

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

October 31, 2024

## Meetings Minutes

### PRESENT:

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

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

### ABSENT:

Caufield, John

#### 1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC)  
Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 5:08 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

Assistant Executive Director Taylor Blakslee provided an overview of the meeting protocols in facilitating a remote meeting.

#### 5. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Committee Member Jaffe commented on the issue of idle land in the model and the need for future discussions to define and resolve the classification of idle, irrigated, native, and fallow land. Jim Beck suggested putting this on the next agenda for clarity.

Mr. Beck suggested putting the idle land classification issue on the next agenda to provide more definition on the differences between land uses and how they are handled in the model.

#### 6. SAC Membership and Meeting Logistics

Chair Kelly reported that two members resigned and that SAC applications are accepted until they are filled. He noted that there are two open positions for members of the Hispanic committee.

Chair Kelly took a poll on SAC meeting start time:

- Not before 5: Gaillard, Haslett, Lewis
- Earlier than 5 p.m.: DeBranch
- Committee Member Jaffe and Chair Kelly commented in favor of a time that can accommodate the majority.

Majority opinion supports keeping the start time at 5 p.m.

## 7. Approve 2025 Meeting Calendar

Ms. Bianchi provided an overview of the 2025 meeting calendar for SAC consideration.

### **MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve 2025 CBGSA meeting calendar. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

## 8. Approval of August 29, 2024, Minutes

Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the August 29, 2024, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

### **MOTION**

Committee Member Gaillard made a motion to approve August 29, 2024, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Vice Chair DeBranch. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

## 9. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

### a. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on CIMIS Station Implementation Policies

Mr. Blakslee provides an overview of the CIMIS Station Implementation, including the Department of Water Resources (DWR) requirements, issues with the existing station, financial considerations, and water use implications.

Committee Member Gaillard asked what kind of vegetation is acceptable to meet DWR requirements. He expressed concern about ongoing operations and maintenance specifically mowing in the summer, which can cause fires.

Committee Member Haslett asked about is the preferred vegetation and water requirements will vary.

Committee Member Jaffe asked how many stations are funded by the DWR and if the main basin was the area of concern.

Mr. Blakslee responded that the grant covers the cost of two CIMIS stations. He added that the main basin is a priority.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented he supports of the ad hoc's recommendation.

### **MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to follow the ad hoc's recommendations for CIMIS station policies. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

## **10. 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 6 and the previous opportunities for public comment on the GSP. He thanked everyone for providing feedback during this time.

### **b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Groundwater Allocation Program**

#### **i. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Farm Unit Policy**

Mr. Blakslee provides an overview of the farm unit issue and reviews three options for handling changes to farm unit allocations when leases end during an allocation period. He reported that Option 2 was recommended by the ad hoc committee, as it would be a more financially responsible approach and not require redoing the entire allocation scheme, unless the impact was to a large number of farm unit acres.

Mr. Van Lienden comments on the difference between two options and large areas will have a greater impact.

Chair Kelly asks if there is a threshold for determining the impact of a parcel and asks how long the allocations apply. Mr. Blakslee responded the allocations will last a minimum of five years, but the board passed a motion to do a qualitative assessment during the annual report to determine if allocations should be expanded outside the central management area (CMA).

Committee Member Jaffe asked how common this farm unit issue is. Stakeholder Jane Wooster responded that it's uncommon.

Mr. Blakslee reported that staff recommends option two, but if the parcel was large enough, staff would recommend escalating to option three.

Mr. Beck commented that five percent of the CMA maximum allocation pumping would be a reasonable threshold before escalating to option three.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented in favor of option two (remove parcels from management area, but don't adjust allocation amount).

Committee Member Lewis commented that the examples are not representative of the policy, and he will not endorse any of the options.

#### **MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to recommend option 2 with a threshold of no more than five percent of the maximum annual pumping, for the CMA, for that year. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

#### **ii. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Baseline Options and Implementation of 2025-2029\* Groundwater Allocations**

Mr. Beck reviewed the previous Board direction and provided an overview of the four baseline options that are for SAC consideration.

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the methodology used to calculate allocations and historical use. He noted that the proportion of the total allowable pumping in any given year is developed based on the average 1998 to 2017 applied water use for each parcel, as estimated by the model. He explained that the changes made to the model, including updating the central management area and farming unit area boundaries, as well as updates to the historical land use and evapotranspiration (ET) estimates, have had significant effects on individual allocations compared to what was previously proposed for 2023 and 2024.

