

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

January 4, 2024

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Chair
DeBranch, Brad – Vice Chair
Adams, Karen
Caufield, John
Furstenfeld, Jake
Gaillard, Jean
Haslett, Joe
Jaffe, Roberta
Lewis, David

Beck, Jim – Executive Director
Blakslee, Taylor – Assistant Executive Director
Dominguez, Alex – Legal Counsel
Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran
Eggleton, Micah – Woodard & Curran

ABSENT:

None

1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Assistant Executive Director Taylor Blakslee called roll of the Committee (shown above).

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Kelly led the pledge of allegiance.

4. Meeting Protocols

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the meeting protocols.

ACTION ITEMS

5. Election of Officers

CBGSA Executive Director Jim Beck presented options to either elect the current slate of officers for 2024 or consider other nominees. Current Chair Kelly and Vice Chair DeBranch said they were willing to continue to serve.

MOTION

Committee Member Lewis made a motion to appoint the current officers to continue serving as Chair and Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

- AYES: Adams, Caufield, DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
- NOES: Haslett
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: None

Committee Member Haslett commented he does not believe Vice Chair DeBranch should be on the SAC due to not residing in Cuyama and it is not appropriate for Vice Chair DeBranch to be an alternate on the Board.

6. Approval of Minutes

Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the October 26, 2023, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve the October 26, 2023, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Adams, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

- AYES: Adams, Caufield, DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: None

7. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Amendment Components

a. Update on GSP Components Schedule

Mr. Beck reviewed the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) components schedule which is provided in the SAC packet and indicated everything is on schedule except for discussions related to interconnected surface water (ISW) which has been delayed due to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) providing criteria for ISWs later in 2024.

b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Sustainable Management Criteria and Undesirable Results for:

i. Groundwater Levels

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the options for groundwater levels sustainability criteria for minimum thresholds (MT) which is included in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if there are any data gaps in the groundwater level monitoring network. Mr. Van Lienden replied that grant-funded monitoring wells have largely filled in the monitoring data gaps.

Chair Kelly asked if the new evaluation tool for well protection depth is commonly used in other GSA's. Mr. Van Lienden replied this tool is consistent with what other GSA's are

doing.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the tool will be used for every active well in the basin. Mr. Van Lienden replied the tool was used for every active well in the basin.

A local Cuyama stakeholder asked how the methodology handles outliers in option 2. Mr. Van Lienden replied if a well is determined to be dry in 2015 the well will be removed, and the raster will only be used at the locations of the representative wells.

Stakeholder Mark Ellsworth asked what data staff has on production regarding maintenance. Mr. Van Lienden replied staff does not have this information for the wells.

Committee Member Lewis asked if the well protection depth will be listed in the GSP for each individual well. Mr. Van Lienden replied staff did not anticipate releasing that information but could do so if directed to.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the horsepower on the pump is not being accounted for and it is important to consider this information.

Committee Member Jaffe asked what the purpose of the minimum thresholds is if not to protect wells from going dry. Mr. Blakslee replied the purpose of minimum thresholds is to protect all beneficial uses and users.

Committee Member Furstenfeld asked if there is anything wrong with the current methodology and what would be the benefit of using any of the new proposed methodologies. Mr. Beck replied the original methodology was used because there was minimal data available, and a tool was created to overcome the lack of data. Mr. Beck continued to say the GSA now has more data available to establish a new methodology.

Committee Member Caufield asked how the ten foot buffer is defined for the well protection depth. Mr. Beck replied it was based on the location of the pump not the water level, meaning if the pump is 100 feet, then the well protection depth would be set at 90 feet.

Committee Member Gaillard commented that ten feet is not a big enough buffer because if water level reaches that level, then many pumpers would need to turn off their pump due to the drawdown of the pump.

Stakeholder Rachel H. asked how many wells were removed from the well protection depth. Mr. Van Lienden replied the map showing the well protection depth selection process shows all the wells removed.

