Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Delta-Mendota Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Thursday, March 26, 2026, 10:00 AM

Board Room, Santa Nella County Water District
12931 CA-33, Gustine, CA 95322

Central Delta-Mendota Groundwater Sustainability Agency Members and Alternates Present
Aaron Barcellos, Member – Pacheco Water District
Amy Montgomery, Member – Santa Nella County Water District
Augustine Ramirez, Alternate – Fresno County
Chase Hurley, Alternate – Pacheco Water District
Brian Silva, Alternate – San Luis Water District
Palmer McCoy, Member – Mercy Springs Water District (MSWD)
Damian Aragona, Member – Widren Water District (WWD)
Wayne Western, Member – Panoche Water District

Absent
Fresno Slough Water District
Tranquillity Irrigation District
Eagle Field Water District
Oro Loma Water District
Merced County

Others Present
Lauren Layne – Baker Manock & Jensen (BMJ)
Taylor Blakslee – Hallmark Group
Patrick McGowan – Panoche Water District

Others Present Via Zoom
Anona Dutton – EKI
Amir Mani – EKI
Joe Hopkins – P&P
Juan Cadena – Panoche Water District
Karlee Liddy – Hallmark Group
Susan Xie – EKI

1. **Call to Order/Roll Call**
   Chair Barcellos called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
   Chair Barcellos led the pledge of allegiance.

3. **Committee to Consider Corrections or Additions to the Agenda of Items, as authorized by Government Code Section 54950 et seq.**
   No corrections or additions were made.

4. **Opportunity for Public Comment**
   There was no public comment.

5. **Election of Officers**

Lauren Layne (legal counsel, Baker Manock & Jensen) gave context for the need to appoint members. The Central DM GSA Board Chair was selected, along with the Vice Chair and Secretary.

Motions:
Director Western made a motion to appoint Aaron Barcellos as the Central DM GSA Board Chair. The motion was seconded by Director McCoy and passed unanimously.

Director McCoy made a motion to appoint Amy Montgomery as the Central DM GSA Board Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Director Western and passed unanimously.

Director Western made a motion to appoint Taylor Blakslee / Hallmark group as the Central DM GSA Board Secretary and Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Director McCoy and passed unanimously.

6. **Review and Take Action on Consent Calendar (Barcellos)**
   a. Minutes for the February 26, 2026 Meeting of the Central Delta-Mendota GSA
   b. Budget-to-Actual Report
   Director Montgomery stated that the budget to actual report from the San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority is the last one from them for Fiscal Year 2026.

Motion:
Director Western made a motion to approve the consent calendar. The motion was seconded by Director Silva and passed unanimously.

7. **Authorize Executing an Engagement Agreement with Baker Manock & Jensen**
Layne introduced this item stating that because the Central DM GSA is now going to handle contracting on its own and not through the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs JPA, it will need to contract directly with BMJ for legal services.

Motion:
Director Western made a motion to authorize executing an engagement agreement with Baker Manock & Jensen. The motion was seconded by Director Montgomery and passed unanimously.

8. **Rescind the Special Project Agreement between the Central DM GSA and the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs Joint Powers Authority and Authorizing Consultant Contracts with the Hallmark Group and EKI as Previously Approved**
Layne discussed that when working with the Hallmark Group to set up accounting for the Central DM GSA, it was going to be more complicated to open an account under the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs JPA. As the Central DM GSA is already a separate entity, it was going to be simpler to contract directly with consultants approved through the RFP process issued by SLDMWA, instead of being under the umbrella of another JPA. Therefore, the Central DM GSA should rescind the Special Project Agreement with the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs JPA and authorize previously approved contracts with Hallmark Group and EKI.

Motion:
Director McCoy made a motion to rescind the Central DM GSA Special Project Agreement with the DM Subbasin JPA and to authorize execution of consultant contracts with the Hallmark Group and EKI. The motion was seconded by Director Silva and passed unanimously.

9. **Approve the Combined Central Delta-Mendota GSA JPA Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27 and Authorize an Initial Cash Call of 1/12 of All Costs**

Director Montgomery introduced this item, stating that she will close out the prior account and books through February 28, 2026 and have it audited, with the current account monies paying for the audit. She will then work with Hallmark Group to close out the current account at Wells Fargo and open up an account at Chase Bank over the next few months.

Layne added that there will likely be a small reimbursement to the original 10 agencies of that Central DM GSA that contributed (this excludes Oro Loma and Widren WD, who were not part of the Central DM GSA at this time).

Taylor Blakslee, Hallmark Group, stated there were a few changes in the combined, approved fund 65 and Central DM GSA budgets, and that he has a few questions for the Board. He highlighted changes that were made for the revised, combined budget including the Central DM's 1/7th cost share of the DM Subbasin JPA, increased budget for legal counsel, and the actual amount for Hallmark Group, which was approved by Central DM GSA but was not accurately listed on a previous budget from SLDMWA.