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the groundwater allocation program structure, and the steps used to determine groundwater allocations.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster asked if the ET and modeled pumping are different between the old model v2 and the new model v3. Mr. Van Lienden responded that the historical estimates changed from the v2 to v3. He added that the percentages in water allocations changed in the new model as a result of changing the ET.

Committee Member Lewis asked about the level of accuracy of the modeled pumping and historical average acre feet.

Mr. Beck responded that a graphic was previously provided, which showed the actual pumping levels compared to model levels. Mr. Van Lienden responded that there is within a five percent of the measured pumping for 2022 and 2023, but it is difficult to calibrate water use numbers based on two years of reported data.

Committee Member Haslett commented that using the historical pumping average to determine allocations is not equitable.

Committee Member Jaffe asked what the "other" grouping was in the spreadsheet.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented that it is not fair to only regulate the large growers.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster commented that individual farmers in the farmer unit don't know their allocation percentage because the methods have changed.

Mr. Van Lienden clarified that the methodologies have not changed.

Chair Kelly asked how many operators are included in the "other" category.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that approximately 60 owners are included in the "other" but most of the individuals have zero pumping or less than half an acre of land.

Mr. Beck reported that there are six pumpers in the other category.

Committee Member Lewis commented that the reduction in allocations for small pumpers is not going to have a large impact on basin sustainability compared to large pumpers.

#### **MOTION**

Vice Chair DeBranch made a motion to recommend option 3. The motion fails without a second.

Vice Chair DeBranch asked if there were any legal issues with the tiered approach.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez responded that the tiered approach is difficult to determine an equitable way to tier allocations and CBGSA staff recommends the Board avoid that approach.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis commented in favor of option 10 and that the recommended option acre-feet remain consistent for the entire period.

#### **MOTION**

Committee Member Gaillard made a motion to recommend option 4 that includes a tiered approach that protects the basin and small pumpers. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed.

Vice Chair DeBranch voted no based on the response from Legal Counsel Dominguez.

AYES:	Gaillard, Jaffe, Kelly, Lewis
NOES:	DeBranch
ABSTAIN:	Haslett
ABSENT:	Caufield

#### **c. Review Public Comments on Amended GSP**

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

#### **d. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on the Adoption of Amended GSP and GSP 5-Year Evaluation**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the adoption of the amended GSP.

Vice Chair DeBranch commented that there are a lot of questions around the updated model, and it is difficult to approve the amended GSP.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the amended GSP has a lot of inconsistencies and does not address the water quality issues.

Chair Kelly reviewed his comments on the amended GSP that were provided to staff and included in the meeting packet.

#### **MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to recommend not approving the amended GSP as is. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Lewis. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed.

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

The SAC made the motion due to lack of support for the GSP for a variety of issues. Committee Member Haslett does not address areas and solve problems.

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the periodic evaluation and the key components of the evaluation.

Mr. Blakslee commented that the periodic evaluation is required by DWR.

There was no motion or action on this item.

### **11. Technical Updates**

#### **a. Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities**

Mr. Van Lienden briefly mentioned that all the GSP activities were reviewed in the which is provided in the SAC packet.

#### **b. Update on Grant-Funded Projects**

Mr. Van Lienden provided a brief overview of the grant-funded projects which is provided in the SAC packet. He reported all wells have been installed.

#### **c. Update on 2024 Groundwater Quality Conditions Report**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the October 2024 Groundwater Conditions Report which is provided in the SAC packet.

### **12. Administrative Updates**

#### **a. Report of the Executive Director**

Nothing to report.

#### **b. Report of the General Counsel**

Nothing to report.

Committee Member Joe Haslett asked if there was an update on the water rights analysis. Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez responded it could be expected to be completed by the end of November.

Committee Member Robbie Jaffe asked if there was an update on the adjudication.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez reported that there are no updates on the adjudication.

**c. Board of Directors Agenda Review**

Mr. Beck briefly noted that November 6, 2024, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda is provided in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Jaffe recommended that staff include an item on the impact of allocations on groundwater storage.

**13. Items for Upcoming Sessions**

Nothing to report.

**14. Committee Forum**

Committee Member Haslett asked about the change in naming of the committee.

Committee Member Lewis asked about the Groundwater Extraction in the GSP Evaluation and commented on the inequity in the pumping allocation and enforcement policies, where small pumpers face severe penalties for exceeding their allocations by small amounts, while large pumpers have more leeway before facing similar consequences.

**15. Correspondence**

Nothing to report.

**16. Adjourn**

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: *Brenton Kelly*  
Brenton Kelly (PH) 4/2023 to 12/2023

ATTEST:

Vice Chair DeBranch:

*Brad DeBranch*  
Brad DeBranch (PH) 2/2024 to 11/2024