

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Summary of March 7, 2018 Community Workshops

Overview

On March 7, 2018, the Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Board of Directors (Board) and the CBGSA Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) hosted two community workshops which were preceded by a Special Joint Meeting of the CBGSA Board and SAC. The workshops were held at the Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center in New Cuyama. The English language workshop began at 4:10 pm and ended at 6:20 pm. The Spanish language workshop commenced at 6:40 pm and concluded at 8:01 pm. Approximately 35 people attended the English language workshop and 12 people attended the Spanish language workshop. The Board meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm and the workshops continued without a quorum of the Board present.

Meeting notices were prepared in English and Spanish for the March 7, 2018 community workshops. The notices were distributed as follows:

- February 21: Both meeting notices were emailed to the CBGSA stakeholder list of 89 people. This email list is inclusive of the Santa Barbara County Cuyama Basin email list and includes Board and SAC members.
- February 22 - March 1: Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center distributed approximately 100 notices within the community by hand.
- February 22: Cuyama Valley Community Association (CVCA) sent both notices as an email to their list of 100.
- March 2: A reminder of the workshops was emailed to the CBGSA email list.
- March 5: County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Water Resources Engineer Catherine Martin sent an email notice about the March 7, 2018 workshops to the San Luis Obispo County Cuyama Basin email list.
- March 1 to 7: Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center developed an English and a Spanish flyer for the workshops. Approximately 500 hard copies were distributed by hand, and they were also emailed to the CVCA email list.

English Language Workshop

The workshop included an overview of what the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires, the team's current understanding of the Cuyama Basin, and the team's approach for better understanding the Cuyama Basin (see workshop presentation). There were several opportunities for extended discussion on these topics included in the workshop timeline (see workshop agenda).

The questions, issues, and comments raised at the workshop are summarized below. In addition, the CBGSA technical team asked attendees for additional data in these areas:

1. Well and Pumping Levels
2. Land Use Change, specifically post-2014
3. Irrigation Use

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Questions, Issues and Comments

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and Groundwater Sustainability Plan

- Aren't the solutions for the Cuyama Basin groundwater problem simply more rain and less use? What other options do we have?
- How many aquifers are there in the Cuyama Basin?
- What do the concepts of Measurable Objectives, Minimum Thresholds, and Interim Milestones mean? These SGMA-related terms required further clarification.
- What is the difference between Minimum Objective and Measurable Objective?
- Under SGMA, is there a timetable requirement for meeting the Minimum Objective?
- If we create a reasonable Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that is accepted by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), what happens if there are droughts that result in failure to meet the objective?
- There are naturally occurring calcium and magnesium levels in the water; how are these addressed under SGMA?
- Who evaluates the GSP and who reports to DWR?
- If the GSP is a "living" document, with interim reporting milestones, then can the plan be adjusted or changed?
- SGMA requires the identification of projects and management actions, most of the examples shown (slide 5B) won't work; what options will be available for the Cuyama Basin?

Data for Use in the Hydrologic Model

- What public data are being used to develop the plan?
- What data will the team use from private wells?
- How will the team be filling in the data gaps?
- How will the team validate the data?
- How will the team address discrepancies?
- What does relevant timeframe mean (referring to a statement that the team is collecting data for the relevant timeframe)?
- What will future pumping allocations be based on, a 20- to 30-year historical amount?
- What is the difference, for the effectiveness of the model, if the team receives generic water data versus specific data from basin growers/farmers/ranchers (referring to a prior statement about availability of data from private sources)?
- Will the team accept water data from growers/farmers/ranchers that USGS did not include in their study?
- Will the team use the monitoring data that USGS is still gathering?
- Does the team know the pumping capacity for the production wells identified?

Cuyama Basin Plan Area Description Elements

- For the geology, will the team use core samples to validate the geology?
- Can the team get the changes in land use from satellite imagery?
- For land use changes since 2014, Sunrise Olive Ranch, on the road to Ventucopa, should be included.
- Regarding land use, some lands are regularly fallowed. Crops are rotated but are still considered irrigated. Since 2014, more than the normal amount of land has been fallowed due to drought conditions.

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- Will the team refer to the same geographic zones as USGS did: Ventucopa Uplands Zone, Main Basin Zone, and Foothill Zone?
- Groundwater temperature and quality vary a lot across the basin.
- Flash floods in the mountains are aggressive. Average rainfall varies greatly across the basin.
- Has there been subsidence from oil pumping? USGS says there has been no subsidence at Russell Ranch.
- Is there a different evapotranspiration rate for the valley (higher altitude, desert, windy conditions)? It was noted that weather data is measured at the High School.

Funding for the GSA and GSP

- Who is paying for this?
- There are 5 representatives from the Cuyama Basin Water District (CBWD) and only 1 from the Cuyama Community Services District. Does CBWD pay more?

Discussion about Existing Basin Conditions

The workshop included an interactive discussion that focused on individual ranchers/farmers talking about their observations and experiences with water in different geographic areas in the Cuyama Basin. Attendees discussed their experience with water in distinct geographic areas of the Cuyama Basin including Upper Ventucopa (Apache Canyon), Lower Ventucopa, the foothills of the central portion of the basin, the valley floor, and Cottonwood Canyon. The information shared provided a better understanding of the changes in water levels and pumping capacities over time as well as the importance of understanding the influence of fault lines on the aquifer.

Next Steps

The team described the next activities to collect and review data, develop the Plan Area Description for public review, and work with the Board and Standing Advisory Committee. The next workshop is planned for June 2018.

Spanish Language Workshop

The project team presented the workshop presentation in Spanish, answered questions, and discussed issues related to groundwater and the GSP.

Questions and Comments Raised at the Spanish Language Workshop

- With the addition of two representatives from the Hispanic community, there are now 9 SAC members.
- What can New Cuyama residents do to stop the decline? Water consumption is so minimal now with people using bottled water, irrigation is limited, people are doing their part. What else could the community do?
- Water quality is poor. How does this project address water quality?
- Water bills are very high, how will this project affect the water bills?
- It would be good if this project provided financial assistance to the high water bill challenge faced by the community.
- What will be the economic impact to agriculture and jobs in the community? What are the impacts of potential changes in water use?

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Next Steps for Education and Outreach

Topics for Further Education, Outreach, and Discussion

The information gathered at the workshops will be used to assist the team in formulating the next steps in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. Topics identified from the workshops for additional education and discussion include the following:

1. Hydrologic Model Selection. Explain what a model is, which model will be used, and what makes a model useful and reliable.
2. What about the Data? Expand the discussion of what data the team is seeking, specifically data regarding wells and pumping levels, land use, and irrigation use. Include more information about how data gaps will be filled and the data validated.
3. SGMA Requirements. Provide further explanation for Measurable Objectives, Minimum Thresholds, and Interim Milestones.
4. Description of the Plan Area. Provide details on the information used to develop the draft Plan Area Description report due out in early April 2018.
5. Water Budget. Describe the past, present, and future water budget and how it was developed.

Next Steps: Outreach Opportunities

1. March 29, 2018: CBGSA Standing Advisory Committee meeting
2. April 4, 2018: CBGSA Board Meeting
3. May 1, 2018: CBGSA Newsletter, Volume 1
4. May 1, 2018: Cuyama Recreation District Quarterly Newsletter
5. June 2018: Next Community Workshops