

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

August 28, 2025

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:

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

Bianchi, Grace – Hallmark Group
Blakslee, Taylor – Assistant Executive Director
Dominguez, Alex – Legal Counsel
Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran
Ceyhan, Sercan – Woodard & Curran

ABSENT:

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

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Kelly led the pledge of allegiance.

4. Meeting Protocol

Project Coordinator Grace Bianchi provided an overview of the meeting protocols in facilitating a hybrid meeting.

5. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Chair Kelly opened up public comment. No comments were made.

Action Items

6. Approval of June 26, 2025, Minutes

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the June 26, 2025, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

There were no comments on this item.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve June 26, 2025, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

7. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation**a. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on the Plan and Timeline to Evaluate Allocations in the Ventucopa Management Area**

Mr. Blakslee provided background on the expanding allocations in the Ventucopa Management Area.

Mr. Van Lienden introduced the overall objective to assess data availability and adequacy.

Sercan Ceyhan from Woodard & Curran expanded on the proposed process to assess the adequacy of the model to help make decisions regarding potential allocations in the Ventucopa Management Area.

Mr. Blakslee highlighted the reasoning behind the changes to the draft timeline for assessing the implementation of allocations.

Committee Member Jaffe asked about the impact of pushing approval on approach for annual report. Mr. Blakslee responded that there is not an impact to the fiscal year budget.

Committee Member Caufield asked if a determination has already been made regarding the fault influencing the flow of groundwater into the Ventucopa area and if the CBGSA revisiting this study. Mr. Van Lienden mentioned the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault (SBCF) Investigation report is on website.

Mr. Blakslee mentioned that he can distribute the report.

Committee Member Haslett asked when the CBGSA can expect to make a decision on allocations. Mr. Blakslee responded that the staff report to the board in January will include a recommendation if the data is adequate to inform a decision to allocate.

Mr. Ceyhan continued to outline the process to assess the adequacy of the data and model, and his slides were included in the SAC packet. He invited folks to ask about hydrology and potential allocations in a specific geographic area.

Committee Member Jaffe asked about the groundwater levels of wells on either side of the SBCF. Mr. Ceyhan confirmed that they believe the 700 ft drop in head across 1 mile (from 2600 to 1900) is indicative of being on two sides of the fault.

Chair Kelly recommended adding depth to water graph to slide 27 (GWLs around the SBCF).

Committee Haslet commented that there is a county-maintained gauge with historical data on his property in Cottonwood Canyon. He recommended get the data from the county. Mr. Ceyhan

Chair Kelly asked when the CIMIS station at the high school was decommissioned. He expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the data as it was believed to be decommissioned for over a decade.

Mr. Ceyhan responded that the data can be corrected if needed once the new CIMIS stations are installed.

Committee Member Haslett asked about the permanently fallowed land shown in the land use map data. Mr. Ceyhan responded that the model assumes the fallow lands use a small amount of water used for dust management and it assumes that permanently fallowed lands have no use.

Committee Member DeBranch asked about the land use data provided by landowners. Mr. Blakslee responded that the GSA sends out land use forms, which have been used to request land use data.

Mr. Blakslee added that he will work with Woodard and Curran to ensure that all land use data from landowners is used in the model. Mr. Van Lienden added that the permanently fallowed land use classification was determined by W&C from their own observations.

Chair Kelly noted that SB Highlands have removed a significant portion of the vineyards shown in the land use map near Ventucopa. Staff reported that they will look into this and ensure the most up to date information is applied to the model.

Chair Kelly asked Mr. Ceyhan to define the rating tables. Mr. Ceyhan responded that rating tables are used to convert the flow height into flow rate in the channel, which is used to define how much streamflow contributes to recharge in the basin.

Committee Member Caufield asked about the outlier show on the pumping slide. Mr. Ceyhan responded that it may have been influenced by a miscalculation of the crop acreage.

Chair Kelly asked if extraction in the Central Management Area is shown in layer 3. Mr. Ceyhan responded that better understanding the thickness and formation of layer 3 is important to estimate subsurface flows and makes it challenging to provide calibrations in the model.

Committee Member Haslett asked about the information collected from the bore holes. Mr. Ceyhan responded the bore holes collect information on geologic formation type, the porous media, and the groundwater level.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis commented that there is a well near his property that is 700 feet and dry. He noted he has the e-log for a well, but it has been capped. Mr. Ceyhan requested the well information from Mr. Wegis.

Chair Kelly asked about using the LiDAR data. Mr. Ceyhan responded that the rating table data was not sufficient to complement the LiDAR data.

Committee Member Haslett asked about the definition of deep percolation relative to the area and soil conditions. He asked if the subsurface flows map includes data from the stream gauge south of Ozena Fault. Mr. Ceyhan responded that it is included.

Chair Kelly suggested adding a gauge be added to the bridge near Apache Canyon.

Committee Member Caufield asked about the exploratory oil wells.

Committee Chair Kelly asked about there is any rain gauge/ satellite data available or if data just through PRISM data. Mr. Ceyhan responded that CIMIS Station data is available.

Mr. Van Lienden provided a summary of the geophysical analysis in the 2024 SBCF investigation and outlined the objectives and timeline for the 2025 investigation.

Committee Member DeBranch asked about the possibility of the fault ending between the two transect lines that were run in BLM land and along highway 33. Mr. Van Lienden responded that Jim Steinberg may have a more thorough answer, but that it is possible the fault ends before the highway 33 transect.

Stakeholder Tristan Zannon commented that satellite imagery may indicate a potential fault south of map shown on the Summary of Geophysical Analysis in 2024 Investigation slide.

b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on the CMA Allocation Exchanges Policy

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the Central Management Area (CMA) Allocation Exchanges Policy that was included in the packet for approval.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez reviewed the sections in the policy.

