

Board Members

Richard Valle
Doug Verboon
Rusty Robinson
Robert Thayer
Kimber Regan



Staff

Chuck Kinney, General Manager
Laurie Avedisian-Favini,
General Counsel
Catherine Venturella, Clerk

Regular Meeting Agenda

Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2026
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Place: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS, Kings County Government Center
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard, Hanford, California 93230

☎ (559) 852-2362 ❖ bosquestions@co.kings.ca.us ❖ website: <https://www.midkingsrivergsa.org>

The meeting can be attended on the Internet by clicking this link:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/23566400624290?p=qjMRSE0jKB059PVIGb>

or by sending an email to bosquestions@co.kings.ca.us on the morning of the meeting for an automated email response with the Microsoft Teams meeting link information. Members of the public attending via Microsoft Teams will have the opportunity to provide public comment during the meeting. Remote Microsoft Teams participation for members of the public is provided for convenience only. In the event that the Microsoft Teams connection malfunctions or becomes unavailable for any reason, the Board of Supervisors reserves the right to conduct the meeting without remote access. *Microsoft Teams will be available for access at 12:55 p.m.*

Members of the public who wish to view/observe the meeting virtually can do so on the internet at:

www.countyofkingsca.gov and click on the "Join Meeting" button or by clicking this link:

<https://youtube.com/live/tU5iKv-XcGY?feature=share>

****Members of the public viewing the meeting through YouTube will not have the ability to provide public comment.**

Members of the public may submit written comments on any matter within the Board's subject matter jurisdiction, regardless of whether it is on the agenda for the Board's consideration or action, and those comments may become part of the administrative record of the meeting. Comments will not be read into the record, only the names of those who have submitted comments will be read. Written comments should be directed to bosquestions@co.kings.ca.us email by 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the noticed meeting to be included in the record, those comments received after 8:00 a.m. may become part of the record of the next meeting. E-mail is not monitored during the meeting. To submit written by U.S. Mail to: Kings County Board of Supervisors, Attn: Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, County of Kings, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford, CA 93230.

1:00 PM
CALL TO ORDER
ROLL CALL – Clerk
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

UNSCHEDULED APPEARANCES

This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the Board on items of interest within the Board's jurisdiction, and which are not already on the agenda. The Board will not answer questions impromptu, and concerns or complaints will be referred to appropriate staff. For items which are on the agenda, members of the public will be provided with an opportunity to address the Board as each item is brought up for discussion. Speakers should limit their comments to not more than two (2) minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Approval of the minutes from the special meeting for March 24, 2026.

CONSENT CALENDAR

All items listed under the consent calendar are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion. If a Board member has questions, requests additional information, or wishes to comment on an item, the vote should not be taken until after questions have been addressed or comments made, and the public has had an opportunity to comment on the Consent Calendar items.

None

REGULAR CALENDAR

- A. Stakeholder Advisory Committee update – Garrett Gilcrease, Chairperson
- B. Consider the first amendment to Agreement No. 24-01 with Geosyntec to provide additional outreach services – Chuck Kinney, General Manager
- C. Update on GSA related activities – Amer Hussain, Engineer

BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS OR REPORTS

On their own initiative, Board Members may make a brief announcement or a brief report on their own activities. They may ask questions for clarification, make a referral to staff or take action to have staff place a matter of business on a future agenda (Gov. Code Section 54954.2a).

- ◆ Board Correspondence
- ◆ Correspondence and Information on Future Agenda Items

CLOSED SESSION

- ◆ None

ADJOURNMENT

The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2026 at 1:00PM.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Mid-Kings River GSA office at (559) 852-2362 by 9:00 a.m. on the Monday prior to this meeting.

