

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

August 29, 2024

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Chair
DeBranch, Brad – Vice Chair
Caufield, John
Haslett, Joe
Gaillard, Jean
Jaffe, Roberta
Lewis, Dave

Beck, Jim – Executive Director
Bianchi, Grace – Project Coordinator
Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran

ABSENT:

Adams, Karen
Furstenfeld, Jake

1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC)
Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Bianchi called roll of the Committee (shown above).

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Kelly led the pledge of allegiance.

4. Meeting Protocol

Executive Director Jim Beck provided an overview of the meeting protocols in facilitating a remote meeting.

5. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

No public comments.

6. Approval of July 25, 2024, Minutes

Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the July 25, 2024, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

Committee Member Gaillard commented that his name was spelled incorrectly and asked for correction of cattle owners to “carrot growers”.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if there was any action taken on the idle land discussion and if this could be brought up again. She asked for a correction to change a comment from “sustainable” to

“not sustainable” in the idle land discussion.

Committee Member Haslett commented on the monitoring well canyons that were included in the SAC report but not the minutes.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve July 25, 2024, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes with the noted corrections. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

7. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

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

Executive Director Beck reported that the SAC had previously approved the Data management system update (DMS).

Chair Kelly commented on the “site view” toggle that was previously included in the DMS, the site information button that took to the basemap of the exact location of the well.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that the button was not intentionally removed, and he will check with the technical team if the button could be added again.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis asked how landowners can improve precision of the locations on the map. He added that there some well locations are not correct.

Mr. Van Lienden responded there is a well survey that can be used to provide the correct well information and then the technical team will update the information in the DMS.

8. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Amendment Components

a. Update on GSP Component Schedule

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Chapter schedule. He noted the public hearing on November 5 and asked about any community events that may conflict with potential dates for the public workshop.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the recreation center would be a more favorable location for the workshop than the high school.

Members generally agreed no community events would conflict with the potential workshop dates.

b. Review and Take Appropriate Action on CMA Operational Boundary

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the updated central management area (CMA) operational boundary.

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the existing CMA boundary with farming units and the updated CMA Boundary after that was approved. He discussed an issue of the model CMA boundary that

relied on the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault line and the lack of understanding on the fault line.

Mr. Beck commented that the Board will have to review and decide whether the “yellow” area is included in the CMA and is looking for a recommendation from the committee on this matter

Committee Member Gaillard asked how the CMA boundary has shifted to the east.

Mr. Beck commented the board direction was to follow a two-foot change over 50 years for the contour. He added that there was a greater extent of shallower levels in the eastern boundary, so when the same amount of pumping is modeled over a shorter depth of groundwater aquifer, it tends to move the impacts farther to the east.

Mr. Van Lienden added there were two factors that affected the model: first was the geology as Jim just described and the second is the adjusted crop evapotranspiration factors and water use to get closer to the reported use.

Committee Member Gaillard asked if the updated CMA is bigger or smaller than the previous model. Mr. Van Lienden responded that the new CMA boundary is slightly larger than the previous modeled version.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that it would be difficult to modify the model without further technical analysis to justify changes and he is in favor of keeping the boundary as is until there's more technical basis.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis commented he is confused about the proposed boundary changes to the CMA and the Ventucopa area. Ground elevations, well depth, and depth to water in the new proposed area are in the same realm as the Ventucopa management, as defined in the GSA. There is no correlation with wells in the southwest portion of the CMA. There is no monitoring well information posted on the DMS site south of well 91, which is on Foothill Road. There's a blank area from Foothill Road all the way up and there's monitoring wells, but they're from the 50s, 60s and 70s. The GSA built monitoring well #905 on our property in the spring of 2022. The most current information on the DMS Site was taken in April of this year. The groundwater elevation was 2568.5 feet depth to water was 111.7 feet. On that same day, well 91 readings were groundwater elevation, 1813 feet in depth to water 667.24 feet. This was a groundwater elevation difference of 755.5 feet. That's how much water elevation is or 6.7 times deeper than well 905. So, the correlation there doesn't make any sense. The closest monitoring well to the south is well 101 and in April of 24 groundwater elevation was 2658.49 feet and depth to water was 87.29 feet, which was difference in it that well was 90 feet higher in groundwater elevation and 24 feet in depth to water shallower in 24 feet in depth to water. We have an irrigation well #1 is 3/4 of a mile south of well 905. On April 21, 2024, a pump company test results showed a depth to water of 106 feet, which is a difference of 5.7 feet higher than 905. About 100 yards to the east of well, 905 is an old monitoring well #277 that has records from 1955 to 1968. In April of 1955, the groundwater elevation was 2585 feet and depth to water was 125 feet. This was 69 years ago, and the current groundwater elevation is 74.5 feet higher now than in 1955, and the depth of the water was also 13 feet less than 1950. Sixty-nine years of GSA records say this area is the same. That's why I feel that the change in CMA boundary is not justified change.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the Ventucopa area recovers in the winter and the assumption that the well goes down two feet or more is not factual. He commented on the different hydrologic features.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis comments that there are areas north of the boundary, where the well levels constantly go down at different rates, but constantly decline.

