Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Special Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

July 25, 2024

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:
DeBranch, Brad – Vice Chair
Adams, Karen
Gaillard, Jean
Jaffe, Roberta
Lewis, Dave

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

ABSENT:
Caufield, John
Furstenfeld, Jake
Haslett, Joe

REMOTE PARTICIPATION
Kelly, Brenton – Chair

1. **Call to Order**
   Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Vice Chair DeBranch called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**
   Mr. Blakslee called roll of the Committee (shown above).

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
   Vice Chair DeBranch led the pledge of allegiance.

4. **Meeting Protocol**
   Assistant Executive Director Taylor Blakslee provided direction on the meeting protocols in facilitating a remote meeting.

5. **Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**
   No public comments.

6. **Approval of April 25, 2024, Minutes**
   Vice Chair DeBranch opened the floor for comments on the April 25, 2024, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

   MOTION
   Committee Member Adams made a motion to approve the April 25, 2024, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee

Member Gaillard. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

7. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

a) Update on Fault Investigation Study

Woodard & Curran consultant Jim Strandberg provided an update on the fault investigation study which is provided in the SAC packet. The study provides new insights into the complexity of the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault (SBCF) and the Russell Fault, and how the faults affect groundwater flow and water quality in the basin.

Committee Member Jaffe asked what electrical resistivity is and its significance. Mr. Strandberg explained that it is a natural property of earth materials that reflects their ability to transmit an electrical charge and that it helps to differentiate clay, silt, sand and gravel.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that an 11,000-foot exploratory oil well will be drilled soon near North Forks property, and it may provide water quality data. She asked if the GSA could request well water quality data from the California Geologic Energy Management (CalGEM).

Committee Member Lewis commented on the unchanged groundwater level in the graph of electrical resistivity for the Russel Fault. Mr. Strandberg replied that there is saturated alluvium on the east and west side, and there is nothing inhibiting the flow of groundwater across the fault from high pressure to low pressure (the hydraulic gradient).

Vice Chair DeBranch asked if there are plans to further investigate the SBCF, its location, and extent. Mr. Strandberg responded that the technical staff will recommend in the final report that another geophysical transect be run to identify the eastern extent of the fault. The fault may trend in a northeast direction and cross state route 33 north of the transect conducted.

Mr. Strandberg commented that there is a great discrepancy between the water levels at MW-H and TSS #3 wells and the likely explanation is that there is a fault between those two well locations. Mr. Strandberg speculated that a fault might run more toward the northwest and southeast due to the locations of these wells. He suggested a geophysical transect be run south of the transect conducted to identify this fault.

Vice Chair DeBranch opens the floor for public comment.

Stakeholder Steve Gliessman asked if deep well data collected in the west of the Russell Fault would provide enough information to determine how the different Morales layers are affecting the storage capacity on the west side of the fault. He also asked why there is little flow in the river basin.

Mr. Strandberg responded that water quality data from wells on the west side would be used if those wells are at comparable depths to the current monitoring wells (TSS #1 wells) on the east side of the fault. He added that the river basin flow in this area is an output of the water resources model and reflects a limited thickness of saturated alluvium above impermeable rocks and a low hydraulic gradient.

b) Update on Cuyama Basin Water Resources Model

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the model topics to be presented. Mr. Van Lienden introduced Ali Taghavi as the Senior Modeling Consultant at Woodard & Curran. Ali Taghavi, Senior Modeling Consultant at Woodard & Curran, commented his focus has been on the development of the model and the application of the model for sustainable yield.

Mr. Taghavi commented that the committee and stakeholders should consider that the outputs provided are in the context of model uncertainty and an uncertainty analysis will be conducted. There is quality control on the data, and this will cause slight variation in the central management area (CMA) and sustainable yield.

Committee Member Gaillard asked if the CMA asked if there is less underground storage for water. Mr. Taghavi responded that there is less storage in the southern part as it has tributary to the main groundwater basin. The CMA is receiving less water from that southern part and from the Badlands areas.

