



What is the Merced Irrigation Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MIUGSA)?

The Merced Irrigation Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MIUGSA) is made up of the following public agencies: Cities of Merced, Livingston, and Atwater, Le Grand and Planada Community Services Districts, Winton Water and Sanitary District, and Merced Irrigation District. The public agencies formed MIUGSA in 2017 to address the statewide mandate of measuring and securing future groundwater supplies under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). If you live or have a business within the areas served by these agencies, then you are a beneficiary of MIUGSA's services.

What is the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)?

According to the California State Water Board website, SGMA was “enacted in order to halt overdraft and bring groundwater basins into balanced levels of pumping and recharge.” SGMA allows for the local agencies to manage groundwater in their basin. In order for local agencies within the Merced Groundwater Sub-basin to achieve that, they must:

- Form a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) to ensure compliance and enforcement of SGMA within its underlying area of the groundwater basin.
- Develop and submit a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to the California Department of Water Resources before January 31, 2020.

MIUGSA is one of three (3) GSAs within the Merced Groundwater Sub-basin that have worked collaboratively to complete a single GSP. For information specifically about the Merced Groundwater Sub-basin GSP, visit www.mercedsgma.org. Merced Groundwater Sub-basin generally includes the area in Merced County east of the San Joaquin River and south of the Merced River.

How is the GSA managed?

A GSA is its own agency with its own governing board. In the case of MIUGSA, the board has representation from each of the seven member agencies.

Why is a fee needed to fund the GSA?

SGMA provides GSAs the authority to collect fees to fund the costs of its regulatory activities including the GSA's participation in developing and implementing its portion of groundwater sustainability plan(s), investigations, inspections, compliance assistance, enforcement, and program administration, including a prudent reserve.

How is the GSA currently funded?

Currently, the seven agencies are funding the initial cost of the GSA, which has been mostly staff time incurred to develop the Merced Groundwater Sub-basin GSP. A budget has been developed to reimburse agencies for costs associated with SGMA compliance and to fund future needs of the GSA.

What is the operating budget of the GSA?

The annual budget for MIUGSA will vary from year to year depending on the activities that need to take place; generally, it is estimated to range between \$650,000 and \$850,000 per year. The costs cover operating expenses including agency staffing and professional services such as those to amend the GSP; developing annual, five-year GSP reports and proof of compliance required by the California Department of Water Resources; developing implementation policies and guidelines for the GSP, such as groundwater allocation; grant writing; and legal counsel. Regulatory compliance and administration costs include general operational costs such as small tools, materials and supplies, travel and training costs, insurance, dues and permit costs, costs associated with data gathering, and County fees to place MIUGSA's regulatory fee on the property tax roll.

How will the fee be determined?

The fee setting process takes into consideration several factors including the unique needs of the represented communities within the boundaries of MIUGSA, reasonableness and fairness for all beneficiaries of groundwater management planning, as well as simplicity and understandability of the fee. The fee is determined using the estimated budget for the next five years. The amount that needs to be raised from the new fee is divided among the beneficiaries of MIUGSA's services.

How much will the fee be?

Two fee allocation methodologies are being considered. Watch the videos that summarize the fee options being considered for the following beneficiary types: Residential, Commercial, Agriculture, Apartment/Multi-unit housing.

When will the fee take effect?

MIUGSA is planning to approve the fee in July 2020. The fee will be placed on the County Property Tax roll for fiscal year 2020/21.

How is this fee different from other fees being imposed by other agencies?

The fee to fund the MIUGSA is specifically for GSA operations and is not part of, or associated with, any existing fees imposed by member agencies within the Merced Irrigation Urban GSA boundaries.

Could my property be charged a fee from more than one GSA?

Yes. There are a few situations in which a property owner may have a parcel(s) that overlap between the Merced Irrigation Urban GSA boundaries and the Merced Sub-basin GSA boundaries. In that case, a fee would be charged for each GSA. View the [map](#) to see if your property is in an overlap area. If so, please fill out a [comment form](#) and include your APN in the comment section. A team member will contact you.

How can property owners learn more about MIUGSA and the fee study?

Public involvement is an important part of the process. MIUGSA wants those impacted to provide comments about a preferred option prior to the fee adoption. The public may get involved by doing the following:

1. Go to www.miugsa.org to learn about MIUGSA.
2. Go to www.miugsa.org/feestudy for more information about MIUGSA Fee Study and to watch brief video explanations about the fee setting process.
3. E-mail the project team at FeeStudy@MIUGSA.org or leave a comment at <http://eepurl.com/g2qTqj>.
4. Join the Fee Study e-mail list at <http://eepurl.com/g2qTqj> to receive project updates, board meeting notices, and stay informed about public involvement opportunities.
5. Check the website often for updates.
6. If you are interested in learning about the Merced Groundwater Sub-basin GSP, please go to www.mercedsgma.org

Will there be workshops about the fee study?

Pursuant to executive orders issued by California Governor Gavin Newsom regarding the restriction of public gatherings, public involvement will be **virtual** until state orders to restrict gatherings are lifted. MIUGSA is planning for two virtual workshops to be held on Monday, June 15th at 6 p.m. and Tuesday, June 16th at 6 p.m. Sign up at <http://eepurl.com/g2qTqj> or check the website at www.miugsa.org/feestudy after June 8th to receive instructions about how to join the virtual workshops.

Should public gathering restrictions be lifted, options to attend in person will be advertised on the website and noticed to the e-mail list.