agriculture. The first effort was defining the problem under SGMA and preparing for the change. The Valley and the State will be impacted. This is shown by the Economic Impact Report by Dr. David Sunding of UC Berkeley based on an earlier report by the Public Policy Institute of California. We're looking at a million acres taken out of production with tens of thousands of jobs lost.

The Blueprint was able to rally the Valley's lawmakers and present this to Governor **Gavin Newsom**. The message is, "Destroying the Valley's economy and opportunity isn't acceptable." The heaviest hit will be the disadvantaged communities. Self Help Enterprises has come on board with the efforts as has some environmental groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund. Fresno State University has been working with Self Help and the Leadership Council on finding ways disadvantaged communities with drinking water challenges located along the Friant Kern Canal can be helped.

Ewell said finding solutions is a big part of the Blueprint. Finding ways to enhance existing infrastructure, developing new infrastructure to help get water where it needs to go and utilizing flood flows better can all be useful in filling the gap.

Once the problem was defined well enough to see what solutions can be brought about the Blueprint realized working with what we have now, working with the US Bureau of Reclamation and DWR will go a good ways, but not far enough. Scott Hamilton is leading a technical committee in finding a way to get additional surface supplies from the Delta. There is a plan in place for a fish friendly diversion. It's very cool – innovative and simple – I've seen the plans. Two thumbs up.

Ewell didn't say it but I know there are many years when tens of millions of acre feet flow out to sea. This is water above and beyond all environmental, X2 line and any other regulatory needs. We just needs fraction of this water.

So, we got the water what next? We got to move it to where it's needed which means infrastructure to get the water to domestic, recharge and habitat locations. The investigation to help communities along the FKC is being considered for replication along the Delta Mendota Canal.

Ewell said the goal is to make people aware of the problem, and solution, to bring about greater participation. He said the GSAs input is needed. The Blueprint is meant to evolve and be collaborative. He said FSU and Stanford University are coming up with a way to better bring folks together to achieve the common good in face of certain economic devastation and the social ills accompanying it. Ewell said this is a voluntary effort and it is bringing together many people and organizations who haven't worked together. I think that was the end because everything was silent followed by a dial tone. Then Waterhouse was back. He thanked Ewell and encouraged everyone to get more involved in the Blueprint. Poire said she'll send out a copy of Ewell's slide deck and suggested the home boards ask someone from the Blueprint to come speak.

There was no new business and everyone was invited to read the correspondence report at their leisure. The meeting then went into closed session at 9:15am and that was that. Good for them for keeping the meeting length reasonable.

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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.

**Staff:** Patty Poire – Executive Director, Valerie Kincade - Attorney

**The Kern Groundwater Authority membership:**

Arvin-Edison Water Storage District, Cawelo Water District, City of Shafter, Kern County Water Agency, Kern-Tulare Water District, Kern Water Bank Authority, North Kern Water Storage District, Olcese Water District, Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District, Semitropic Water Storage District, Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District, Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District, Tejon-Castaic Water District, West Kern Water District, Westside District Water Authority & Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District

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