

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

January 8, 2026

## Meetings Minutes

**PRESENT:**

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

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

**ABSENT:**

Gaillard, Jean

**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. Election of Officers**

**MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to keep the current officers with Brenton Kelly as the Committee Chair and Joe Haslett as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Caufield. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

**6. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**

Chair Kelly opened the floor public comment.

Committee Member Jaffe expressed concerns about the allocation exchange policy and the variance pool for small farmers

Committee Member Lewis expressed concern about allocation process inadequacy for small pumpers.

**ACTION ITEMS****7. Approval of October 30, 2025 Minutes**

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the October 30, 2025, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

**MOTION**

Committee Member Haslett made a motion to approve October 30, 2025, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Caufield. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

**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.

Jim Strandberg (Woodard & Curran) provided an update on the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault Investigation.

Committee Chair Kelly asked if the investigation has provided a better understanding of the flow in the basin such as permeability and flow rate.

Mr. Strandberg responded that the faults are a barrier to flow, but once water has crossed over it flows until it hits another barrier. Mr. Ceyhan added that the new data will improve gradient resolution but impacts to flow can't be estimated without running the model.

Committee Member DeBranch asked if additional information to come is through the existing scope or if an additional study will be needed. Mr. Strandberg responded that the supplemental fault investigation scope ends in February. Mr. Van Lienden added that the next agenda item includes estimated costs for model improvements.

Committee Member Caufield asked whether the current groundwater model already incorporates faults in the Ventucopa area. Mr. Ceyhan explained that the model includes faults based on prior USGS interpretations, but the representation is simplified. He clarified that the model treats the fault as a barrier below a defined depth and groundwater could flow over the fault at higher water levels.

Committee Member Caufield followed up by asking whether improved fault understanding would directly change model conductance assumptions. Mr. Ceyhan responded that improved fault characterization would likely reduce conductance values, increasing resistance to flow across the fault in the model.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis asked how the fault investigation results will benefit the Ventucopa Area and whether the updated information would indicate reduced groundwater inflow to the area. Mr. Ceyhan responded that the next model update would incorporate additional stratigraphic and fault data, which could change flow rates.

Committee Member Caufield asked for Mr. Strandberg's recommendation on identifying the lateral ends of the fault. Mr. Strandberg explained that limited flat terrain restricts traditional investigation methods. He described an ongoing student-led transect east of Highway 33 and noted that additional investigation north of Bollinger Canyon could be feasible.

Stakeholder Byron Albano questioned whether additional funding and time should be allocated to fully determine fault extents, given the potential implications for Ventucopa groundwater management. Staff acknowledged the concern and noted that prioritization would be considered in the context of overall model improvement planning and budget constraints.

Mr. Ceyhan presented preliminary recommendations for potential groundwater model improvements specific to the Ventucopa analysis and a range of estimated costs for each proposed improvement.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis asked when the next comprehensive model update is anticipated. Mr. Blakslee responded that staff is targeting 2027 to allow sufficient time for data collection, technical work, and review.

Committee Chair Kelly asked if the proposed model improvements could be completed within a budget year. Mr. Van Lienden responded that the proposed model improvements could be completed within a fiscal year.

Mr. Ceyhan recommended leaving proposed improvement #5 until the end and the other recommended improvements can be made individually.

Committee Member Haslett stated that model improvement #1, related to the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault should be prioritized, given the amount of work already completed. Mr. Ceyhan agreed that improvements addressing fault characterization and recharge dynamics are critical.

Mr. Ceyhan commented that improvement #2 is a critical item.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster expressed concern about the wide cost ranges presented and requested that refined cost estimates be brought back for consideration before major decisions are made.

Committee Member Caufield asked about the recommended level of effort for each proposed improvement, given the range of costs. Mr. Ceyhan responded that improvement #1, 2, 5 would best maximize budget.

Committee Member DeBranch emphasized that overdraft is a basin-wide issue and cautioned against viewing Ventucopa in isolation.

Stakeholder Byron Albano emphasized that improvements #1-2 addressing basin structure and fault behavior are foundational and should be prioritized.

**MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to recommend option 4 to defer model improvements to until the next model update. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

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

Mr. Blakslee presented the draft approach to manage potential increased water use outside the Central Management Area (CMA). He provided an overview of the initial assessment that will rely on groundwater pumping, groundwater levels and well permits/land use permitting

Committee Member Haslett raised concern about relying on the two-feet-per-year overdraft criterion outside designated management areas. He questioned whether that threshold appropriately captures localized impacts and future risk.

Mr. Ceyhan responded that the model is calibrated in the Ventucopa area at a level comparable to the CMA. He explained that groundwater recovery assumptions play a much larger role in long-term projections outside the CMA.

Committee Member DeBranch emphasized that the basin functions as a single interconnected system. He stated that pumping increases outside the CMA still affect basin-wide sustainability and noted that cumulative pumping outside management areas could exceed what might otherwise be allocated under basin sustainable yield assumptions.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster noted that the coloring on the change in groundwater level map does not appear to be accurate and the contour coloring is not accurate.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster commented that the color gradients on the groundwater level change maps appeared misleading or inaccurate.

**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 Groundwater Conditions Report**

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the quarterly groundwater conditions report and annual groundwater quality reports.

**d. Update on Adaptive Management Processes for Minimum Threshold Exceedances**

Ms. Bianchi reported that three wells previously exceeding minimum thresholds had recovered. Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on Well 610 and noted changes to the well protection depth.

Committee Chair Kelly expressed concern that some nested wells showed recovery while overall trendlines remained downward.

**9. Administrative Updates**

**a. Report of the Executive Director**

Nothing to report.

**b. Report of the General Counsel**

Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez reported changes to general counsel.

**c. Board of Directors Agenda Review**

Mr. Blakslee noted the January 14, 2026, 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**

There was no correspondence.

**13. Adjourn**

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly:   
Brenton Kelly (Feb 27, 2026 17:07:32 PST)

ATTEST:  
Vice Chair Haslett:   
Brenton Kelly (Feb 27, 2026 16:09:58 PST)