Committee Member Caufield asked what differentiates a well from being classified as a production or domestic well. Mr. Van Lienden replied all wells reported as domestic are classified as domestic and all other wells are classified as production wells.

Committee Member Adams commented she is concerned with option three since the glidepath will probably look different once the new information is analyzed.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the glidepath is only for the Central Management Area (CMA).

Committee Member Gaillard commented he does not agree with the comment that there wasn't enough data to set the existing methodology and strongly recommends keeping the existing methodology.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if groundwater dependent ecosystem (GDE) can be considered with the other options. Mr. Van Lienden replied GDEs are part of option four.

Committee Member Jaffe asked for wells 841 and 845 to be considered for GDE protection. Mr. Van Lienden replied these wells are not close enough to GDEs.

Committee Member Gaillard commented it will be difficult to treat all the wells the same when there are significant differences across the Basin.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented it is important to remember the new methodologies are being developed with more complete data.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the hybrid model seems the closest to the existing MT when comparing the different options in the graphs.

Committee Member Gaillard agreed option four is similar to the current MT and therefore there should be no change.

Committee Member Jaffe asked why more wells would be at risk of going dry if the current MT is more conservative. Mr. Beck responded the current MT has at least twelve areas that do not offer sufficient protection and will likely go dry.

Committee Member Gaillard commented that the water quality gets worse the deeper the water levels are and this is not taken into account in the options that are presented.

Chair Kelly commented there has not been management action taken for the 16 wells that have exceeded the MT and asked if there will be any management actions for wells that exceed the MT in the future. Mr. Blakslee replied some MT levels were set so tight that a slight change in water levels would exceed the MT. Mr. Beck commented management actions will need to be established to address any material impact.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlisle asked if there is an analysis of how the different MT options affect the glidepath. Mr. Van Lienden replied option three takes this into account.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlisle asked how the different options affect the glidepath since a lower MT will allow more pumping. Mr. Beck replied the glidepath is independent of MT and minimum objectives (MO). He continued to say the model generates the end point of the sustainable yield and MT can be helpful in indicating the progress toward sustainability.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlisle commented that the GSA needs to be aware of any action they take and its effect on groundwater storage and recommends the SAC make a motion to stay with the current MT.

Stakeholder Rachel H. commented it is important to consider how the lower groundwater elevations will impact future generations.

Vice Chair DeBranch made a motion to pursue option two or four. There was no second.

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to use option four basin wide with a buffer larger than 10 feet and including strict protections for GDEs. Committee Member Haslett seconded the motion. Both Committee Members withdrew their motion.

Committee Member Furstenfeld agreed there needs to be a buffer greater than 10 feet.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to set the sustainable management criteria using hybrid option four for all wells in the basin including strict protections for GDEs with the following exclusions, first increase the well protection buffer to a minimum of forty feet above the pump depth, and secondly remove the saturated thickness methodology. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

- AYES: Adams, Caufield, Gaillard, Jaffe, Kelly
- NOES: Lewis, Haslett, Furstenfeld, DeBranch
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: None

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the options for groundwater levels sustainability criteria for MO which is included in the SAC packet.

MOTION

Committee Haslett made a motion to approve option three which is to retain existing margin operational flexibility with MO level adjusted for new MT and the Margin of Operational Flexibility must be at least ten feet. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Adams, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

- AYES: Adams, Caufield, DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: None

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the options for groundwater levels undesirables results definition which is provided in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Jaffe commented it would be best to keep it at the existing definitions.

MOTION

Committee Member Furstenfeld made a motion to keep the existing definitions for groundwater levels undesirable results. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES:	Adams, Caufield, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	DeBranch
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

ii. Groundwater Storage

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the GSP approach and potential options which is included in the SAC packet.