Chair Kelly asked how confident the technical team is about the data.

Mr. Van Lienden commented that the data presented to the Board and the SAC was the best data available. Mr. Beck commented that data analysis considers how good the model calibrates and includes statistical analysis, but the model is better in some places than others and the model can always be improved.

Committee Member Jaffe asked how wells in the east have shifted.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that including the crop factors and well locations improved where the pumping is represented.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis asked if the model uses the geological formations in the basin and then water levels are compared to see how data matches up.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that geological data is included, but as the model is calibrated water levels are compared to historical measurements to determine how the geology information is represented and if there needs to be model changes.

Committee Member Lewis commented on the uncertainty in the model and the straight angle of the fault boundary.

Committee Member Caufield asked if calibration data sets are set aside or is all well data included in the model.

Mr. Van Lienden responded there is a subset of calibration wells, which have historical elevation that is used as an indicator of how well the model is performing. There are pumping wells in the model to simulate pumping in the basin.

Committee Member Caufield asked if there is a discrepancy between the model and data, then he would like the technical team to explain these differences. Mr. Van Lienden responded there is not a discrepancy and there is not a lot of data for wells north of the CMA, so there is not as much data for the calibration in that area.

Committee Member Caufield recommended not making changes until an explanation is provided on why the model does not reflect the well data.

Committee Member Haslett commented that data is not collected on the ground with landowners.

Chair Kelly asked about the multi-completion well that has gotten farther from the CMA, but the well has dropped 50 feet and asked how has the CMA moved and the well dropped that much?

Mr. Van Lienden responded that the model relies on years of data, but there are a lot of reasons why the well levels such as where pumping occurs in a year.

MOTION

Committee Member Caufield made a motion to not to recommend the updated boundary in the CMA until an explanation is provided on the discrepancy between the

model and the well data. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

c. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Groundwater Allocation Program

i. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Frequency and Extent of Changes to Groundwater Allocations

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the options for the frequency and extent of groundwater allocations inside and outside the CMA.

Committee Member Haslett asked how far away from the CMA boundary is considered areas outside the CMA. Mr. Beck responded that there are two areas, those in the CMA and those outside the CMA.

Committee Member Haslett commented the word “outside” is very broad and what is the motivation to have allocations outside the CMA.

Mr. Beck responded that the greatest area of overdraft is in the CMA, but there is overdraft outside the boundary. From a mathematical standpoint, the basin will not be in balance if a portion of the basin is not in balance. The entire basin must be looked at if you want to get it in balance, from an accounting standpoint.

Committee Member Jaffe asked that the “outside” be better defined. Does it mean the whole basin, or can you identify areas where certain changes are taking place?

Mr. Beck responded that all areas outside the CMA but within the basin would be considered “outside the CMA”.

Committee Member Haslett expressed concern for the water budget of the entire basin if there are allocations outside the CMA and the implications that the entire basin can achieve an artificial level of balance because of reductions outside the CMA.

Committee Member Caufield expressed concern about overdrafts in areas outside the CMA. He asked if there is a hybrid approach, where every 5 years this policy is addressed and has triggers for consideration of allocations. He is in favor of quantitative metric such as change in pumping or pumping volume, and qualitative metric of assessing areas outside the CMA.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if there is a current metric in the GSP to trigger consideration of allocations. Mr. Beck commented that allocations would be examined during the next periodic evaluation.