<i>Agenda backup information and any public records provided to the Board after the posting of the agenda will be available for the public to review at the Board of Supervisors office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, for the meeting date listed on this agenda.</i>

Board Members

Richard Valle
Doug Verboon
Rusty Robinson
Robert Thayer
Kimber Regan



Staff

Chuck Kinney, General Manager
Laurie Avedisian-Favini,
General Counsel
Catherine Venturella, Clerk

Special Meeting Action Summary

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2026
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Place: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS, Kings County Government Center
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard, Hanford, California 93230

☎ (559) 852-2362 ❖ bosquestions@co.kings.ca.us ❖ website: <https://www.midkingsrivergsa.org>

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<https://youtube.com/live/3cxv67ynjsU?feature=share>

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1:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL – Clerk

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MEMBERS PRESENT: RICHARD VALLE, DOUG VERBOON, RUSTY ROBINSON, ROBERT THAYER

MEMBERS ABSENT: KIMBER REGAN

UNSCHEDULED APPEARANCES

This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the Board on items of interest within the Board's jurisdiction, and which are not already on the agenda. The Board will not answer questions impromptu, and concerns or complaints will be referred to appropriate staff. For items which are on the agenda, members of the public will be provided with an opportunity to address the Board as each item is brought up for discussion. Speakers should limit their comments to not more than two (2) minutes.

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Approval of the minutes from the special meeting for February 17, 2026.

PUBLIC: NONE

ACTION: APPROVED AS PRESENTED (DV, RV, RT, RR – Aye; ABSENT - KR)

CONSENT CALENDAR

All items listed under the consent calendar are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion. If a Board member has questions, requests additional information, or wishes to comment on an item, the vote should not be taken until after questions have been addressed or comments made, and the public has had an opportunity to comment on the Consent Calendar items.

REGULAR CALENDAR

- A. Stakeholder Advisory Committee update – Garrett Gilcrease, Chairperson
- B. Consider entering into an agreement with MLJ Environmental for an online portal service – Chuck Kinney, General Manager
PUBLIC: NONE
ACTION: APPROVED AS PRESENTED (RV, DV, RT, RR – Aye; ABSENT - KR)
- C. Consider entering into an agreement with MLJ Environmental for website design services – Chuck Kinney, General Manager
PUBLIC: NONE
ACTION: APPROVED AS PRESENTED (RV, DV, RT, RR – Aye; ABSENT - KR)
- D. Consider entering into an agreement with Provost & Pritchard Engineering Group for services related to public outreach, election facilitation, and preparation of an engineers report for a Prop 218 election – Chuck Kinney, General Manager
PUBLIC: NONE
ACTION: APPROVED AS PRESENTED (DV, RV, RT, RR – Aye; ABSENT - KR)
- E. Update on meetings which have been held with State Staff and consider making a request for assistance to the State Water Board – Amer Hussain, Engineer
PUBLIC: Chip Mello stated that we have spent a lot of time trying to create a plan with the 2-acre foot de minimis amount and then the State changes the amount to 20-acre feet. We don't want to make things more restrictive for the public, and I think it's a great thing, but this should have happened initially. I don't think commenting makes a difference, it's just a shame because we have developed a plan based upon the 2-acre feet and now the State is looking to change it so this makes it more challenging on the GSA.

Garrett Gilcrease stated the State keeps changing the goal post while we're working towards a plan and we have been working to meet the States' requirements but now they change things again. If they could give us a plan, make it black and white so we know what to follow. It's very hard to make a plan when things keep changing.

Chuck Kinney, General Manager, suggested that Board Member Doug Verboon speak during unscheduled at the State Water Resource Control Board meeting on April 7, 2026.

ACTION: APPROVED AS PRESENTED (RV, RT,DV, RR – Aye; ABSENT - KR)

- F. Update on GSA related activities – Amer Hussain, Engineer**
PUBLIC: NONE

BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS OR REPORTS

On their own initiative, Board Members may make a brief announcement or a brief report on their own activities. They may ask questions for clarification, make a referral to staff or take action to have staff place a matter of business on a future agenda (Gov. Code Section 54954.2a).

None

- ◆ Board Correspondence
None
- ◆ Correspondence and Information on Future Agenda Items
None

CLOSED SESSION

- ◆ **None**

ADJOURNMENT

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2026 at 1:00PM.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Mid-Kings River GSA office at (559) 852-2362 by 9:00 a.m. on the Monday prior to this meeting.