Blakslee asked the Board if they would like to continue to keep the budget item for printing meeting materials, and the Board directed staff to continue to print packets for the Board meetings.

Blakslee asked the Board about the $75,000 line item for "Annual Report – Data Coordination". He stated that the annual report work is already covered under the 1/7th cost share to the DM Subbasin JPA and that there is another $25,000 contingency item in the budget. The Board directed staff to remove this line item, as it is redundant and may be from a past budget for Woodard & Curran.

Blakslee asked the Board about the long-term plan for the $100,000 line item for "Reserved Funds for GSP Update". He stated that the GSP update would be a basin-wide item that could be amended in the DM Subbasin JPA budget if needed at a later date but also asked that Amir Mani (EKI) iterate his recommendation to the Board. Mani stated that they recommend keeping a small reserve for GSP implementation contingency (pumping studies, PRP support, etc.).

Director Hurley stated that there is $100,000 in reserved funds from SLDMWA that was not used under those agreements. The Board directed staff to remove the $100,000 line item for "Reserved Funds for GSP Update".

Blakslee stated that DMS upload was not in the scope of work for EKI nor Hallmark Group, which was previously covered by Woodard & Curran. He recommended that Hallmark Group attempt to upload the data and get back to the Board regarding scope and adjusting the budget after a quarter or two of uploading data into the DMS, because they may be able to keep it within the current budget. Layne asked if EKI would be willing to do this, as it is a technical item that requires QA/QC. Director Ramirez asked if GSAs are QA/QCing their data before sending it to Woodard & Curran/ Hallmark Group and expressed concern that they would potentially pay for EKI to QA/QC twice.

The Board directed Karlee Liddy (Hallmark Group) to perform the data upload for this quarter and to come back to Board with cost estimates and EKI to provide a quote for this effort, as well. The Board agreed that the $25,000 contingency could help cover the initial quarter costs for data upload to the DMS.

Blakslee stated that the DM JPA Board will be voting in April regarding the model calibration at the Subbasin scale. Therefore, the first cash call to the Central DM GSA entities would not include the $75,000 for the model calibration at the Subbasin level. Blakslee iterated that the full amount of the model calibration would then be included in the second cash call.

Director Hurley asked about the budget policy they voted on to have a 50/50 split of budget based on estimates and the other half based on pumping. Chair Barcellos stated that there will be discussions regarding this policy in upcoming meetings to follow through on those commitments, which will hopefully be done before the next cash call.

Motion:
Director Montgomery made a motion to approve the revised combined budget with directed amendments and to authorize cash call for each of the 12 participating entities of the Central DM GSA. Director McCoy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

10. Review and Take Action to Approve the DM Subbasin Model Calibration and Costs Associated Therein

Blakslee stated that the DM Subbasin JPA Board will vote on a decision regarding the timing and cost split of the model calibration during their meeting on April 13, 2026. Patrick McGowan asked staff to confirm that Central DM GSA's cost share would be $75,000 for the first cash call. Staff confirmed that figure and McGowen stated that it would be prudent for the Subbasin to perform the calibration sooner than later. The Board directed Liddy to send Exhibit A from special project agreement to form one single GSP to all GSAs in the DM Subbasin.

Director Ramirez asked if someone who attended the technical ad hoc can give an update on what the opposed opinions were and Director McGowan stated that Aliso and Farmer's would like to see well completion reports and different cost-share approaches to be in a support position for the calibration. Ramirez stated he would like to see model calibration include stronger efforts to coordinate with other modelers in adjacent basins. Joe Hopkins (Aliso WD) stated that their concern was having meter data available and given that the metering requirement only went into place January 2026, that another year of meter data could help improve the model.

Director Ramirez and Patrick McGowan expressed concern regarding the potential need to recalibrate the model in another year or two, which would cost more money.

Motion:
Director Western made a motion to authorize the Central DM GSA representative to the DM Subbasin JPA Board approve the model calibration this fiscal year at the existing 1/7th cost split during the meeting on April 13, 2026. Director Montgomery seconded the motion, which passed with Director Ramirez voting no.

11. Review and Take Action to Approve the Bank Resolution and Authorize Signatories on the Bank Account

Blakslee introduced this item and stated that the Board needs to approve two signatories to establish the Central DM GSA bank account with Chase Bank.

