

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

October 30, 2025

## Meetings Minutes

### PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Chair

Haslett, Joe – Vice Chair

Jaffe, Roberta – Stated she needed to leave at 6pm.

DeBranch, Brad

Gaillard, Jean

Lewis, Dave

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Bianchi, Grace – Hallmark Group

Blakslee, Taylor – Assistant Executive Director, Hallmark Group

Dominguez, Alex – Legal Counsel

Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran

Ceyhan, Sercan – 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

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 August 28, 2025 Minutes

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the August 28, 2025, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

Chair Kelly commented that he had asked a question on Page 5 regarding rating tables, which help convert flow rate to flow height and vice versa. Grace Bianchi confirmed she has made the edit in August 28, 2025 minutes.

**MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to approve August 28, 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, Haslett, Jaffe Kelly, Lewis  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: None  
ABSENT: Caufield

**7. Approval of the 2026 Proposed Meeting Calendar**

Grace Bianchi presented the 2026 Proposed Calendar and asked for committee feedback on the July Board meeting date, as it falls on July 1.

There was no opposition to the 2026 Proposed Calendar, including keeping the July 1 board meeting date, even as it falls near 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend.

Mr. Beck reported that he will be leaving Hallmark Group and will therefore stepping away from his work in the Cuyama Basin at the end of the year.

**8. 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 an overview on the plan and timeline for evaluating allocations in the Ventucopa Management Area.

Sercan Ceyhan (Woodard & Curran) presented updates on the model analysis, including an overview of the datasets that were reviewed for evaluated allocations in the Ventucopa Management Area.

Committee Member Haslett asked if staff could define deep percolation. Mr. Ceyhan described deep percolation as a model term where precipitation and surface waters percolate through the soil to the groundwater table as recharge.

Chair Kelly asked if there is a way to measure deep percolation rates and Mr. Ceyhan responded that the model does not calculate those rates.

Mr. Ceyhan reviewed the streamflow records.

Committee Member Gaillard asked about the blue dots shown on the USGS 113500 vs Small Watersheds slide. Mr. Ceyhan responded that the blue dots indicate areas where the model calculates a mass balance.

Committee Chair Kelly asked about the depths of the wells shown in the simulated groundwater level slides. Mr. Ceyhan responded that he'll try to include graphs with slides with depths for the board packet.

Mr. Ceyhan continued to review the simulated pumping vs reported pumping model results.

Committee Member DeBranch asked if the reported pumping included majority pumping in the CMA. Mr. Blakslee responded that it captures the majority of the pumping in the basin.

Committee Chair Kelly stated that on slide 34, "Pumping", the Service Area ID 27 is not Cuyama Orchards but rather Menzies Trust (Kern Ridge) and Mr. Ceyhan confirmed that he can make that change.

Committee Member Haslett asked about the purple area being the accumulation of the subflow from the canyon area and stated that the United States Geological Survey (USGS) stream gauge data shared in previous slides seems very different from the 424 acre-feet/year that flow in the rivers in the "Subsurface flows" map.

Mr. Ceyhan responded that the 892 af/yr estimate is the average annual flow over 20 years. To compare it to the 40,000, it must be balanced. the model separates precipitation, infiltration, and

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Committee Member Lewis left the meeting.  
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Mr. Blakslee noted that only the preliminary recommendation is presented today, and the final recommendation will be provided at the January meeting.

Committee Member DeBranch asked if this is the last year the state grant funding will cover technical updates to the model. Mr. Blakslee responded that the grant funds will only cover CIMIS stations for the remainder of the year. He stated that there may be more opportunities through Prop 4 funding.

Committee Member DeBranch asked if staff has an estimate of what a theoretical sustainable yield would be for Ventucopa.

Mr. Ceyhan responded that the sustainable yield was not calculated and given that the model wasn't adequate in capturing wet years, but long-term groundwater level trends can provide a ballpark area for the sustainable yield.

Committee Chair Kelly asked if the model is likely to perform poorly in other areas of the Basin, and what it would take to improve the accuracy and confidence in the model. Mr. Ceyhan responded that there was little information about the western and eastern side of the Central Management Area (CMA), which has now been added to and improved the model, but the two areas (Ventucopa and CMA) have diverse conditions.

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault investigation.

Committee Chair Kelly asked if locating the fault would provide new information on parameters of permeability. Mr. Van Lienden responded that it should give some new information on parameters, but Jim Strandberg would need to confirm this.

