

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board of Directors Meeting

July 1, 2026

Draft Meeting Minutes

PRESENT:

Directors

Jackson, Steve— Chair
Anselm, Arne – Vice Chair
Bantilan, Cory – Treasurer
Young, Matthew – Secretary
Grant, Brian
Reely, Blaine – Alternate
Richardson, Kyle
Ricci, Malcom – Alternate
Yurosek, Derek
Zenger, Katelyn
Ellsworth, Mark – Joined at 2:10 p.m.

Staff

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

1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Bianchi called roll (shown above) and informed Chair Jackson that there was a quorum of the Board.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was led by Chair Jackson.

4. Meeting Protocols

Ms. Bianchi provided an overview of the meeting protocols.

5. Standing Advisory Committee Meeting Report

The Standing Advisory Committee met at the Family Resource Center in a hybrid format, with four Committee Members present in-person and two on the conference line. GSA Staff Taylor

Blakeslee and Project Coordinator Grace Bianchi were present, and they were joined by Brian Van Lienden on the call. One stakeholder was in the room with several on the video conference.

Legal counsel Nathan Metcalf gave a brief and helpful update on the status of the adjudication. The unresolved issues regarding the Minor Extractors Order for property owners who pump less than 5 AFY are expected to be finalized at the next hearing in the morning of Wednesday July 1st, 2026.

The SAC meeting lasted 1.5 hours and primarily consisted of GSP implementation updates. No votes were taken and no recommendations were made, Most of the discussion was regarding potential new pumping outside of the CMA.

7.b.i) i. Update on Increased Water Use Assessment for Areas Outside the Central Management Area

Staff presented the update on the two sites of concern where pumping may be increasing in the basin outside of the CMA. Progress is being made with the Ozena property to understand how the mistake was made as it seems to be a meter data issue and not a pumping extraction issue. After numerous outreach attempts by phone, email, and through the parent company, Staff has not been able to make contact with the Salisbury Canyon cannabis operation. This lack of communication is concerning to the SAC who feels it is very important to develop and maintain a working relationship with basin stakeholders.

The SAC generally supported the sending of a formal legal letter to inform them of the situation and to begin the process of using the model to determine the possible impacts of the new operation on the groundwater basin.

Stakeholder Kathleen March suggested that the pumping at North Fork Vineyard was much more impactful on the basin. She claims that the groundwater elevations have dropped over 100 feet and should be investigated for possible management actions.

The Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

CONSENT AGENDA

6. Consent Agenda

Chair Jackson asked if any Directors wanted to move any of the consent items out to discuss in more detail.

Stakeholder Ann Myrhe suggested inviting members of the public in attendance to introduce themselves, as other boards regularly do.

MOTION

Director Yurosek moved to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Richardson. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed with 93%.

AYES:	Anselm, Bantilan, Grant, Jackson, Ricci, Richardson, Reely, Young, Yurosek, Zenger
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	Ellsworth

ACTION ITEMS

7. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation

a. Adopt Reserve Fund Policy

Mr. Blakslee presented the proposed reserve fund policy, reviewed the various reserve amount options, and noted the staff recommendation.

Legal Counsel Collins stated that public agencies commonly maintain reserves for cash flow and capital needs. She explained that the amount and structure were policy decisions for the Board and could be adjusted during future budget cycles.

-----Director Ellsworth joined the meeting at 2:10 p.m.-----

Director Young stated that the Finance Ad Hoc Committee generally supported staff's approach and separate reserve categories but did not select specific funding levels.

Staff and legal counsel noted that the Board previously used an informal \$200,000 ending cash-balance target and managed cash around grant reimbursement timing.

Director Yurosek supported a reserve tied to a percentage of the budget and one flexible reserve fund instead of separate operating and emergency funds.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster asked whether agencies typically fund an entire reserve in one year. Legal Counsel Collins responded that timing varies and reserves are often built over time, although the Agency's current cash position allowed the Board to fund a reserve sooner.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren supported using reserves for rate stabilization and asked whether collecting more in the current year would reduce a sharp fee increase the following year.

Stakeholder Byron Albano commented that the historically low groundwater extraction fee might have encouraged pumping and supported increasing the fee to help fund the reserve.

Alternate Malcom Ricci supported establishing a reserve and favored a percentage-based approach that would adjust with the annual budget.

Director Young discussed setting a minimum and target reserve to provide flexibility during annual rate setting.

Director Grant asked the order of magnitude of the existing infrastructure. He's in favor of using a percentage and only having one fund. Legal Counsel responded that the resolution is set up to allow for adjustments and it can be reevaluated each year.

Director Anselm is in favor of a percentage of budget for the reserve.

Director Zenger asked what vote would be required to use reserve funds. Legal Counsel Collins stated that the draft required a simple majority, subject to revision by the Board.

The board discussed various percentage options for the reserve policy.

MOTION

Director Yurosek moved to adopt the reserve policy to establish a single reserve fund equal to 20% of the budget. The motion was seconded by Director Grant. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed with 78%.

