

WHEELER RIDGE-MARICOPA WATER STORAGE DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Eric McDaris

DATE: February 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Preliminary and Draft Groundwater Allocation Policy

The WRMGSA formed its Project and Management Action committee (P/MA committee) in 2023 to explore various project and management options available to the GSA, to include considering a groundwater allocation policy. Staff and the committee made it very clear that this policy was, and remains, in draft form and is not intended to be implemented in the near future. The GSA elected to begin developing a groundwater allocation policy for implementation in the event that the GSA needs to rapidly enact demand reduction actions. The process has been intentionally iterative, focusing on maximizing landowner engagement and feedback.

The P/MA committee met on October 12th, October 31st, and December 7th, 2023, as well as January 18th, 2024, to discuss a groundwater allocation policy. The first meetings were to review aspects of how other GSAs across the valley are addressing groundwater allocations and policies, and to determine if any concepts from those policies could be usefully applied in the WRMGSA. A draft groundwater allocation policy document, based largely on that of Westlands Water District/GSA, was circulated to landowners leading up to the December 7th meeting, with subsequent meetings focused on reviewing and modifying the policy to better suit the WRMGSA. Staff received written and in-person feedback from various stakeholders in attendance at the P/MA committee meetings, and those comments were integrated into the draft policy where appropriate.

Key points of the draft policy that were generally agreeable include all acres in the WRMGSA being eligible to receive a groundwater allocation; annually allocated groundwater credits can be pooled across farming units within the GSA; transfers are allowed to and from other users within the GSA; unused allocated groundwater will be carried over, and; landowners will be allowed to offset pumping of allocated groundwater by substituting credits generated from the recharge of eligible surface supplies, consistent with the District recharge policy.

Various sections within the policy are intentionally marked 'In Progress'. Some of these items are ministerial in nature and can be further developed as implementation gets closer, e.g. year-end procedures, etc. Other sections are pending additional information from staff or consultants, such as the sustainable yield data, which is pending the results of the Todd Groundwater basin study, and the subsidence section, which is pending additional information from E.K.I.

Points of contention have centered around possible deferred impacts of pumping groundwater allocation, carryover, and stored surface water. Staff have included three options that the P/MA committee has discussed in the attachments. Following the February Board meeting, the P/MA committee has directed staff to circulate the draft policy to all WRMGSA landowners by mail, soliciting comments and

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feedback. An additional P/MA committee meeting will be scheduled to review any comments received from landowners and to discuss any recommendations from the Board.

Recommendation. None. This memorandum is for discussion only.

Attachments: GW Allocation Slide
Groundwater Allocation Policy – *Draft*
Filename: 8.10.a Preliminary and Draft Groundwater Allocation Policy