

MERCED IRRIGATION-URBAN GSA SETS NEW AGRICULTURE PUMPING REGULATIONS

FALL 2022



ABOUT THE MERCED IRRIGATION-URBAN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

In response to SGMA (see sidebar), the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency was formed to serve as one of the three governing authorities over the Merced Groundwater Subbasin. The three governing authorities (Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA (MIUGSA), Merced Subbasin GSA, and Turner Island Water District GSA-1) agreed to collaborate on one Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to address the Merced Groundwater Subbasin. The GSP was first submitted to Department of Water Resources (DWR) in January 2020.

Those receiving this notice are either a resident or property owner within the Merced Irrigation District (MID) boundaries; the cities of Merced, Atwater, Livingston, or Winton; the communities of Franklin-Beachwood, Tuttle, El Nido, Planada or Le Grand, and are therefore within the MIUGSA jurisdiction.

Scan for more history about MIUGSA and the Merced GSP. →



Important! All users of groundwater are subject to comply with measures set by the GSAs to comply with SGMA. Note that SGMA does not allow metering of wells that extract 2-acre feet (650,000 gallons) or less per year for domestic purposes such as one-acre residential lots.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SGMA

SGMA mandates the implementation of State-approved groundwater sustainability plans to ensure groundwater supplies last sustainably for future generations. The Merced Groundwater Subbasin was designated as critically-over drafted; meaning that groundwater levels were significantly being depleted causing an impact to the population and environment that rely on groundwater supplies.

Since 2015, member agencies within the Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA have worked diligently through multiple stakeholder-guided processes to lay the foundation for effective groundwater management within the Agency's boundaries to address SGMA-defined "Undesirable Results". MIUGSA has been developing the rules, regulations, and policies to implement a program to prevent declining groundwater levels, subsidence and other sustainability indicators identified in the Merced GSP. Program implementation will include allocating, measuring, monitoring, and enforcing groundwater extraction on non-residential parcels.

GROUNDWATER ALLOCATION AND MONITORING

The MIUGSA Board set a groundwater allocation of 3.3-acre feet per acre over three years (1.1-acre foot per year on average) starting April 1, 2023 through December 31, 2025 and will require that all agriculture wells be registered.

MIUGSA is incorporating flexibility and tools into its rules and policies that will allow agricultural users to comply with the allocation. These include combining allocated water over multiple parcels, allow carry-over of recharged water and any unused water to future years, and accounting for supplemental groundwater from an Ag user's water provider.

WHAT IS THE SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT (SGMA)?

The State of California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) was enacted in 2015, requiring the sustainable management of groundwater supplies throughout California and outlined requirements for basins identified as medium- and high-priority, and critically over-drafted. In response, most identified basins established Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to manage groundwater and serve as a funding mechanism to develop solutions to meet sustainability by 2040. Solutions are identified in Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs), which go through rigorous planning with groundwater specialists and the public, and need to be approved by DWR.

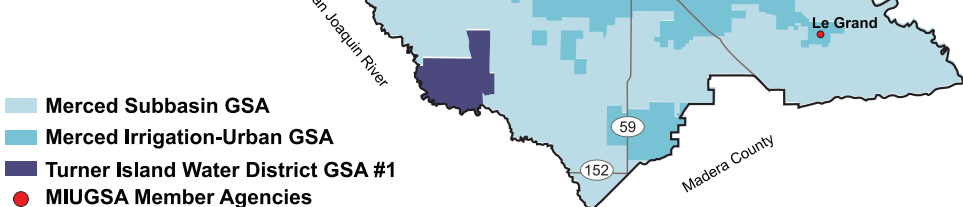
Important! Basins who do not comply or reach sustainability by the set deadline will be placed on probation. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) would then enforce its own plan and set fees and penalties until the basin becomes compliant.

SUPPLEMENTAL WATER BUDGET OPTIONS

Fortunately, most Ag users within MIUGSA boundaries are also customers of the Merced Irrigation District (MID) and are typically less dependent on groundwater to meet the watering needs of crops. Ag users may acquire surface water or developed water supplies (water that MID recharges into the groundwater basin) from MID. MIUGSA will account for different water sources (allocated groundwater, surface water and developed water) in the Ag user's water budget to help Ag users remain compliant with groundwater extraction.

MIUGSA encourages growers, especially those reliant on groundwater, to contact MID to discuss potential options if the groundwater allocation is not sufficient.

MERCED SUBBASIN

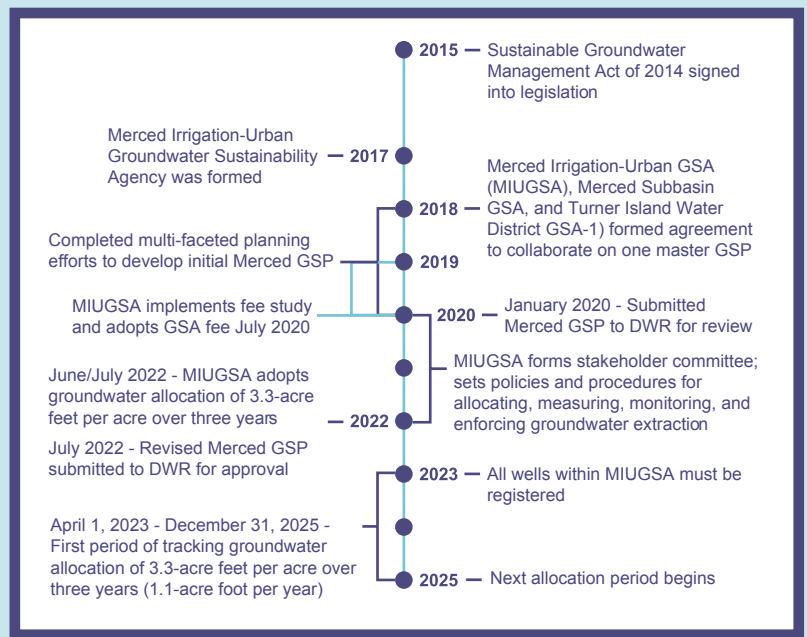


NEXT STEPS: WELL REGISTRATION & GROUNDWATER USAGE REPORTING

MIUGSA is currently establishing an online platform and procedure to register wells with the goal of having all wells registered in 2023. More details about how to register and training opportunities will be made available.

MIUGSA will continue to work through a stakeholder-guided process to help all groundwater users within its boundaries to comply with SGMA. MIUGSA is currently developing policies for measuring groundwater use and will be working with stakeholders to analyze and vet policies for the future use of flow meters. Policies will then be reviewed and adopted by the MIUGSA Board of Directors.

Until then, initial groundwater use measurements will be made using remote sensing technology (satellite imagery). MIUGSA intends to make groundwater use measurements available to individual users within the GSA to better track and understand their water usage.



Responsible Management Today
Sustainable Groundwater for the Future

STAY INFORMED!

MIUGSA encourages you to stay informed. New information will be regularly posted to MIUGSA.org including community meeting opportunities and trainings about how to use the well registration and usage reporting website.



Questions?

Email MIUGSA at contact@miugsa.org.

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