Chair Kelly asked if the model is generating the data for the change in storage. Mr. Van Lienden replied that is correct.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlisle asked if there should be sustainable management criteria on the groundwater storage since it is continuously reducing. Mr. Van Lienden replied the model can be used to estimate the change in groundwater storage but it is difficult to rely on the model to determine the groundwater storage and continued to say there is a connection in groundwater level and groundwater storage.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren commented using groundwater levels as a proxy may not be perfect but it is currently the best option available.

Committee Member Haslett commented there is a significant elevation change from the mountains to the center of the basin and because of this when it rains the water runs down to the central management area. He said because of this, there is not much groundwater storage in the mountains.

MOTION

Committee Member Gaillard made a motion to continue to use groundwater levels as a proxy for groundwater storage. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES:	Adams, Caufield, DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

iii. Subsidence

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the Sustainable Management Criteria and Undesirable Result Statement for Subsidence which is included in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Haslett asked why there are changes at the subsidence station at the Cuyama Union High School. Mr. Van Lienden responded that this station is the only one in the CMA and the pumping in the CMA could have affected the station but upon discussions with Ryan Turner from United States Geological Survey it was determined that the station is still providing accurate data.

MOTION

Committee Member Adams made a motion to keep existing MT and MO along with keeping the existing definition for undesirable results. The motion was seconded by

Committee Member Jaffe, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES:	Adams, Caufield, DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

iv. Water Quality

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the Sustainable Management Criteria and Undesirable Result Statement for water quality for total dissolved solids which is included in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Gaillard asked when will the interim milestone be achieved. Mr. Van Lienden replied the Board will direct staff on the MT and MO and staff will set the interim milestone using the same approach as five years ago.

Committee Member asked if the wells are strictly monitoring wells or production wells. Mr. Van Lienden replied it is a mix of monitoring wells and production wells.

MOTION

Committee Member Lewis made a motion to update MTs using the same calculation but incorporating more recent monitoring measurement data and if well’s calculated MT is lower than 1000 mg/L then the MT will be set to 1000 mg/L, update the MOs using same calculation but incorporating more recent monitoring measurement data, and keep the existing definitions for ground water quality undesirable results specifically for total dissolved solids. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Furstenfeld, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES:	Adams, Caufield, DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the Sustainable Management Criteria and Undesirable Result Statement for water quality for nitrates and arsenic which is included in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Jaffe commented it would be prudent to develop sustainability criteria for arsenic and nitrates.

Committee Member Caufield suggested setting the GSA as a coalition on behalf of the landowners which would allow the GSA to do the sampling rather than rely on an outside source.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented that when the GSP was being formed there was no MO or MT for arsenic and nitrates and DWR is now requiring this be addressed.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to set sustainable criteria for nitrates and arsenic and coordinate with water quality agencies as appropriate. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Furstenfeld, a roll call vote was made, and the motion

passed.

AYES:	Adams, Caufield, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	DeBranch
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

c. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on GSP Draft Chapters

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the GSP draft chapters which are included in the SAC packet. He continued to say any comments on the draft chapters can be sent to Mr. Blakslee for consideration of inclusion in the final chapters.

Committee Member Furstenfeld commented the figure 1-17 shows there is water pumping occurring at the end of the Wasioja river but there is no pumping occurring in that area. Mr. Blakslee replied staff will look into that figure.

MOTION

Chair Kelly made a motion to approve the draft chapters as presented. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Adams, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES:	Adams, Caufield, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	DeBranch
ABSENT:	None

d. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Allocation Program Components

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the allocation program components which is provided in the SAC packet.

Mr. Beck reviewed the options for baseline allocation amount which is included in the SAC packet.

Chair Kelly asked if using a five-year average would be the best option to use to incorporate the dry and wet years. Mr. Blakslee replied staff would need to check if this is a viable option.

Committee Member Haslett commented if a decision is made today, it would be best to continue using the current approach but update with 2021 modeled water use, however, if this will be done later than 2023 and 2022 water use data should be used.