Committee Member Jaffe asked how data from abnormally wet years 2022-2023 will affect the model. Mr. Taghavi responded that sensitivity analysis needs to be performed, but it helps calibrate the model for extreme weather conditions. Data will continuously be collected and with more data, the model can be compared and refined.

Vice Chair DeBranch asked if pumping volumes and crop ET values are by field specific. Mr. Taghavi responded pumping is assumed as the amount of water pumped is equal to the amount of water that is required for the transportation of applied water and pumping data reported by well owners is mapped to the corresponding service areas.

Vice Chair DeBranch asked if the evapotranspiration (ET) rate per crop included in the model is assumed. Mr. Taghavi responded that is it a reasonable assumption to use the historical potential ET rates as pumping data for specific crops by well users is not available.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that there are no wells in the Cottonwood Creek area shown on the pumping wells map. Mr. Van Lienden clarified wells shown are pumping wells used in the model.

Committee Member Adams asked if there is a map of all the wells monitored which would be helpful to have maps of wells included in the model and wells not included. Mr. Van Lienden responded that well maps are available on the Cuyama website and well data collected is accessible on the Data Management System on the Cuyama Basin website

Stakeholder Tara Sailor asked if there is correlation between the idle land from land use map and the pumping wells not included in the map.

Mr. Van Lienden clarified reports of pumping less than 25-acre feet per year is not included in the pumping wells included in the model. The land use is indicated as idle or non-irrigated land, which is not included in the model.
Stakeholder Gliessman commented that management actions that reduce water use should be considered.

Stakeholder Pam Dorion asked about fallowed land and why that is not represented in the land use maps.

Committee Member Adams commented that idle land is a misrepresentation of fallow and

grazed land and de minimis users should be shown in a map.

Mr. Beck summarized comments from committee members that there's concern about the appropriate representation of the de minimis users or dry farming. He added SAC could request the Board of Directors request that staff and the future present a plan for addressing that with associated costs and potential impacts in that.

Vice Chair DeBranch opened the floor for committee comments.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the groundwater levels continually decline as more water is pumped than replenished. She added by not making changes to pumping allocations than the basin is going to be not sustainable by 2040. Committee Member Adams seconded this comment.

Mr. Beck clarified that the project pumping estimates represent business-as-usual practices and there is a plan to reduce overdraft estimates through allocations and the glidepath.

Vice Chair DeBranch opened the floor for public comments.

Stakeholder Gliessman commented that the glidepath and pumping reductions data would provide more information to the model which could project groundwater level changes.

Stakeholder Brenton Kelly asked for summary slides to show a distinction between positive and negative numbers for the pumping and overdraft estimates.

Committee Member Jaffe asked for justification for delineations in sustainable yield by region and if regional yields are a part of the model. She commented that she would like clarification on what are the reductions in groundwater levels under sustainable conditions and when they take place.

Mr. Taghavi responded that the model included calculations of small “cells” through the valley using hydrology, rainfall, land use, infiltration, percolation, and groundwater pumping. The groundwater levels under sustainable conditions represent the pumping reductions if regulated now. The map does not include the glidepath reductions.

Stakeholder Gliessman commented on reverse in the direction of groundwater levels and that even with 5%-6% reductions it is still causing overdraft. He commented he would like to see how reduction reduces pumping and changes the groundwater level.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren asked how deep percolation calculations are calculated.

Mr. Taghavi responded that the calculation uses the crop type, water application, rainfall, and crop coverage. For example, if land is fallow, crop lands are converted to native vegetation, then the ET patterns change and a reduction in pumping results in a reduction in applied water, which means reduction in deep percolation associated with applied water.