AYES:	Anselm, Ellsworth, Grant, Jackson, Richardson, Reely, Ricci, Yurosek, Zenger
NOES:	Bantilan, Young
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

b. Update on Increased Water Use Assessment for Areas Outside the Central Management Area

Mr. Blakslee provided an update on contact with landowners identified in the assessment of increased use outside the central management area. He reported that staff is working with the landowner in the Ozena Lockwood area to investigate the cause for the increased use. He reported for the area in Salisbury Canyon has not responded to any of the outreach attempts.

SAC Committee Chair Kelly provided the SAC report on this agenda item.

Director Grant asked about the wells' capacities and whether the Agency receives notice of new well permits. Staff explained that Santa Barbara County publishes quarterly well application data and that Agency staff now review well permits annually as part of the increased-use assessment.

The Board directed staff and legal counsel to send a formal letter to the Salisbury Canyon landowner on behalf of the Board and continue efforts to identify an appropriate contact.

8. PUBLIC HEARING – Consider Approval of Resolution No. 2026-03 Setting a Groundwater Extraction Fee for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and Authorize Invoicing of Landowners

Chair Jackson opened the Public Hearing at 3:31 p.m. and confirmed that a quorum was present. He reported that notice of the hearing was published in the Santa Maria Times on June 11, 2026 and June 18, 2026.

Mr. Blakslee stated that the Board had approved the fiscal year budget and noticed a maximum groundwater extraction fee of \$20 per acre-foot. He reported that no written public comments were received by email or mail.

Chair Jackson opened the public comment portion of the public hearing.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren supported collecting enough in the current year to reduce a larger fee increase in the following year.

Chair Jackson closed the public comment portion of the public hearing.

MOTION

Director Bantilan moved to adopt a groundwater extraction fee for an amount of \$6 per acre-foot. The motion was seconded by Director Yurosek. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed with 89%.

AYES: Anselm, Bantilan, Ellsworth, Grant, Jackson, Richardson, Reely, Young, Yurosek, Zenger
NOES: Ricci
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

MOTION

Director Bantilan moved to adopt the Resolution 2026-03 to Set Its Groundwater Extraction Fee Against All Persons Operating Groundwater Extraction Facilities Within the Cuyama Basin. The motion was seconded by Director Yurosek. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed unanimously.

AYES: Anselm, Bantilan, Ellsworth, Grant, Jackson, Richardson, Reely, Ricci, Young, Yurosek, Zenger
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

REPORT ITEMS

9. Administrative Updates

a. Report of the Executive Director

i. Update on Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Workplan and Schedule

Mr. Blakslee reviewed the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 schedule and the proposed timeline leading up to the 5-year evaluation.

Director Anselm asked about DWR's review of the CBGSA's 2025 Periodic Evaluation. Mr. Blakslee responded that the GSA submitted a response before the July 31 deadline and are waiting for DWR's review.

b. Report of the General Counsel

Nothing to report.

10. Technical Updates

a. Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities

Mr. Van Lienden noted that these updates are included in the board packet.

b. April 2026 Groundwater Conditions Report

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the April 2026 Groundwater Conditions.

CLOSED SESSION**11. Closed Session - Conference with Legal Counsel – Existing Litigation**

Pursuant to Government Code section 54956.9(d)(1)

a) *Bolthouse Land Company, LLC, et al v. All Persons Claiming a Right to Extract or Store Groundwater in the Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin (BCV-21-101927)*

The board went into closed session at 4 p.m. and reconvened in at 4:20 p.m. Legal Counsel reported that no reportable action was taken during closed session.

12. Report of Ad Hoc Committees

Nothing to report.

13. Directors' Forum

Nothing to report.

14. Public comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren commented on the difficulty of finding and contacting landowners willing to sell allocations. Staff explained that the pilot program was designed with limited administration but would be reviewed for improvements, including possible assistance connecting buyers and sellers.

Stakeholder Karen Lewis stated that potential sellers might not know whether allocations are available until the end of the irrigation season. She requested a grace period before penalties apply so landowners have time to complete exchanges.

Stakeholder Byron Albano suggested polling water users about whether they would consent to sharing their contact information with parties seeking allocations. Staff agreed to pursue the option at the Board's direction.

Stakeholder Dave Lewis stated that the allocation methodology did not account for the circumstances of small family farms. He requested an alternative allocation approach, noting that the amount needed by his farm was small relative to total basin use.

Stakeholder Jacob Metz with Sunrise Ranch Properties, requested that the enforcement of Central Management Area allocations be postponed until the adjudication determines water rights. He stated that Sunrise's allocation was based on unrepresentative production years and that continued enforcement could harm affected agricultural operations.

15. Correspondence

Staff reported that two correspondences were received from Alisha Taff and David and Karen Lewis.

Ben Markham, speaking on behalf of David and Karen Lewis, requested that the Board maintain their 120 acre-foot variance or postpone allocations pending the adjudication.

16. Adjourn

Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at 4:22 PM.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair: *Steve Jackson*
[Steve Jackson \(Sep 22, 2026 10:15:22 PDT\)](#)

ATTEST:

Secretary: *Matthew Young*