Mr. Beck commented during each periodic evaluation or significant pumping change in the interim

Vice Chair DeBranch commented he would like to bring to sustainability and would like to determine what areas contribute to overdraft that should have pumping reductions.

He commented he would allow staff to determine metric for quantitative metric to trigger consideration of allocations. He is in favor of an annual examination.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the allocations may affect areas that might not be in the CMA. He commented that balancing the CMA water budget based on the rest of the basin is wrong.

Chair Kelly commented there is a large area of overdraft that is not included in the CMA.

Committee Member Haslett commented in favor of 5 years.

Committee Member Jaffe expressed concern for wells over drafted in the annual report.

Committee Member Caufield commented in favor of 5 years and quantitative triggers.

ii. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Implementation of 2025-2030* Groundwater Allocations

Mr. Beck provided an overview of schedules and variance process for implementing groundwater allocations in 2025-2030.

Poll on variance process

In favor of a variance process – Gaillard, Kelly, Caufield, Lewis, Jaffe, Haslett.

Not in favor of a variance process – DeBranch.

Mr. Beck reviewed two options for the implementation schedule for groundwater allocations.

Committee Member Jaffe asked how long the allocations apply. Mr. Beck responded five years, but the Board could choose a shorter time frame.

Chair Kelly asked if the variance would apply to areas outside the CMA are included, then variance would apply to those areas. Mr. Beck responded that you would want to be consistent with other management areas.

Committee Member Caufield asked how many members would make up the ad hoc under option 1. Mr. Beck responded that the ad hoc would have a maximum of five members, but the ad hoc would make a decision under option 1 and the ad hoc would provide a recommendation to the board under option 2.

Mr. Beck commented that the ad hoc would meet before the Board meeting in November.

Committee Member Caufield asked if variances are approved all at once. Mr. Beck responded that staff would have to know all the allocations.

Committee Member Caufield commented in favor of option 2.

Stakeholder Wegis commented that option 1 is better from a farming perspective.

Committee Member Gaillard clarified that there is a second variance if needed in option 2. He is in favor of option 2.

Committee Member Haslett commented in favor of option two, assuming that it will be for five years.

Committee Member Lewis commented in favor of option 2.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented in favor of option 1 from a timing perspective.

Committee Member Jaffe is in favor of option 2.

Chair Kelly is in favor of option 2.

iii. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Baseline Options

Mr. Beck reported that the Board had asked for the baseline options with the pumping estimates and that the CBGSA staff had provided several options for consideration.

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the baseline options for groundwater allocations.

Committee Member Jaffe commented on the large difference in the old model estimates and new estimates. Mr. Beck responded that the old model overestimated the pumping estimation.

Committee Member Gaillard asked how de minimis users are included in the reported pumping estimation.

Mr. Beck responded that the baseline options using reported pumping data don't include de minimis users. Mr. Van Lienden added that the difference between the model and report baseline options does not represent the de minimis users.

Committee Member Haslett asked how long the baseline option will be used since current allocations are with the 2021 data. He commented in support of using the updated model number but would like this baseline number to stay the same until 2040.

Committee Member Caufield asked what the impact of changing the baseline option. He expressed concern that the storage in basin is "worse" than previously thought.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that the reduction in storage is less than predicted because less is pumped.

Committee Member Caufield commented if 56,00 is correct, then there's a loss in storage, but there's a negative balance and less was pumped than previously thought. So, there are the inflows and storage less than we initially thought.

Mr. Beck commented that the inflows say the same, but there was a decrease in pumping, therefore the decline in storage decreased.

Committee Member Caufield asked what the confidence level for non de minimis users are not reporting. Mr. Van Lienden responded that staff are in the process of identifying non-reporters.

Committee Member Caufield commented in favor of using reported data, but not for one year.