Chair Kelly asked if someone over pumped, but paid their fees, would they be able to exchange allocations. Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez responded that a landowner that has paid fees would be considered in good standing with the GSA and would be able to exchange.

Mr. Blakslee noted that Hallmark Group will track allocations through reports and that a glidepath or water market strategy would not negatively impact the GSA's ability to meet sustainability by 2040.

Committee Member Haslett asked about the timeframe in which exceedances are identified and addressed. Mr. Blakslee responded that staff is recommending a process and timeframe in the Adaptive Management Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

Committee Member Jaffe expressed concern about the lack of detail in the policy and noted the Fox Canyon water markets, where large pumpers aggregated and had to end their water market program .

Committee Member Haslett expressed concern regarding the time period to address and correct the wells below the minimum threshold (MT).

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez commented that the Cuyama Basin is a smaller pool and the policy addresses the conditions specific to this basin and the CMA.

Committee Member Gaillard asked if there is a selection process in which the exchanges are allowed so that small farmers have a priority in the market.

Committee Member Caufield asked if Minimum Thresholds (MTs) will remain fixed. Mr. Blakslee responded that there was an adjustment to an MT at the last meeting, and that most MTs have been set based on methodology outlined in the GSP and should not change.

Committee Member Jaffe expressed that there needs to be more discussion about the policy, including more input from small farmers like Dave Lewis, and that the policy isn't ready to adopt it. Mr. Blakslee responded that there was key input from stakeholders in the last public meetings and those comments were considered in the development of the policy. Mr. Dominguez stated that the SAC and Board provided input on what they wanted in the policy, and those comments were incorporated.

Committee Member Haslett expressed concern that the Board and other committee conversations are not representative of small farmer considerations, who are in learning mode when they attend the meetings. He recommended a public process for interested parties to register for the water markets and allocate a percentage of the total allocations for small farmers.

Committee Member Jaffe recommended that the policy consider more stakeholder input and could be an opportunity to build trust, transparency and equity in the Basin.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis commented that the pool idea only works for landowners that have extra water that they can make available.

Stakeholder Tristan Zannon preferred a simpler policy that is subject to revisions. He added that he hasn't found any sellers.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that a simpler policy would be better, and the price would be somewhat driven off the penalty fee that the GSA set forth.

Committee Member Lewis noted that he didn't receive a notice before planting additional trees and the ad hoc didn't reach out to him regarding this issue.

Committee Chair Kelly commented that there is an issue with the spatial distribution of benefit or water to be sold.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the new model is the cause of landowners impacted by allocations were included in the CMA that used the new model is the cause of the these issues.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to recommend the board not adopt the policy until there are further refinement and engagement of stakeholders impacted. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

c. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Standard Operating Procedures for Adaptive Management Process

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and its application to the Minimum Threshold (MT) exceedance on Opti Well #610.

Committee Chair Kelly asked who would help realize potential improvements or deepening of wells as a potential management strategy. Would it be the GSA's responsibility? Mr. Blakslee stated that this is just one potential option, and that the GSA could work with local landowners and that a potential management strategy could be a pumping restriction.

Member Jaffe mentioned concern that the SOP does not specify a timeline or timeframe by which exceedances would be investigated or by which management actions would be implemented. Mr. Blakslee stated that he can include a monthly timeline for the steps in the procedure, which can be reviewed by the Board.

Committee Chair Kelly asked who makes the first determination if the well is in exceedance or if adaptive management process is triggered. Mr. Blakslee responded that staff would present that information to the Board and would seek recommendations to continue with an investigation.

MOTION

Committee Member Caufield made a motion to recommend the board adopt the SOP with the inclusion of a monthly timeline. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

d. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Options to Address New Pumping Outside the Management Area

Legal Counsel Dominguez provided an overview of the options to address new pumping outside the management area (MA), which the Board requested during the meeting on July 9, 2025. He presented a few examples of how other GSAs handle new pumping outside the management area, which are included in the SAC packet.

Committee Chair Kelly asked about the basin-wide allocations in the East Kaweah GSA and Eastern Tule GSA. Mr. Dominguez responded that allocations are given for each parcel.

Committee Member Jaffe asked how these options are impacted by the adjudication and why go through the allocation process if the courts decide.

Legal Counsel Dominguez responded that the GSA have to fulfill court orders and fulfill SGMA requirements. He noted that it is unclear when the courts will determine allocations which is why the GSA has moved forward setting allocations.

Committee Member Haslett supports option 1, Continue implementing the GSP.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that the data he has seen suggest that the basin is being pumped well beyond the sustainable yield.

8. 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 noted that the update on the grant-funded projects is provided in the SAC packet.

c. Update on July 2025 Groundwater Conditions Report

Mr. Blakslee provided a brief overview of the July 2025 groundwater conditions, which is provided in the packet.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the transducer in Well 571 is broken.

9. 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. Blakslee noted the September 3, 2025, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda is provided in the SAC packet.

10. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Nothing to report.

11. Committee Forum

Nothing to report.

12. Correspondence

Stakeholder Tristan Zannon spoke about his correspondence included in the board packet. He noted that he wasn't given the opportunity to address the allocations. Benjamin Markham, Zannon's Legal Counsel, added that there are errors on the GSA's side and they will take this to the board on September 3, 2025.

13. Adjourn

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 9:42 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: *Brenton Kelly*
Brenton Kelly (Oct 31, 2025 09:41:33 PDT)

ATTEST:

Vice Chair Haslett: *Joel Haslett*
Joel Haslett (Oct 30, 2025 17:21:21 PDT)