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Date: April 14, 2026

To: Board of Directors

From: Chuck Kinney, General Manager

Subject: Selection of Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Background

At your meeting on December 17, 2024, your Board authorized the Chairperson to sign Agreement No. 24-01 which entered the Mid-Kings River GSA into contract with Geosyntec to provide for ongoing engineering services needed by the GSA with day to day operations as well as the preparation of a GSP for the Mid-Kings River GSA. The Mid-Kings River GSA has made significant progress with the creation of policies and programs as well as updating the 2024 GSP so that the Mid-Kings River can submit a revised GSP to the State Water Resources Control Board which complies with the requirements of SGMA. In an effort to help the Mid-Kings River GSA come into compliance it was determined that significant outreach efforts were needed to ensure that the public is engaged through the process of the GSP update as well as ensuring that the public is familiar with all of the relevant policies and programs which the GSA has established. Because of this need for additional outreach an amendment to Geosyntec's contract has been prepared to add the needed scope of services as outlined in Exhibit A of the attached agreement. The cost associated with this additional scope of services comes to a total of \$196,500.

Request

The General Manager requests the Board of Directors authorize the Chairperson to sign the first amendment for Agreement No. 24-01.1 which will provide for the necessary outreach services which the State Water Resource Control Board has indicated are needed to be considered compliant with SGMA.

Agreement No. _____

**MID-KINGS RIVER GSA
FIRST AMENDMENT AGREEMENT FOR SERVICES**

THIS FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE AGREEMENT (“1st Amendment”) is made and entered into on _____, 2026 (“Effective Date”), by and between the Mid-Kings River GSA and **Geosyntec Consultants Inc., a California company** (“Contractor”) (singularly a “Party,” collectively the “Parties”).

R E C I T A L S

WHEREAS, the Parties entered into Kings County Agreement No. 24-01 on December 17, 2024, and is scheduled to terminate on December 17, 2026 (“Agreement”);

WHEREAS, Section 6 of the Agreement authorizes the Parties to modify the Agreement’s terms by a written amendment, executed by both Parties; and

WHEREAS, the Parties intend to amend the Agreement to add additional services to the Scope of Work and to add additional Compensation.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Parties agree as follows:

1. **Exhibit A – Amendment No. 1** is hereby added to **Exhibit A: Scope of Work**.
2. **Exhibit B – Amendment No. 1** is hereby added to **Exhibit B: Compensation/Fees**.
3. All other terms and conditions of the Agreement remain in full force and effect.
4. The Parties may execute this 1st Amendment by electronic means and in two (2) or more counterparts that together constitute one (1) agreement.
5. Each signatory to this 1st Amendment represents it is authorized to enter into this 1st Amendment and bind the Party that its signature represents.

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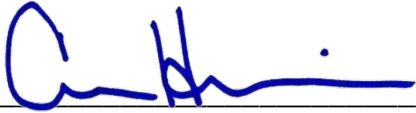
SIGNATURES ARE ON FOLLOWING PAGE

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties executed this Agreement on the Effective Date first written above.

COUNTY OF KINGS

GEOSYNTEC CONSULTANTS INC.


By: _____
Rusty Robinson, Board Chairman
Mid-Kings River GSA

By:  _____
Amer Hussain, Senior Principal

ATTEST

By: _____
Catherine Venturella, Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM
Laurie Avedisian-Favini, Mid-Kings River GSA
Counsel

By:  _____
Jennifer Thompson, Deputy Mid-Kings River GSA Counsel

Exhibits/Attachments:
Exhibit A – Amendment No. 1
Exhibit B – Amendment No. 2

{4925-8099-8297, v.1}

EXHIBIT A

Amendment No. 1

Exhibit A

Amendment No. 1

Task 2: Preparation of New and Revised Policies and Plans (Updated)

Task 2.1: Stakeholder Advisory Committee (Updated)

Geosyntec will meet regularly with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to present policies, drafts of the groundwater sustainability plan (GSP), and updates on feedback with meetings with SWRCB. The number of meetings has increased from the originally proposed number of 2 to more than 20. It is anticipated that approximately 20 more meetings will occur in 2025.

Task 2.7: Coordination with SWRCB

Geosyntec will represent MKR at meetings with SWRCB to discuss policies and the updated GSP. We anticipate 4 meetings with SWRCB focused on MKR. Geosyntec will present and review the MKR developed policies with the SWRCB. The meetings are anticipated to last at least 2 hours each. Additional time will be spent preparing presents and documents required for the meetings. It is also anticipated that there will be follow-up activities after each meeting. More meetings will be held with SWRCB but in the context of the overall Tulare Lake Subbasin.