Motion:
Director McCoy made a motion to approve the bank resolution, establishing a bank account and ACH transactions with Chase bank, and authorize Chair Barcellos and Vice Chair Montgomery as signatories. Director Western seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

12. Review and Take Action to Update and Adopt the Following Policies

a. Central Delta-Mendota GSA Well Census and Registration Policy and Provide Direction on Updates to the Fee Schedule

Layne introduced this item and stated that policies need to be at least reviewed every 5 years, and she introduced each updated policy since the single GSP has been adopted within that timeframe. She stated that all wells need to be registered to the Central DM GSA, and that any new wells must be registered within 30 days. She asked the Board for feedback regarding if the fees set under Prop 26 are still appropriate.

The Board held a discussion regarding the responsible party for the enforcement of the policies. The Board directed Hallmark Group to reach out to each district regarding compliance with the policies including collecting groundwater data and if wells are registered and metered. Staff will post the policies on the website and encourage district representatives to share the policies with landowners.

Layne stated that there are no substantive changes to the policy outside of updates since the single GSP adoption, and recommends approval of the updates.

Motion:
Director Ramirez made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-02 and approve the updated well and census registration policy. Director Western seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

b. Central Delta-Mendota GSA Well Metering and Reporting Policy

Director Montgomery stated that the email address for annual reporting is still accurate but stated that there is no fillable report for landowners at this time. Layne stated that there is a clause stating that landowners must send photos of well meter reading to the GSAs, which Hallmark Group can keep track of, and will post the well metering reporting sheet to the website. Mr. Blakslee stated that well meters need to be calibrated every 5 years.

Motion:
Director McCoy made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-03 and approve the updated well metering and reporting policy. Director Ramirez seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

c. Central Delta-Mendota GSA Policy Regarding Implementation of the Pumping Reduction Plan

Layne introduced this item and stated that this draft policy came to be based on conversations at the February 26, 2026 meeting and can be approved or deferred for next meeting. She stated that the policy outlines prioritization of the use of available surface water to mitigate pumping pressures on groundwater in the region. Director Montgomery stated concerns with the policy as written because Santa Nella County Water District is a CVP Contractor and needs to prioritize groundwater use.

The Board directed legal counsel to make further amendments on the M&I components to the policy for the implementation of the pumping reduction plan (Res. 2026-04). The Board directed Hallmark Group to email participating entities regarding well registration and metering compliance, distribute reporting forms, and post the policies and reporting forms on the website.

Motion:
Director Western made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-04 and approve the policy for the surface water prioritization and groundwater extraction management, with further amendments from legal counsel to the M&I components. Director McCoy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Report Items

13. **Report from the Central DM GSA Representative to the DM JPA Board**
Director Hurley stated he will be attending the SWRCB Board meeting on April 7th to offer gratitude to staff for the recent recommendation to bring the DM Subbasin back under DWR.

14. **Update from the March 19, 2026 Technical Ad Hoc Meeting**
Blakslee recommended that this item be discussed at a subsequent meeting, as the Central DM GSA Board already made a motion advising their representative to the DM Subbasin JPA Board regarding the model calibration.

15. **Update on GSP Implementation**
    a. **Pumping Reduction Plan (PRP) Implementation and PRP Dashboard Reporting**
    b. **Q1 Water Level and Quality Monitoring Event and DMS Upload**
    Susan Xie and Amir Mani provided an update on PRP implementation and dashboard reporting. The Board was reminded to provide Hallmark Group with groundwater level and quality data for Q1 (target data collection was February) as soon as possible to be uploaded into the DMS.

16. **Program Management Report**
Blakslee stated there was nothing to report and that an update on action items will be presented at subsequent meetings.

17. **Next Steps**
    1. Consultant contract execution.
    2. Work with legal to rescind Central SPA.
    3. Make amendments to budget and post to the website and distribute to districts.
    4. Facilitate the execution of the bank resolution and to set up the Central DM GSA account with Chase Bank.
    5. Facilitate the execution of the resolutions adopting the policies presented and distribute them to the districts and post online, with reporting forms.
    6. Report at the next meeting on the work prepared by Provost & Pritchard on well verifications.

18. **Reports Pursuant to Government Code Section 54954.2(a)(3)**
There were no reports provided.

Closed Session

19. **Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation (1 case)**
The GSA will meet in closed session to confer with legal counsel on significant exposure to anticipated litigation pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Government Code Section 54956.9: (1 case).
The Board went into closed session at 12:04 p.m.

Open Session

20. **Report Out of Closed Session**
The Board came out of closed session at 12:52 p.m. with no reportable action.

21. **Future Meetings**
    a. Central Delta-Mendota GSA
        i. Thursday, April 23, 2026 at 10:00 AM (Santa Nella County Water District)
    b. Delta-Mendota Subbasin Coordination Committee
        i. Monday April 13, 2026 at 10:00 am (Grassland Water District)

22. **Adjournment**

Chair Barcellos adjourned the meeting at 12:54 p.m. PST.