**b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on the Tri-County Pistachio Request**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview on the request letter from Tri-County Pistachio for an increase in allocations "from 426 AF to 611 AF, which is a 5 percent reduction from Tri-County's 2024 water use of 644 AF and comports with the CBGSA's reasonable glide path ramp down of 5-6 percent per year for all other CMA farmers."

He reviewed the technical analysis of Tri-County's historical use and potential impact to allocations.

Committee Member Haslett asked Tristan Zannon about the allocation. Mr. Zannon responded that they are content with the 10% increase, but it doesn't save their business.

Committee Chair Kelly asked about staff reflection on the process.

Mr. Blakslee responded that staff is internally reviewing how this happened to prevent similar incidents in the future. He added that he believes the variance process is a good process, but he has received feedback about having more time for the variance process.

### **MOTION**

Committee Member Haslett made a motion to support the ad hoc recommendation. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Kelly. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

### **c. 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 and the issues raised at the board meeting on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. He reviewed the map of the CMA and Farming Units boundaries and the ad hoc recommendation.

Stakeholder David Lewis commented that the water market is a result of the flood allocation and if there was consideration other than historical use for allocations, then the water market wouldn't be necessary. He added that there are minor changes in the policy since it was last presented in August/September.

Committee Member Haslett commented that there are two landowners in the CMA that would be interested in the water market, and too much time is being spent on these conversations. He suggested excluding these two landowners in the CMA and reevaluating them in 2029.

Committee Chair Kelly expressed concern that much time has been spent on drafting a policy that will not find water for small farmers who are willing to buy water. He stated that the amount of water needed for farmers like David Lewis and the Zannons to avoid pulling trees and losing their business is only about 1000 acre feet over the next five years. He then recommended that the policy should allow for this use case.

Committee Member DeBranch is in support of a water market, but that a voluntary water market is difficult to achieve.

Committee Member Gaillard is not in favor of a water market and that there are only two big growers that might potentially sell water. His opinion is that small farmers are not protected by the board and his goal is to protect the small farmers. He is in favor of allocating 1000 AF for five growers.

Stakeholder Tristan Zannon stated that he is expecting a bill for \$220,000 for 200 AF for two years for water use and advocated for a market where percentages of unused allocations can be purchased by small farmers.

#### **MOTION**

Committee Member Gaillard made a motion to allocate small farmers up to 1,200 AF for the 2025-2029 allocation period for existing permanent crop demand. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

Committee Member DeBranch commented unusual to take unused allocations then transfer it to other parties.

#### **d. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Options to Address Adaptive Management Processes**

Mr. Blakslee and Karlee Liddy provided an update on the adaptive management processes for Opti Wells #833, 77, 420, 421, and 610. She reminded the SAC that the Adaptive Management Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) was approved at the September 3, 2025 Board Meeting and that an ad hoc committee met to review the Minimum Threshold (MT) exceedances on the wells.

Committee Chair Kelly asked about the 4<sup>th</sup> well in the nested well (#77, 420, 421). Mr. Van Lienden confirmed that that well has already run dry.

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

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the options to address new pumping outside the management area. He reviewed the board direction on September 3, 2025, and the current management actions used for pumping in the management areas.

Committee Member Haslett commented that the last agenda item was on adaptive management process and so there is a plan in place to manage the rest of the basin.

Mr. Blakslee responded that the adaptive management plan is a framework, but there isn't a plan to identify potential problem areas outside the management area.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez commented that the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) provides the GSA with powers on groundwater management, including the ability to regulate or halt the extraction from groundwater wells.

Committee Member Haslett commented in favor of option 1, continue with current approach.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that reported pumping outside of the CMA will still cause exceedance of sustainable yield. He said that the GSA should consider how to manage basin wide. He's in favor of a more proactive approach and demand reduction in areas outside the CMA.

Committee Chair Kelly and Committee Member Gaillard are in favor of a more proactive approach (Option 2).

## 9. 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.

## 10. Administrative Updates

### a. Report of the Executive Director

Nothing to report.

### b. Report of the General Counsel

Nothing to report.

Committee Chair Haslett asked legal counsel about AB 273.

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez said AB 273 will go into effect on January 1, 2026, and will require Form 700s and link to FPPC on GSA website.

### c. Board of Directors Agenda Review

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

## 11. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Nothing to report.

## 12. Committee Forum

Nothing to report.

## 13. Correspondence

## 14. Adjourn

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: *Brenton Kelly*  
Brenton Kelly (Jan 9, 2025 14:20:38 PST)

ATTEST:

Vice Chair Haslett: *Jan Haslett*  
Jan Haslett (Jan 8, 2026 17:38:18 PST)