

Merced River Stakeholders
May 21, 2007
6:00PM-8:30PM
Merced County Farm Bureau Office

Meeting Minutes

Introductions, Minutes Approval, Agenda Review

Minutes for March 2007 meeting were postponed for approval in order to allow for inclusion of following revisions:

In MID Update – David Hu, USFWS

- Change “GPS to “Sonic Tag”

In EMRCD Grant Proposal – Lydia Miller, SRRC

- Invite representative of USFWS Endangered Species to participate in species workgroup
- Concerned that “Blueprint” process may not be the best place to recruit consultant facilitator
- Would like to see additional representation from Board of Supervisors to ensure good representation
- Merced River Stakeholders should be listed as a participating group
- Clarify that the resulting plan is not to be used as a policy document
- The Merced County General Plan Update process will be finished before this grant is complete. Therefore, the document cannot be used to inform the process.

Updates

Merced Irrigation District *Hicham Eltal*

On May 22nd MID will be finished with their planned releases for the high VAMP flows. 1100 cfs were the maximum flows.

Department of Water Resources report on snowmelt at 30% of a 10 year average and 17% of last year 667,000AF in Lake McLure

Question: How many acre feet are used per year?

MID diverts 500,000 acre feet per year

MID board will probably turn off irrigation earlier than usual this year, but the date has not been decided.

Question: Is MID selling water down south?

MID has done water transfers to CalFed and in 1994 for MID growers in Merced.

Questions: What are the plans for Chowchilla?

“Sphere of Influence” growers banded together as one customer. Asking for water. 5,000 acre feet given to these growers, a small amount.

Question: What is the state of the fish hatchery?

The State put the hatchery in MID's lap. Currently paid by MID and other beneficiaries.

Merced County Planning Department *Jeff Wilson*

Request for more time at next MRS meeting

Santa Fe – Finishing up contracts. Environmental review will be discussed at next meeting.

Wade/Schmitt – Next month will have public review posted on website. Will email this to facilitator for forwarding to MRS.

Question: Were you part of the General Plan focus groups?

No. Today was first round. Regional work groups completed.

Question: What criteria was used to select members?
Not sure.

Black Diamond- legal actions pending, cannot discuss this project.

Merced Alliance Biological Survey *Maia Singer*

Interim report is completed and posted to mercedriverwatershed.org. Raw data and full documents available. This years' fish surveys were completed using snorkeling and bird surveys are underway. Gearing up for the Spring BMI (benthomacro-invertebrates – water insects). Last year BMI was only done in Fall, this year will include upper BMI. Chinese Mitten Crabs not being found anywhere, so budget was changed away from mittne crab survey to additional BMI surveys. There was an "open house" fish count demonstration held earlier this year that was very successful. This summer another will be held at McConnell Park.

Merced Watershed Plan—Grant Proposal *East Merced Resource Conservation District, Gwen Huff*

Areas for discussion:

- Participation and decision making
- Stakeholder input/inclusiveness
- Goal of proposed plan
- Process for grant submission
- Work groups – modify list?
- Access to land
- Feasibility/frequency of meetings
- Differences between MRCRP and this proposed plan
- Accountability outside of RCD
- Plan being used as policy
- Coordination with County general plan update process

Benefits of the Proposed Grant:

- Restoration money could come into the area
- Coordination of existing information
- Identify gaps in information
- Water supply plan currently not done
- Leverage oppportunities
- Set precedence in watershed restoration
- Overcome obstacles
- Group diversity and collaboration
- Continuity and continued momentum
- Process improved
- Upgrade/expand existing plan and outcomes
- Influence policy
- Raise consciousness

Some Comments from Individuals (Not a transcription)

- Host meetings December through March
- Evening meetings, ask in advance on dates/times
- Action oriented plan
- Don't "Plan-to-Plan" – structured meetings
- Hard copies of documents made available
- Reward participation
- Disagreement as to whether or not MRS members had adequate opportunity to participate in proposal development

- Request for layperson's summary of grant proposal
- Concerned how this may impact landowners, particularly since they are unlikely to come to meetings and develop outcomes
- Ensure that process is open to MRS participation

Update on Merced River Fisheries Restoration Progress Merced Fly Fishers, *Ken Jensen*

The Merced Fly Fishers have met with the Department of Fish and Game and the Merced County Board of Supervisors (BOS) about restoration of a fishery that will encourage residentialized steelhead on the lower Merced River. BOS approved the project. No extra water will be taken from farmers. Need for permits has yet to be established by Dept of Fish and Game. 25,000 fish will be acquired from the Feather River hatchery. In the Mokelumne River 300,000 fish were put in, but only about 200 returned. Still looking for grant money to add appropriate gravel for this fish population.

Merced River Fair/Heartland – Merced River Alliance

The Heartland Festival and Merced River Fair will be held at Riverdance Farms June 1st. Contact Cindy Lashbrook for more information.

Water Forum – Merced River Alliance

Hicham Eltal of MID will be speaking June 6th at the Presbyterian church about the impacts of urban expansion on water resources of Merced County. Contact Cindy Lashbrook for more information.

Schedule Next meeting and wrap up

Next meeting scheduled for July 16th

Snacks – Bernie Wade

Drinks – Jean Kiel

**For more information, please contact Gwen Huff at
(559) 497-5033 or gwenhuff@comcast.net**

Past meeting minutes can be found at www.emrcd.org/stakeholders