Stakeholder Lovgren asked what percentage pumped water for overhead or for drip really goes back to the basin if it is on cultivated crop land. Mr. Taghavi responded under historical conditions approximately 80% and under projected conditions the model assumed 90% crop efficiency.

c) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on a Monitoring Network Consultant Contract for FY 24-

25

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the Provst & Pritchard (P&P) contract for monitoring network. P&P have been collecting groundwater level and water quality samples for 64 wells and the contract is to continue these services for a total of $68,000, which is within the budgeted amount approved by the Board on May 1, 2024.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve a groundwater monitoring contract with P&P. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Adams; a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

d) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Data Management System Update Options

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview and additional information on the Data Management System (DMS) Update Options, as requested by the Board.

Stakeholder Kelly asked if these DMS updates will include well-depth information. Mr. Van Lienden commented it will include any new data on newly constructed wells, but there is not a budget allocated for staff to fill data gap of wells in DMS without information.

8. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Amendment Components

a) Update on GSP Component Schedule

Mr. Beck provided updates on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Schedule through the rest of the year.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the amount of information is overwhelming and the schedule.

b) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Project and Management Action Options [Final Discussion]

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the project and management action options to be included in the 2025 GSP update.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that previously when the minimum threshold was exceeded, the solution was to adjust the minimum threshold. She commented that the adaptive management wording in the GSP should be stronger to investigate the cause of changing thresholds and determine appropriate actions.

Stakeholder Gliessman commented on the flow and capture and the rangeland and forest management. He asks if there are additional opportunities to provide management action options. He comments he would like to see alternative crop management and vegetation management that conserve water and biodiversity.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented that pumping allocations is not included in the list of project and management action options.

SAC Committee reported no recommendations on the project and management action options.

c) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Glidepath Methodology [Final Discussion]

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the glidepath methodology and potential options for the central management area. Brian outlined the mathematical equations to reach sustainability with two years at 5% reduction and then all the following years at 6.5% reduction.

Mr. Beck reminded the committee that the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires basins to reach sustainability by 2040. The Cuyama Basin Board of Directors decided on a target end date of 2038. Glidepath percentages are also reviewed every five years, so there will be a 6.5% reduction over the next five years for the CMA.

Committee Member Adams asked for proof that there was a 5% reduction in 2023 and that the 5% reduction will be achieved in 2024. Mr. Blakslee responded that a report was provided in March that showed pumpers were 50% under the allocations and the 5% glidepath was reached in 2023. He added that a report on pumping reductions will be provided in March 2025.

Stakeholder Brenton Kelly commented that the percentages may change with model updates and that it would be helpful to see the metric used to show the groundwater levels are on target to meet sustainability goals.
Committee Member Jaffe commented that the glidepath should be looked at overtime and every year the GSA delays allocations, water levels continue to decline. She asked how does the GSA conserve groundwater storage and how does the glidepath connect the difference between the inflow and outflow.
Vice Chair DeBranch asked if the current glidepath achieves sustainable conditions by 2040. Mr. Beck responded that the glidepath for the CMA is the best estimate to achieve sustainability in uniform increments.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented that the GSA is currently meeting sustainability goals and if glidepath adjustments are needed in the future, there is flexibility to make changes. He added groundwater levels are not going to change overnight and that this is a long-term planning process.

Committee Member Jaffee asked for visualization of how the glidepath relates to groundwater levels and how groundwater levels change over this time.

Committee Member Gaillard commented that carrot growers are draining the wells. He would like a more aggressive glidepath to get out of the minimum threshold. Is there grant to help pay small farmers for well repairs from over

Stakeholder Rachel Higgins advocated for a glidepath that allows groundwater levels stay high as possible and like to have more accessible meetings and Latino representation.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to adjust the glidepath schedule to be correlated to the groundwater levels from the revised model and in conjunction with minimum thresholds, so groundwater levels stay above the minimum threshold. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Adams; a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES:	Adams, Gaillard, Jaffe, Lewis
NOES:	DeBranch

ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Caufield, Furstenfeld, Haslett, Kelly

Stakeholder Brenton Kelly is in favor of the motion.

d) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Basin-Wide Water Management Narrative

Mr. Blakslee provided an update on Basin-Wide Water Management Narrative and proposed revision for 2025 GSP Update.

