Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

April 30, 2026

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:
Kelly, Brenton – Chair
Haslett, Joe – Vice Chair
DeBranch, Brad
Gaillard, Jean

Bianchi, Grace – Project Coordinator, Hallmark Group
Blakslee, Taylor – Executive Director, Hallmark Group
Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran
Metcalf, Nathan – Legal Counsel, Hanson Bridgett

ABSENT:
Jaffe, Roberta
Caufield, John
Lewis, Dave

1. **Call to Order**
   Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 5:02 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 the floor public comment.

   Committee Member Haslett noted that the form 700 link on the CBGSA website requires login credentials and is not user-friendly.

6. **Introduction of New Legal Counsel**
   Legal Counsel Nathan Metcalf introduced himself, provided his background and experience at Hanson Bridgett. Mr. Metcalf reported they are onboarding and the court is moving toward phase 3 allocation proceedings.

   Committee Member Gaillard asked if the court would provide relief for small extractors under 5 acre-feet soon given financial constraints.

Mr. Metcalf responded that the court is drafting a streamlined process and final order should be in place within a few weeks.

ACTION ITEMS

7. Approval of February 26, 2026, Minutes

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the February 26 2026, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

MOTION

Committee Member Haslett made a motion to approve February 26, 2026, 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, Kelly
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	Caufield, Lewis, Jaffe

8. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

a. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Potential Areas of Overdraft Outside the Central Management Area

Mr. Blakslee provided background on the approach to evaluating potential increased pumping outside the Central Management Area (CMA). He noted that the initial assessment includes groundwater pumping, groundwater levels, and land use and well permitting data.

Ms. Bianchi presented an initial screening using 2024-2025 reported groundwater use, groundwater levels, land use, and well permit data. Two areas were identified with significant pumping increase, three areas with notable groundwater level declines, and no concerning areas with land use changes.

Stakeholder Byron Albano noted that the water use for the landowner growing rye seems unreasonable and should be confirmed.

Committee Member Haslett expressed concern regarding board representation and lack of landowner representation.

Ms. Bianchi continued to review the analysis of land use data and reported that staff identified 19 non-irrigated fields becoming irrigated and five domestic well permits outside the CMA, with two completed.

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for public comment.

Stakeholder Byron Albano expressed concern about using the term overdraft for two-year vs long term overdraft. He added that short-term changes can be misleading and urged using long-term trends when identifying overdraft.

Mr. Blakslee responded that the intent is to use the screening as an early-warning tool, and acknowledged the need to refine how overdraft is defined for areas outside the CMA.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster commented that there isn't a lot of data and it may be premature to present as "problems".

Mr. Blakslee responded that staff could refine mapping and work directly with specific landowners during ground-truthing, while still avoiding public identification of individual operations.

Committee Member DeBranch emphasized that over 8,000 acre-feet were pumped outside the CMA in the last year, and noted there is currently no restrictions on new uses there. He cautioned that without stronger guardrails, growers can keep adding wells and acres.

The Committee supported proceeding with initial outreach and targeted analysis, with higher-cost actions reserved as needed.

b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on GSA Response to DWR's Additional Information Request Regarding their Review of the 2025 Amended GSP and Periodic Evaluation
Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the comments from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan and Periodic Evaluation. He reported that staff met with a Board ad hoc committee and DWR, and written responses are due July 31, 2026.

Committee Member Haslett asked about groundwater quality concerns, including nitrate and arsenic. Mr. Blakslee responded that responses clarify existing methodologies and incorporate updated monitoring data.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlisle emphasized that DWR has repeatedly raised nitrate and arsenic, asked what would satisfy DWR, and suggested that the GSA should at least have a communication/notification process for domestic well owners if quality changes due to pumping or migration. Mr. Blakslee responded that the GSA does not regulate water quality directly but is incorporating monitoring and adaptive management.

Stakeholder Jim Wegis asked about sources of groundwater quality data. Mr. Blakslee responded that data is obtained from existing monitoring programs and GSA measurements.

MOTION
Committee Member Haslett made a motion to recommend the Board proceed with CBGSA response to DWR as presented. The motion was seconded by Committee Member DeBranch. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

c. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on FY 2026-2027 Budget
Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the draft fiscal year (FY) 2026-2027 and noted that staff is requesting SAC high-level feedback.

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the model improvements budget items included for consideration that will refine water budget estimates and improve model accuracy.

Committee Chair Kelly questioned asked about cost estimate for a model update. Mr. Van Lienden responded that the model update involves data preparation and recalibration, estimating costs between $100,000 and $200,000.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlielie raised concerns about withholding updated data from the judge, questioning transparency and the impact on future basin allocations. She added that legal counsel has not submitted the comprehensive GSP data to the judge.

Stakeholder Teddie Kelly asked for clarification on Hallmark's GSP implementation budget item. Mr. Blakslee responded that it includes management and coordination related to GSP projects and management actions.

Mr. Van Lienden continued to review Woodard & Curran's budget items.

Stakeholder Lynn Carlisle asked how we can justify spending this much money for additional data when the information isn't submitted to the judge.

Committee Member Haslett suggested option 5 with a short 15-minute update from legal at the beginning of the meeting.

MOTION
Committee Member Haslett made a motion to move option 5 with short briefing from legal at the beginning. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

9. Technical Updates

a. Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities
Mr. Van Lienden reported that GSP activities update is provided in the SAC packet.

b. Update on Grant-Funded Projects
Mr. Van Lienden reported that the updates on the grant-funded projects are included the SAC packet.

10. Administrative Updates

a. Report of the Executive Director
Nothing to report.

b. Report of the General Counsel
Nothing to report.

c. Report on 2025 Basin-wide Groundwater Use, 2025 CMA Allocation Compliance, and Groundwater Allocation Exchanges
Mr. Blakslee reported that final 2025 reported use and CMA allocation compliance

d. Board of Directors Agenda Review

Ms. Bianchi briefly reviewed the May 6, 2026, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda, which is provided in the SAC packet.

11. Items for Upcoming Sessions
Nothing to report

12. Committee Forum
Nothing to report.

13. Correspondence
There was no correspondence.

14. Adjourn
Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: Brenton Kelly
Brenton Kelly (Jun 25, 2026 21:42:01 PDT)

ATTEST:
Vice Chair Haslett:
Joe Haslett (Jun 25, 2026 18:25:34 PDT)