

Eastern Tule GSA September 3, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The Eastern Tule GSA board meeting was held remotely from Porterville on Zoom. Chairman/Porterville Irrigation District Director **Eric Borba** called the meeting to order at 2:00pm. General Manager **Rogelio Caudillo** asked folks to please mute your phone.

Roll Call was the first item and there was a quorum, no public comment and the minutes were approved. The next item was a by **Tom Watson** and **Bob Abrams** of Aquilogic. They gave a Power

Point presentation concerning subsidence in the Tule Sub Basin. I believe it was Watson speaking and he said he wanted to emphasize the purpose for this is to provide more data. He didn't want to be perceived as endorsing any particular blame for subsidence problems on the Friant Kern Canal. This is data gathered for the benefit of hydrogeologist **Thomas Harder** with a "d" who did the initial study.

Subsidence Salad

One slide showed a cross section of the San Joaquin Valley floor. There are several wells between I-5 and Highway 99 that pass through the clay layer into the deep aquifer. Watson said this is a set of conditions that can cause the clay layer to collapse. Many of the slides were attributed to Harder's report. One slide was extensometer findings on Deer Creek that showed water levels fluctuating a good deal. Watson said this shows the elasticity of the aquifer. The large Corcoran Clay layer underlying much of the Valley doesn't extend as far east as the Friant Kern Canal or the **ETGSA**. He also pointed out ETGSA has one of the lowest well density of any area in the region and overlies an unrestricted aquifer.

Watson said the subsidence depression sink is centered to the west near Corcoran and Alpaugh. Subsidence can be both vertical and horizontal which causes geo-mechanical ground tilting. They checked this with both Lawrence Berkeley Labs and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to be sure their findings jived with existing data sources like satellite imaging. Next they ran a video from years of satellite passes that showed the subsidence spreading out from the Corcoran area. They also showed another cutaway of the Valley floor that showed the subsidence originated from the area under, about Highway 43 and spreading east and west. There were then two pie charts shown pointing out the well density and pumping rates are much bigger to the west of Highway 99. This was the basis for Watson



to say in Aquilogic's opinion the ETGSA isn't responsible for the alleged 85 percent of the subsidence on the Friant Kern Canal.

Abrams then began speaking about groundwater models and he said a lot. He pointed out the Tule Sub Basin groundwater model is not on trial, but there are modeling limitations. This is something we've been hearing since SGMA was passed in 2014. He said the model relies heavily on "virtual farm wells" which in most cases don't sue actual well locations. Aquilogic concluded pumping in ETGSA didn't start the subsidence and isn't the major contributor to subsidence impacting the Friant Kern Canal. Watson and Abrams also recommended several things before assigning any financial responsibility to FKC subsidence. And that was the end of that report.

Purchasing Policy

Caudillo reminded the board about amendments to the purchasing policy that sets the limits for the general manager and staff. It sounded like a purchase from a reliable vendor for an amount over \$5,000 will officially go before the board.

There is a new grant opportunity out there in SGMA land. A sub basin wide coordinator can be installed for five years and paid for by the California Conservation Service. It think the amount is about \$500,000 or \$100,000 per year. **Eric Limas**, GM Pixley and Lower Tule IDs answered some questions about why the Tule Basin Land Water Conservation Trust is the lead on this and he said because they've been working on this and no one else has. The board voted to send a letter of support.

Other Things

Next, **Scott Hamilton**, representing the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint spoke a bit about the Blueprint's goal of bringing more water to the Valley. He said bringing the infrastructure to the Tule Sub Basin won't be cheap and it will take money trying to figure out how to do so. He asked for a \$15,000 contribution and bless their hearts the board (and the finance committee) all thought this a good idea. Borba thanked Hamilton to the hard work and Hamilton thanked the board for the contribution.

Caudillo gave a report on the ETGSA outreach efforts – I think he's about 99 percent of that drive. He spoke to the Porterville Chamber of Commerce's government affairs committee. He reported the ETGSA meetings in August have had a good sized turnout, it's been hovering around 50 folks Zooming in.

Caudillo gave the finance committee meeting report and all was normal and as they say in Porterville, hunky dory with that committee. The Executive and stakeholders' committees also met and Caudillo also reported on those meetings. All these committees approved the minutes and such. The exec committee recommended working further with Harder on the land subsidence issues.

Response to Comments

Attorney **Aubrey Mauritsen** reported to the board there is a red lined draft of amendments on the proposed changes to ETGSA policy. Several comments were received from farms and individuals. The stakeholder committee will get one more chance to review this. **Sean Geivet**, GM Porterville, Saucelito and Terra Bella IDs said this redlined document has already been reviewed many times, used a lot of resources and there are other pressing matters. He recommended the board adopt the version today and if further amendments need to be made they can later.

The board next approved paying the bills. I think it was Caudillo who gave a rundown of recent committee matters and an update from Land IQ's monitoring of all things wet in the GSA.

There were a couple of chat items on the Zoom sidebar asking why there were no public comments on the items. **Justine Massey**, Community Water Center asked why there were not public comments on the redlined draft. Borba explained because there wasn't a vote on accepting the draft it

will go back to committee. I thought Massey's point was important and I also thought the board was receptive to public input so this was good interaction between a NGO and a GO.

There was also a bit of talk concerning Aquilogic's position needing to be accepted sub basin wide. Engineer **David DeGroot** was instructed to work on that and so you know it's in good hands. This was the part of the meeting where the board went into closed session to talk about a potential lawsuit with the Friant Water Authority and another potential lawsuit but no name was given as to who that might be against. And that was that.

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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.

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