Task 10: Stakeholder Engagement

Geosyntec, along with selected subcontractors, will assist MKR with Stakeholder Engagement program. The program will consist of four main outreach campaigns along with on-going engagement efforts for the 2026 calendar year. The four outreach campaigns will consist of:

- Well Registration Program
- Domestic Well Mitigation
- Fees and Elections
- Draft 2026 Groundwater Sustainability Plan

10.1 Workshops

It is anticipated that up to twelve public engagement workshops will be conducted to support the four campaigns. Six of the workshops will be in-person in the Hanford area and 6 will be virtual via ZOOM. Geosyntec will coordinate with MKR to secure the location of the

in-person workshops and prepare content announcing each workshop. In addition, Geosyntec will prepare handouts and presentations for the workshops. For the virtual workshops, Geosyntec will host the Zoom broadcast. The public questions and comments at each workshop will be recorded and documented. It is anticipated that each workshop will be 1.5 hours long.

10.2 Reports

A report will be prepared after each campaign to document efforts including outreach efforts, comments received, response to the comments, and lessons learned. The report will then be presented to the SAC and the GSA Board.

10.3 Pop-Up Events

Pop-Up events refer to public engagement efforts outside of the formal workshops or GSA Board Meetings. These events could include making presentations at the Kings County Farm Bureau, having a presence at the Kings Fair, or presenting at a local business. It is anticipated that up to 12 pop-up events will occur. Each pop-up event will include either making a presentation or answering questions from the public.

10.4 Educational Efforts

Educational efforts will include preparing a series (up to six) of presentations with audio that address key aspects of SGMA. The presentations are expected to range from the basics of SGMA to key MKR programs. These presentations will be prepared on an as-needed basis. Each presentation will be prepared to be accessible to the general public.

10.5 Meetings

Updates to the outreach program will be presented monthly at the MKR Board and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings. The updates will cover the outreach efforts over the last month and preview upcoming efforts. Feedback from the Board and SAC will be incorporated into the on-going outreach efforts.

10.6 Social Media

Geosyntec will continue to oversee the MKR social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. This includes preparing focused and timely content on a weekly basis. It is anticipated that up to three posts will be uploaded each week on both platforms. These posts will be closely coordinated with the four outreach campaigns.

10.7 Email

Geosyntec will also oversee the email messaging efforts for MKR through the use of Constant Contact platform. Again, the email messaging efforts will be closely coordinated

with the social media posts. It is anticipated only one email message will be sent out per week as not to overwhelm the recipients. Geosyntec will also be responsible for contact list management.

10.8 Website Content

While others are responsible for updating and maintaining the website, Geosyntec will provide weekly content for the website that is closely coordinated with weekly email message.

10.9 Graphic Design

Geosyntec will provide graphic design services to support the outreach efforts. These services will include preparation of flyers, postcards, maps, infographics and other requested materials. It is anticipated that each campaign will require up to two deliverables.

10.11 Video Content

Geosyntec will coordinate with subcontractors to develop short videos to be posted to the website and YouTube that present key information on SGMA and the GSA activities. The videos will likely include interviews with key stakeholders along with a mixture of informational slides. It is anticipated that one video will be prepared for each campaign.

10.12 Materials

Costs for the outreach efforts are expected to range from printing costs, postage fees, booth/room rentals, platform fees, etc. These fees are estimated for budgeting purposes but may be subject to change.

EXHIBIT B

Amendment No. 2

EXHIBIT B - Amendment No 1

Task 2: Preparation of New and Revised Policies and Plans (updated)

Task 2.2 SAC (Updated)	\$	40,000
Task 2.7 Coordination SWRCB	\$	20,000
Task 2 Subtotal	\$	60,000

Task 10: Stakeholder Engagement

Task 10.1 Workshops	\$	36,000
Task 10.2 Reports	\$	12,000
Task 10.3 Pop-Up Events	\$	10,000
Task 10.4 Educational Efforts	\$	7,500
Task 10.5 Meetings	\$	7,500
Task 10.6 Social Media	\$	15,500
Task 10.7 Email	\$	8,000
Task 10.8 Website Content	\$	8,000
Task 10.9 Graphic Design	\$	7,000
Task 10.10 Video Content	\$	10,000
Task 10.11 Materials	\$	15,000
Task 10 Subtotal	\$	136,500
Amendment 1 Total	\$	196,500