Committee Member Adams commented on if there is a timeline or a limit on how much pumping the Cuyama Community Services District (CCSD) could increase. Mr. Van Lienden responded the CCSD would be assumed to be staying at their current level of pump.

Committee Member Adams commented that the county water usage will not stay at the current level and that there should be collaboration with CCSD to understand upcoming projects and how those might affect the water usage.

MOTION

Committee Member Adams made a motion to approve the redlined GSP Section 7.5.2. and final sentence be modified based on CCSD based on upcoming development. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe; a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

Stakeholder Brenton Kelly is in favor of this motion.

e) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Updated CMA Boundary, Management Area Criteria, Use of an Operational Boundary and Use of Farm Units [Final Discussion]

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the updated CMA Boundary, Management Area Criteria, Use of an Operational Boundary and Use of Farm Units and questions for Board consideration.

Committee Member Gaillard commented he is in favor of keeping the CMA boundary and is worried about crop rotations shifting the CMA boundary to the west.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that the model incorporates crop rotations, and the CMA boundary will not shift as a result of crop rotations.

Committee Member Jaffe asked about the justification for the two foot per year contour.

Mr. Beck replied that the two-foot per year contour was selected during the original GSP development since it represented a large portion of the overdraft in the basin and was used to establish groundwater allocations.

Committee Member Lewis questioned the validity of the updated CMA boundary due to large growers being removed from the CMA boundary and. He commented that he would like to keep the boundary as is until the model is reviewed and refined.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented he is in favor of adjusting the boundary as recommended by

the model.

Committee Member Adams commented she is in favor of leaving the boundary as-is.

Stakeholder Brenton Kelly asked how much acreage is included in CMA with farming units.

Stakeholder Ann Myhre commented that technical consultants provide boundary, and Board should not alter boundary as provided by staff

MOTION
Committee Member Adams made a motion to keep CMA boundary as is within the current GSP. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Lewis; a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

Stakeholder Brenton Kelly is in favor of this motion.

f) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Groundwater Allocations [Final Discussion]
Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the groundwater allocation program and questions for members to review for board direction.

Options for the allocation implementation period:
Mr. Blakslee reported the current allocation implementation period is for two years. Staff asked the committee if they support a five-year allocation program or if there is another option. Mr. Beck commented that the pro of the five-year periods would be it aligns with the model updates, but periods longer than five years would eliminate the opportunity to incorporate new data.

Committee Member Adams commented that five years is too long of a period, and it would make more sense to do two-year allocations until the impacts on water levels are determined and the glidepath projections are accurate.

Committee Member Gaillard commented in favor of the five-year period but would like to have a more aggressive glidepath.

Stakeholder Kelly asked about the probability of updating the model in the next five years. He is in favor of the five-year period. Mr. Beck commented there is sufficient data to update the model in two years, but budget and costs for model update will need to be considered.

Poll
In favor of two-year period: Adams, Jaffe, Lewis
In favor of five-year period: Gaillard, DeBranch

Options for who the allocation applies to:
Committee Member Jaffe commented there should be variation for small landowners and pumpers.

Poll
In favor of CMA + Farming units: Adams, Jaffe, Lewis, Gaillard, DeBranch

Options for the baseline allocation amount:
Mr. Blakslee commented that the staff is looking for feedback on the starting point for the starting point or baseline amount for allocations.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that she does not like the inclusion of 2021 water use as it was a drought year and would like to use the 20-year average from that period as the baseline. Committee Member Adams agreed with Committee Member Jaffe's statement

Stakeholder Kelly commented in favor of a broader historical average and use of an average year for average cutback.

