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BOARD AGENDA ITEM

BOARD DATE: July 19, 2022
TO: County of Merced GSA - Delta-Mendota
FROM: Mark J. Hendrickson, Director of Community and Economic Development
SUBJECT: Public Hearing to consider adoption of the amendments to the Grassland Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

- 1) Open a public hearing and accept public testimony.
- 2) Close the public hearing
- 3) Approve the resolution adopting the amended Grassland Groundwater Sustainability Plan for portions of the County of Merced GSA – Delta-Mendota.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) required that Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) be adopted for high priority, critically-overdrafted groundwater basins in California (including the Delta-Mendota Subbasin) by January 31, 2020. The plans are required to detail how basins will become sustainable over a 20-year timeframe and must be submitted to and approved by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). The Grassland GSP adopted by this Board on December 10, 2019 received an incomplete determination by DWR on January 22, 2022.

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STAFFING IMPACT: None by this action.

FISCAL IMPACT: None by this action.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Resolution

Attachment B – Grassland GSP Executive Summary

REQUIRED REVIEW: ☒ Auditor ☒ Admin Services ☒ Risk ☒ Counsel ☒ CEO

DEPARTMENT CONTACT: Adriel Ramirez, Environmental Health Specialist II (209)381-1100, Ext. 1096

FOR BOARD STAFF USE ONLY

BOARD ACTION: 7/19/2022

SILVEIRA/ESPINOZA – APPROVED RECOMMENDATION

RESOLUTION NO. 2022-76

TO: CED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (continued from page 1):

Consequently, the twenty-three GSAs in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin, which drafted six GSPs to cover the entire Subbasin, worked to address the deficiencies outlined by DWR within the 180-day consultation period following DWR's determination. As required by SGMA, the GSA's in the Subbasin coordinated the amendments to the six GSPs through a Delta-Mendota Coordination Agreement. The amendments include revisions to the water budget components which were revised to reflect coordinated data and methodologies within the Subbasin. As well as revisions to the Sustainable Management Criteria which were revised for each Sustainability Indicator at each Representative Monitoring Site using common data and coordinated methods.

Three of the six basin GSPs cover portions of Merced County, the other three GSPs within the Delta-Mendota Subbasin are outside of Merced County. The County of Merced GSA – Delta-Mendota was formed by the Merced County Board of Supervisors on March 21, 2017. The County of Merced GSA - Delta-Mendota covers approximately 47,500 acres in the Delta Mendota Subbasin, outside the boundaries of cities or water districts. Of the 47,500 acres in the County of Merced GSA - Delta-Mendota, 30,000 acres are covered in the Grassland GSP, including federal and state refuges and wildlife areas, privately managed wetlands, and minimal agricultural land adjacent to the Grassland Water District. Including these lands in the Grassland GSP's Plan Area ensures consistent management of refuges and wildlife areas in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin, for the purposes of SGMA, under a single GSP. The County of Merced GSA - Delta-Mendota has partnered with the Grassland GSA through a memorandum of understanding for GSP development and implementation.

Groundwater Sustainability Plans have required elements outlined in Water Code and associated regulations. The elements of the GSP include: Plan Area, Basin Setting, Sustainable Management, Criteria, Monitoring Network, Projects and Management Actions, and Plan Implementation. The Grassland GSP includes a sustainability goal to prevent groundwater management-induced impairments to the beneficial users of groundwater, as they relate to the six sustainability indicators.

The Plan Area and Basin Setting sections are foundational, containing the Hydrogeologic Conceptual Model and current and historic groundwater conditions for the Grassland GSP Plan Area. Included water budgets are the complete accounting of all water flowing into and out of the Plan Area. Water budgets in the Grassland GSP show an average annual change in groundwater storage for the aquifer underlying the Grassland Plan Area during the historic period as approximately +3,100 acre-feet.

The Sustainable Management Criteria section of the GSP considers six sustainability indicators, defining undesirable results for the basin ("significant and unreasonable" negative impacts). If undesirable results occur, the GSP establishes minimum thresholds and measurable objectives for each sustainability indicator throughout a monitoring network. The GSP requires establishing a monitoring network for each sustainability indicator to monitor trends in the Subbasin and evaluate GSP implementation against the sustainable management criteria.

Within the Grassland Plan area, the groundwater system has historically remained sustainable, rendering a unique focus on maintaining those conditions, rather than implementing new projects or adaptive management actions. To be conservative, the Grassland GSP participants recognize that mitigation measures may be needed in the future due to climate change or neighboring

management actions. Those projects are discussed in the Projects and Management Actions section. Finally, the Plan Implementation chapter discusses the costs and schedule to implement, monitor and update the GSP.

A link to the amended Grassland GSP is publicly available through the County of Merced Community and Economic Development Water Resources web page for the Delta-Mendota Subbasin at www.countyofmerced.com/delta-mendota-subbasin.

The Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs together have held multiple public and technical workshops on the progress of the amended coordinated GSPs to encourage stakeholder engagement throughout the process.

The Grassland GSA and the County of Merced GSA - Delta-Mendota sent a SGMA required 90-day notification of the intent to adopt an amended GSP to the cities and counties in the Plan Area.

Action for Board consideration is to open the public hearing, accept public testimony on the Grassland GSP, close the public hearing and consider adopting the amended Grassland GSP for portions of the County of Merced GSA - Delta-Mendota through a resolution.