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0033
(916) 319-2033
FAX (916) 319-2133

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4500 S. LASPINA STREET
TULARE, CA 93274
(559) 636-3440
FAX (559) 636-4484



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NATURAL RESOURCES
TRANSPORTATION

April 6, 2026

Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel and Board Members
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Mid-Kings River GSA request for a Fee Waiver and Deferral of an Interim Plan

Dear Chair Esquivel and Board Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the request submitted by the Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) regarding the waiver of probationary pumping fees (\$20/AF) and the deferral of a State-led interim plan for the Tulare Lake Subbasin.

Since being placed on probation in April 2024, the Mid-Kings River GSA has demonstrated a good-faith commitment to the mandates of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Under new leadership and a restructured governance model within Kings County, the GSA has been working tirelessly to develop a viable, local path toward groundwater sustainability and subsidence control by 2040.

However, several external factors have created an inequitable burden on the constituents of the 33rd Assembly District:

- Following the September 2024 court-ordered injunction, local GSAs were left to navigate complex regulatory updates without the benefit of direct feedback or guidance from State Water Board staff. It is logically inconsistent to assess a \$20/AF fee—intended to facilitate State administration and oversight—for a period during which the State was effectively unavailable to the subbasin.
- As identified by CalEnviroScreen 4.0, the Mid-Kings River GSA serves a region designated as a Disadvantaged Community (DAC). These residents and family farms are already facing the immense financial pressure of establishing local

fees to fund GSA operations. The addition of a \$20/AF State fee extracts vital economic resources from a community that can least afford it, directly undermining the local GSA's ability to achieve long-term success.

- The threat of an immediate State "takeover" through an interim plan creates a climate of uncertainty that prevents the community from unifying. Providing a one-year stay on the interim plan would afford the Mid-Kings River GSA the necessary time to finalize local support for their revised GSP and begin meaningful implementation.

I respectfully urge the State Water Resources Control Board to grant the Mid-Kings River GSA's request for a fee waiver for the July 2024–September 2025 reporting period and to commit to a one-year deferral of the interim plan. Allowing this local agency the space to succeed is the most effective way to ensure the water future of the Tulare Lake Subbasin.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexandra M. Macedo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'A'.

ALEXANDRA M. MACEDO
Assembly District 33
California State Legislature

Board Members

**Richard Valle
Doug Verboon
Rusty Robinson
Robert Thayer
Kimber Regan**



Staff

**Chuck Kinney, General
Manager
Laurie Avedisian-Favini,
General Counsel
Catherine Venturella, Clerk**

April 7, 2026

State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for Waiver of Probationary
Pumping Fees (\$20/AF) and
Extension of Interim Plan Deadline

To the Members of the State Water Resources Control Board,

On behalf of the Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), we are formally requesting a full waiver of the \$20 per acre-foot (AF) pumping fees associated with groundwater extraction reported between July 2024 and September 2025. Furthermore, we request a one-year stay on the enactment of any State-led interim plan to allow for the successful local implementation of our revised Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

Since the Tulare Lake Subbasin was placed on probation in April 2024, the Mid-Kings River GSA has undergone a significant leadership transition and restructuring, now operating primarily under the governance of Kings County. This shift was designed to bring the GSA into alignment with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requirements. Our staff, local community stakeholders and board are working tirelessly to reach sustainability goals by 2040, specifically addressing groundwater levels and land subsidence.

A critical obstacle to our progress was the September 2024 court-ordered injunction. During this pivotal period, communication between the State Water Board and local GSAs was effectively severed. For over a year, Mid-Kings River GSA was forced to update its GSP and local policies in a vacuum, without the necessary technical guidance or direct feedback from State staff.

While we attempted to glean insights by monitoring communications with neighboring subbasins, the lack of direct engagement from the State hindered our ability to ensure our revisions met your specific expectations. It is difficult to justify a \$20/AF fee—intended to cover the costs of State oversight and assistance—when the State was legally or practically unable to provide those very services during the reporting period.