Poll
In favor of baseline allocation amount from 2021: Gaillard, DeBranch (or use average)
In favor of historical 20-year average as baseline: Jaffe, Adams
No Comment: Lewis

Options for Sustainable yield provided by the model:

Poll
In favor of using sustainable yield as provided by the model: Jaffe, Lewis, Gaillard, Adams
TBD: DeBranch

Stakeholder Gliessman commented that there should be a peer review period to review the sustainable yield. He would like to see external peer reviews, outside of tech forum.
Vice Chair DeBranch commented he would like to see the updated sustainable yield as staff mentioned quality control issues during the model presentation.

Options allocation methodology:
Committee Member Lewis commented in favor of tiered allocations.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that there should be a variance exemption for small pumping.

Poll
In favor of using long-term historic average: DeBranch, Gaillard
In favor of using historic average with an exception for small pumpers: Adams, Lewis, Jaffe

Stakeholder Kelly commented in favor of exception for small pumpers with potential use of a volumetric amount as opposed to using acreage similar to de minimis.

Stakeholder Gliessman commented that tiered systems should be reviewed and considered.

Incorporation of carryover policy:
Committee Member Gaillard commented there should be a limitation to how much can be carried over.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that she is not in favor of carryover until the basin is sustainable.

Poll
Not in favor of carry over until the basin is sustainable: Adams, Jaffe, Gaillard

In favor of carryover: DeBranch

Stakeholder Kelly commented he is in favor of carryover once sustainable conditions are established.

Stakeholder Gliessman recommended considering a reward system that benefits landowners who have practices for water conservation.

g) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Frequency of Changes to Groundwater Allocations [Final Discussion]

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the frequency of changes to groundwater allocations and the potential options for allocations to areas outside the CMA.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the two foot per year is included in the current GSP and commented she is in favor of a quantitative metric that is connected to minimum thresholds.

Mr. Beck responded that it is included in the current GSP.
Committee Member Lewis commented that an annual report is too frequent and a report every five years is too long.

Stakeholder Kelly is in favor of using a quantitative metric annually

Poll
In favor of quantitative metric (annually): Adams, Jaffe, DeBranch
In favor of quantitative metric (3years): Lewis, Gaillard

h) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on GSP Draft Chapters: [Final Discussion]

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the updated GSP draft Chapters for review and inclusion in the public draft. He noted the updated chapters include new information that was not available for the 2020 GSP, and incorporates updated policies approved by the Board in January 2024. He presented the following chapters, and now SAC motion was made to approve them.

i. Chapter 2. Basin Setting
ii. Chapter 3. Undesirable Results
iii. Chapter 5. Sustainability Management Criteria
iv. Chapter 6. Data Management System (DMS)

He encouraged Committee Members to provide any written comments on the chapters to staff.

i) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on GSP Amendment Comment Process

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the proposed public comment process which included a formal comment process.

Stakeholder Gliessman commented that the workshop attendance was low, and staff should consider additional efforts to increase community engagement.

MOTION
Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve the public comment process. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Adams; a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

9. Technical Updates

a. **Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities**
Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the GSP activities which is provided in the SAC packet.

b. **Update on Grant-Funded Projects**
Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the grant-funded projects which is provided in the SAC packet.

c. **Update on April 2024 Groundwater Conditions Report**
Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the April 2024 Groundwater Conditions Report which is provided in the SAC packet.

10. Administrative Updates

a. **Report of the Executive Director**
Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the public workshop attendance.

b. **Report of the General Counsel**
Committee Member Jaffe asked how adjudication process impacts the GSA budget. Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez responded that costs have gone up, but that is all the information that can be provided outside of what is already included in the budget.

c. **Board of Directors Agenda Review**
Mr. Blakslee briefly mentioned the July 31, 2024, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda which is provided in the SAC packet.

11. Items for Upcoming Sessions
Nothing to report.

12. Committee Forum
Nothing to report.

13. Correspondence
Nothing to report.

14. Adjourn
Vice Chair DeBranch adjourned the meeting at 11:21 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)