Mr. Beck informed the SAC that all options for the allocation methodology have been reviewed by legal and are legally viable options.

Committee Member Jaffe asked what the period of time is to determine irrigated acreage. Mr. Beck responded that would need to be determined by the Board.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the next step is individual well monitoring and management.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren commented if you use historical pumping it rewards those who historically pumped large amounts of water.

Committee Member Lewis commented irrigated acreage might be the best option.

Committee Member Adams commented that using historical use is not a realistic method to use because it is unsustainable.

Mr. Beck explained the purpose of the allocation methodology is to determine how much water each pumper is allocated while the glidepath is a method on reducing the water use for each year.

Committee Member Jaffe and Haslett commented that none of the options presented are acceptable.

Chair Kelly commented a hybrid could be used.

Committee Member Haslett commented that a hybrid option needs to be used with a tiered approach.

Committee Member Furstenfeld commented that the option used should include water conservation.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren commented that an allocation could be established based on the crops that are being planted and develop water markets to reward those who are not pumping.

Mr. Blakslee asked if the SAC would like to recommend staff to begin developing options for a water market. SAC members Adams, Kelly, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, and Haslett recommended against this, and SAC members DeBranch and Lewis recommended the GSA move forward with developing options for a water market. SAC Member Jaffe recommended that staff develop an educational workshop for water markets.

Mr. Blakslee asked if the SAC would like to recommend staff to begin developing options to allow landowners to carry over unused allocations. SAC Member Adams, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly, and Lewis recommended staff not develop options at this time, and SAC members DeBranch, and Caufield recommended that staff should develop options to consider carryover of unused allocations.

Mr. Blakslee asked if the SAC would like to recommend staff to begin developing options to develop a more sophisticated accounting system for water accounting.

Committee Member Gaillard asked what the frequency of reported data is. Mr. Blakslee replied that would need to be determined.

Committee Member Haslett commented there is no need to have a sophisticated accounting system at this time.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if this would be reported on individuals or in general. Mr. Blakslee replied that would need to be reviewed with the Board and legal.

Committee Member Furstenfeld commented that tracking this information online would be useful for people to be able to view the historical data.

Committee Member Caufield, Jaffe, Gaillard, and Kelly asked to have a more transparent reporting system that is publicly available.

Committee Member Haslett commented staff needs to ensure the bugs are worked out before releasing to the public.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented he is not in favor of having staff work on a more sophisticated system at this time.

REPORT ITEMS

8. Technical Updates

a. Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the accomplishments for November and December 2023 which is provided in the SAC packet.

b. Update on Grant-Funded Projects

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the grant-funded projects which is provided in the SAC packet.

c. Update on October 2023 Groundwater Conditions Report

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the October 2023 groundwater conditions report which is provided in the SAC packet.

9. Groundwater Sustainability Agency

a. Report of the Executive Committee Member

Nothing to report.

b. Report of the General Counsel

Committee Member Jaffe asked what gets reported on closed sessions and requested for the SAC to receive updates on those reports.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez reported the Board elected to intervene in the adjudication and the Board minutes have an item for reportable items from closed session.

Committee Member Adams asked in what capacity the GSA joined the adjudication. Mr. Dominguez replied the GSA is a neutral party and the goal of the GSA is to support the GSP.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the GSA represents the community and where there is an opportunity to be transparent that would be greatly appreciated.

c. Board of Directors Agenda Review

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the January 10, 2024, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda which is provided in the SAC packet.

10. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Nothing to report.

11. Committee Forum

Nothing to report.

12. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Nothing to report.

13. Correspondence

Nothing to report.

14. Adjourn

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 10:43 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: *Brenton Kelly*
Brenton Kelly (Mar 4, 2025 14:14 PST)

ATTEST:

Vice Chair DeBranch: *Brad DeBranch*
Brad DeBranch (Feb 24, 2025 13:15 PST)