Committee member Haslett commented that the 2022 wet year was not consistent across the valley. He commented that the decrease in pumping was due to decrease in acreage and the wet year is subjective.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that the initial allocation estimate. He is not in favor of using a single year and using more recent multi-year options is not reflective of pumping of that time. He is in favor of looking at historical averages, that is more representative. The CMA is going to change based on the farming units and the allocation estimates are going to change once farming units are included. He doesn't support using a year or average until the new boundary is determined. He commented that sustainable yield, baseline, and glidepath need to align.

Chair Kelly commented that it would be difficult to move forward without selecting a baseline.

Committee Member Debranch commented to stay with 2021 data from old model. Chair Kelly in favor of multi-year with wet and dry years, and in favor of 1998-2023, but not objected to 2021 updated model number.

Committee Member Gaillard is not in favor of multi-year options as it does not reflect changes in irrigated acreage. He commented in favor of the 2021 updated model.

Committee Member Haslett commented the options should include updated farming units. Mr. Van Lienden commented it would be difficult to include farming units. Committee member Haslett commented in favor of option 4.

Committee Member Lewis commented he is not sure what the fallout is from changes 50,600 to 34,000. Mr. Beck responded that once the updated farming units are included a portion of allocations in CMA will be decreased. The 34,000 will then be used for the glidepath and then 6.5% reduction each year until sustainable yield is reached.

Stakeholder Wegis asked if the 6.5% reduction of 34,000 for the next year.

Mr. Van Lienden commented that there would be a 16% reduction in allocations to account for reductions in 2023 and 2024.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster commented that the 50,600 farmers will get less allocation, but there is already a difference.

Committee Member Caufield asked if the technical team is confident in the sustainable yield estimate.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that the change in storage in terms of acre-feet is less for each foot of drawdown in a well.

Stakeholder Wegis commented that the baseline should be locked in. In favor of 1998 to 2017.

Committee Member Caufield commented if the 11,600 is the sustainable yield, then this is a policy question of the path and where to start rather than adjusting the allocations.

Committee Member DeBranch brought up the ranges in sustainable yield and consensus to use the average. He asked if the Board has decided on a sustainable yield number.

Mr. Beck responded that the Board approved the process to approve the sustainable yield and there was consensus on the use of the average yield.

Committee Member Haslett commented in favor of sticking with one year.

Poll:

Option 3 – DeBranch, Lewis

Option 4 – Caufield, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe

Kelly – Option 4 or 9

d. Review Public Comments on Amended GSP

Ms. Bianchi provided an overview of the public comment process approved in July by the Board SAC. She reviewed the CBGSA staff responses to comments on the GSP draft chapters in the comment response matrix, which is provided in the packet.

Chair Kelly commented on the second to last row that addresses hydrographs and he commented he appreciates incorporating this feedback.

e. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Amended GSP [All Chapters]

Mr. Van Lienden reported the full draft of GSP on the website. He briefly reviewed the chapters not previously shown, executive summary, chapter 7, and chapter 8. He noted staff is asking for approval to start 30-day public review period and comments on chapters will be reviewed for the final report in November.

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. He reported 6 wells are complete.

Chair Kelly asked if the newest wells are included in the DMS. Mr. Van Lienden responded that they're monitoring network.

Stakeholder Wegis asked when the wells will be in the DMS.

Mr. Van Lienden commented they should be up there soon.

c. Update on July 2024 Groundwater Conditions Report

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the July 2024 Groundwater Conditions Report which is provided in the SAC packet. Report 8 wells dropped below the minimum threshold and he thinks this is due to summer conditions.

Chair Kelly commented in favor of seeing the well status breakdown with updated SMCs. He asked if the wells will be out of probation.

10. Administrative Updates

a. Report of the Executive Director

Nothing to report.

b. Report of the General Counsel

Nothing to report.

c. Board of Directors Agenda Review

Mr. Beck briefly mentioned the September 4, 2024, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda which is provided in the SAC packet.

11. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the issue with the idle land was resolved and for there to be a future discussion on the determination of defining idle land, irrigated land, native land, and fallow land.

Mr. Beck responded that Chair Kelly can decide if it is included on the next agenda.

12. Committee Forum

Nothing to report.

13. Correspondence

Nothing to report.

14. Adjourn

Vice Chair DeBranch adjourned the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: *Brenton Kelly*
Brenton Kelly (Mar 4, 2025 10:14 PST)

ATTEST:

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