



PRESS RELEASE: Madera Irrigation District GSA, City of Madera GSA, Madera Water District GSA, Madera County GSA, Gravelly Ford Water District GSA

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On January 31, 2020, after over two years of development and public outreach, Madera Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), City of Madera GSA, Madera Water District GSA, and Madera County GSA submitted the Madera Subbasin Joint Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requirements. Gravelly Ford Water District GSA, Root Creek Water District GSA, and New Stone Water District GSA also submitted their respective GSPs by the January 31, 2020 deadline.

In addition to the GSP submittals, SGMA requires a Coordination Agreement to be developed and signed by all GSAs within the subbasin. Six of the seven GSAs were able to agree to the terms of the Coordination Agreement which, among other things, required the coordination of data and water budgets to ensure the subbasin can truly attain sustainability. New Stone Water District GSA did not agree with certain aspects of the Coordination Agreement and intentionally chose not to sign the Coordination Agreement. Specifically, New Stone Water District GSA required the inclusion of an additional groundwater supply that would equate to over one (1) acre foot per acre for the New Stone Water District GSA, which would be three times the groundwater quantity per acre compared to the other six GSAs in the Madera Subbasin.

Since January, the six GSAs, Madera Irrigation District GSA, City of Madera GSA, Madera Water District GSA, Madera County GSA, Gravelly Ford Water District GSA, and Root Creek Water District GSA which collectively represent approximately 99 percent of the subbasin area and 99 percent of the population, have been working diligently with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to understand the implications of New Stone Water District GSA's failure to sign the Coordination Agreement.

On March 10, 2020, the Madera Subbasin's GSAs were informed that DWR had made a determination that the submittals were "inadequate" due to the lack of signature by New Stone Water District GSA on the Coordination Agreement. DWR has notified the SWRCB of this determination and the GSAs are now in the position of awaiting further news from the SWRCB on this matter and preparing for a SWRCB public hearing to address the situation.

Although the Subbasin has not yet been placed on formal probation, the lack of signature by New Stone Water District GSA is already creating significant impacts to the Madera Subbasin. For example, the County of Madera was just informed the Madera Subbasin will not be awarded a \$500,000 grant to initiate the development of a domestic well program even though it received tentative approval before the Coordination Agreement issue arose. If the Madera Subbasin is put on probation, there will likely be further impacts to the Madera Subbasin and its landowners including State intervention, well fees, extraction fees, and accelerated regulatory groundwater restrictions. The collaborating GSAs are continuing to try to resolve the issues with New Stone Water District GSA to minimize the impacts to the Madera Subbasin, including just recently offering to organize and participate in a mediation process. However, that offer was met with the unfortunate response of “New Stone Water District has no interest in mediation.”

In the interim, the Madera Irrigation District GSA, City of Madera GSA, Madera Water District GSA, Madera County GSA, Gravelly Ford GSA, and Root Creek GSA continue to work towards implementing their respective GSPs. Projects and programs to reach sustainability are currently being developed and completed throughout the six GSAs. These GSAs are also continuing to work on meeting additional SGMA requirements including the development of a Data Management System and Annual Reports.

“We are proud that over the last few years we have been able to collaborate on the development of the GSPs for the Madera Irrigation District GSA, City of Madera GSA, Madera Water District GSA, Madera County GSA, Gravelly Ford Water District GSA, Root Creek Water District GSA, and New Stone Water District. It is unfortunate that this collaboration did not result in the ability to secure a Coordination Agreement signed by all seven GSAs. Our goal has been, and will continue to be, sustainability for the Madera Subbasin” stated Phil Janzen, Madera Water District GSA.