The Mid-Kings River GSA, along with the other Tulare Lake GSAs, has made significant progress towards our sustainability goals by enacting numerous policies including groundwater allocations and dry well mitigation plans. The preparation of these policies involved numerous meetings with local stakeholders, including domestic well owners, small growers, and the Tachi Tribe. These discussions have been challenging but ultimately have resulted in a level of trust between the GSA and stakeholders.

The Mid-Kings River GSA and the broader Tulare Lake Subbasin are classified as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) according to the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 tool. Our constituents are already facing significant economic pressure.

- To achieve SGMA compliance, we must establish local fees to fund GSA operations and infrastructure mitigation.
- Collecting an additional \$20/AF for the State removes vital capital from a disadvantaged community that literally cannot afford it.
- These funds are better utilized at the local level to implement the GSP. Extracting this wealth now significantly lessens the likelihood of our GSA's long-term success.

Currently, two primary "distractions" are preventing our community from fully uniting behind the revised GSP: the burden of the \$20/AF State fee and the looming threat of a State-mandated interim plan.

To create an environment where local pumpers and stakeholders can support and adopt the revised GSP, we request the following:

1. **Fee Exemption:** Waive the \$20/AF fee for the water volumes required to be reported by May 1st.
2. **Commitment to Deferral:** Commit to a minimum one-year stay on enacting a State interim plan.

This window of time and financial relief will allow the Mid-Kings River GSA to build the necessary local consensus to begin implementation, ultimately leading to the Tulare Lake Subbasin's removal from probationary status.

We are committed to being a partner in sustainable groundwater management. We ask that the State Water Board recognize our diligent efforts under difficult circumstances and grant this request to ensure the economic and hydrologic viability of our region.

Sincerely,

Doug Verboon, Vice-Chair
Mid-Kings River GSA

California State Senate

CAPITOL OFFICE

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SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
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FAX (916) 651-4916

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BAKERSFIELD, CA 93309
TEL (661) 395-2620

LEMOORE OFFICE
339 WEST D STREET, SUITE E
LEMOORE, CA 93245
TEL (559) 924-1201

TULARE OFFICE
411 E. KERN AVENUE
TULARE, CA 93274
TEL (559) 685-1202

SENATE.CA.GOV/HURTADO

SENATOR
MELISSA HURTADO
SIXTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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SUBCOMMITTEE

BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE #4
ON STATE ADMINISTRATION
AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT
CHAIR

April 6, 2026

State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

To the Members of the State Water Resources Control Board,

As the State Senator representing the Senate District 16, I am writing to formally express my support for the petition from the Mid-Kings River Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) regarding the waiver of the \$20 per acre-foot (AF) probationary pumping fees and the request for a one-year stay on the enactment of a State-led interim plan for the Tulare Lake Subbasin.

I am intimately aware of the challenges our Central Valley communities face in balancing water sustainability with economic survival. Since the subbasin was placed on probation in April 2024, the Mid-Kings River GSA has shown a commendable commitment to reform, restructuring its leadership under Kings County to better meet the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

I urge the Board to consider the following factors in favor of the GSA's request:

- The Tulare Lake Subbasin is home to some of the most economically vulnerable populations in California. According to CalEnviroScreen 4.0, this region is a designated Disadvantaged Community (DAC). Imposing a \$20/AF State fee on top of necessary local GSA assessments places an untenable financial burden on our residents and small-scale farmers, potentially draining the very resources needed to achieve local compliance.
- The September 2024 court injunction created a significant gap in technical coordination. For over a full year, the GSA was forced to move forward without the benefit of the State Water Board's direct feedback. Charging a fee for "oversight" during a period when the State was unable to provide guidance to the local pumpers and staff is fundamentally unfair.

- For SGMA to work, we must empower local agencies to build trust with their stakeholders. The "double threat" of high State fees and an imminent interim plan has become a primary obstacle to local consensus. A one-year deferral of the interim plan would provide the Mid-Kings River GSA the stability required to finalize and implement a revised Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that works for our region.

The goal of both the State and the Mid-Kings River GSA is the same: sustainable groundwater and a resilient Tulare Lake Subbasin. We can best achieve that goal by providing this community the financial relief and the time necessary to succeed locally. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to my Chief of Staff, Aaron Brieno at (916) 651-4016 or Aaron.Brieno@sen.ca.gov . Thank you again for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa Hurtado". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Hurtado
California State Senator, 16th District