

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

February 27, 2025

## Meetings Minutes

### PRESENT:

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

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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 5:01 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 Lewis commented on behalf of his wife and thanked those that appeared and advocated for their variance request at the board meeting on March 5, 2025.

#### 6. Presentation on Cloud Seeding Study

Frank McDonough from Desert Research Institute provided a presentation on the Cloud Seed Study, including the seeding methods and findings for Cuyama headwaters.

Committee Member Gaillard asked if cloud conditions for seeding can be identified from the ground. Mr. McDonough responded that they have equipment to determine if conditions are favorable for seeding, but individuals without meteorological backgrounds could not identify clouds for seeding.

Committee Member Lewis commented that the most favorable years for cloud seeding was during wet years, which is not often in Cuyama, so it would not be financially responsible to support this project.

Stakeholder John Caufield asked the life span of the generators. Mr. McDonough responded that generators last approximately 20-25 years.

Stakeholder John Caufield requested staff reevaluate that the estimated cost per acre feet for the ground program that reflects the generator life span and noted that the estimated cost is in 2025 dollars.

There was SAC consensus to recommend the board not consider this project at this time.

## 7. Approval of January 9, 2025, Minutes

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the January 9, 2025 CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

There were no comments on this item.

### **MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve January 9, 2025, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

## 8. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

### a. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Water Year 2023-2024 Annual Report

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the Water Year 2023-2024 Annual Report and changes from the previous year's annual report.

Chair Kelly asked about the groundwater elevation and depth to contour maps. He asked about adding the river to the map to understand the contour lines. He requested staff consider adding the Cuyama River to the contour maps.

Mr. Van Lienden noted the limitations of the contour maps and noted that staff can add the river to the contour map.

Committee Member Jaffe asked staff to explain the change monitoring wells statuses from last year and this year.

Mr. Van Lienden responded that there were five wells below the MT this year, however, well levels have not changed significantly. He added that the shift in well statuses is due to updated minimum thresholds approved by the board, based on improved data and historical trends.

### **MOTION**

Committee Member Lewis made a motion to approve the annual report for Water Year 2024. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made,

and the motion passed.

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

**b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on GSA Project Prioritization/Schedule**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the GSA project / initiatives prioritization. He reviewed the staff approach for developing the project list, which incorporated feedback from the SAC and board. He stated that staff is looking for feedback on the draft 2025-2029 schedule and feedback on lower ranked projects.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the schedule is busy and expressed concern about staff being overworked.

Mr. Blakslee responded that the Central Management Area (CMA) projects / initiatives.

Committee Member Haslett asked for more information on the “Develop policy to present further development/use” item.

Mr. Blakslee responded additional discussions regarding this policy would need to take place within the ad hoc committee, the SAC, and the board. He clarified that while current policy regulates allocations within the CMA, the GSP does not impose restrictions on pumping outside that area. Some directors have expressed concern about the potential for increased pumping beyond the CMA, noting that no current measures prevent it aside from minimum thresholds. The proposed policy item would address this issue by potentially limiting excessive new water use from outside investors.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the schedule is compact, and she would like to have a more robust process for community engagement on certain topics, such as water markets. She added that the water market and tiered allocation are the two highest priorities for her.

Committee Member DeBranch noted that the two of the highest ranked items, expanded allocations outside the management area and allocations in Ventucopa are not on the schedule until 2026. He asked about the inclusion of the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault (SBCF) investigation.

Mr. Blakslee responded that the SBCF Investigation was included in the 2025 schedule to understand flow across the fault and the impacts to the CMA and Ventucopa. He explained that expanded allocations outside MA and Ventucopa were scheduled following the SBCF investigation once new information is collected.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that he would like to see expanded allocations earlier in the schedule and Santa Barbara Canyon Fault investigation be pushed after expanded allocations initiatives. He requested to remove tiered allocations.

Mr. Blakeslee responded that the board voted to review expanded allocations each year and on expanded allocations discussions were not included on the schedule for 2025 due to lack of additional data.

Committee Member Haslett commented that SBCF study is necessary before determining allocations in Ventucopa. He suggested pushing Ventucopa allocations to 2027 and starting SBCF investigation in 2025.

Committee Member Lewis asked about conducting preliminary studies before the SBCF investigation before spending substantial funding and committing to the project.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren commented that water markets will be complex.

Mr. Blakslee clarified that the water market would only be within the CMA.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that in favor of identifying key priorities then do a preliminary study for priorities to understand costs and timeline.

Mr. Blakslee clarified that staff are looking to get feedback on top priorities from SAC and the board, then staff will look into costs.

Stakeholder Jake Furstenfeld commented that the fault study should not be removed as significant time has been put into it already.

Committee Member Gaillard commented that precipitation enhancement was not ranked high, but there is a presentation this study today.

Mr. Blakslee responded that precipitation enhancement was listed the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), therefore the GSA had to explore project feasibility to the project had to be explored to justify not including it.

Committee Member Gaillard commented that many of the lower ranked projects are interesting, and he would like to see them explored after 2029.

Chair Kelly commented in favor of reconsidering and ranking lower ranked projects annually during the budget development process.

Committee Member Haslett commented that there are no water enhancement studies included in the high priority list, and most projects focus on reducing water use and not on increasing water availability. He requested C.8. Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems and C.10 Irrigation water runoff studies should be moved to this fiscal year.

SAC Members had consensus to recommend that the board consider lower ranked projects annually during the annual budget development.

## **9. Update on Farm Unit Modification Application Process**

Mr. Blakslee provided an update on the farming unit issue that was discussed at the November 6, 2024, board meeting. He reported the ad hoc recommended a process that is flexible and handled on a case-by-case basis.

## **10. Technical Updates**

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

Mr. Van Lienden noted that the update on GSP activities 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 that the 2025 GSP Update and Periodic Evaluation were submitted to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). He noted that public comments can be submitted in the DWR SGMA portal until April 20, 2025.

Mr. Blakslee provided an update on the CIMIS Station Project and the next steps. He added that staff is looking for landowners willing to install a CIMIS station on their property to provide valuable evapotranspiration data for the basin.

Committee Member Haslett suggested looking into the elementary school, which has an irrigated field.

**c. Update on 2025 Groundwater Conditions Report**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the January 2025 Groundwater Conditions Report which is provided in the SAC packet.

**11. Administrative Updates**

**a. Report of the Executive Director**

Mr. Blakslee reported that Proposition 4 was passed which provides xx money for xx projects. He reported that

**b. Report of the General Counsel**

Committee Member Haslett asked why the expert testimony was removed.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez responded that he cannot disclose closed session details.

Committee Member Jaffe expressed concern about the outdated adjudication resources page on the GSA website. She requested that staff update that and how soon it could be updated as it is a very important resource for the community.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez acknowledged the importance of online resources and responded that the bill passed in 2024 regarding information availability didn't apply to ongoing adjudications.

**c. Board of Directors Agenda Review**

Mr. Blakslee briefly noted that March 5, 2025, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda is provided in the SAC packet.

**12. Items for Upcoming Sessions**

Nothing to report.

**13. Committee Forum**

Nothing to report.

**14. Correspondence**

Nothing to report.

**15. Adjourn**

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: *Brenton Kelly*  
Brenton Kelly (Jun 12, 2025 15:02 PDT)

ATTEST:  
Vice Chair Haslett: *Joe Haslett*  
Joe Haslett (Jun 19, 2025 12:43 PDT)