# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

August 27, 2026

## Meetings Minutes

**PRESENT**:
Kelly, Brenton – Chair
Haslett, Joe – Vice Chair
DeBranch, Brad
Gaillard, Jean
Jaffe, Roberta
Caufield, John
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Bianchi, Grace – Hallmark Group
Blakslee, Taylor – Executive Director, Hallmark Group
Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran
Metcalf, Nathan – Legal Counsel, Hanson Bridgett

**ABSENT:**
Lewis, Dave – *participating as a member of the public*

1. **Call to Order**
   Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 5:03 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**
   Ms. 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 asked about the review process for financial disclosure forms. Mr. Blakslee responded that Hallmark Group is responsible for making sure the forms are completed and kept on file, but staff are not required to review or investigate the completeness or accuracy of what filers disclose.

   ----------*Committee Member Caufield joined at 5:09 p.m.*----------

   Stakeholder Dave Lewis commented that the allocation process is inequitable and does not consider small farmers.

6. **Report of the General Counsel**

Legal Counsel Nathan Metcalf provided an update on the recent court orders.

## ACTION ITEMS

**7. Approval of June 25, 2026, Minutes**

Committee Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the June 25, 2026, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. Chair Kelly noted a correction to be made on page 4.

**MOTION**

Committee Member Jaffe moved to approve June 25, 2026, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes, with the requested correction. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Gaillard. A roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

**8. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation**

**a. Increased Water Use Assessment for Areas Outside the Central Management Area**

Mr. Blakslee provided a brief update on outreach with the two landowners with significant increased pumping.

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the proposed 50-year model scenarios for both properties. Staff will add the Anderson Development cannabis use and the increased JR Investments pumping to the model, evaluate projected groundwater-level declines, and present results at the November SAC and Board meetings.

Chair Kelly asked whether Anderson Development plans additional buildout and whether the JR Investments water was used at another location. Staff will confirm the Anderson Development plans and noted that the modeling will focus primarily on the location of groundwater extraction.

**b. Direction on Improvements to the Allocation Exchange Pilot Program**

Mr. Blakslee reviewed feedback on the pilot program and recommendations from an ad hoc committee (Directors Young and Yurosek and Stakeholder Tristan Zannon).

Identifying and Contacting Sellers:

- The SAC generally supported a staff-maintained seller list.
- Committee Member Jaffe recommended that anyone participating as a seller be required to be on the list, rather than opting in, for transparency.
- Committee Member DeBranch emphasized that participation in the program is voluntary.

Allocation Exchange Deadline:

- The SAC generally supported the ad hoc recommendation allowing trades of a landowner's unused prior-year allocation through mid-February of the following year, before staff reports annual water use to the Board in March.

Farming Units Sign off:

- Committee Member Jaffe expressed concern that requiring all farming units to sign off on exchange could limit some landowners and noted examples seen in other basins

(e.g., Fox Canyon)
- Chair Kelly agreed the requirement is likely to remain a barrier until property rights are resolved through the ongoing adjudication.

Stakeholder Representation in Exchange Policy Development:
- Stakeholder Dave Lewis asked how the ad hoc committee is formed and who selects the stakeholder participant; Mr. Blakslee responded that the Board Chair appoints ad hoc committees, including the stakeholder, and that ad hoc recommendations are not final decisions but are brought to the SAC and Board for further input.

Variance Pool
- Committee Member Jaffe stated that a variance pool is essential to keep small pumpers viable, citing prior analysis showing landowners pumping less than 100 acre-feet have minimal impact on groundwater levels.
- Committee Member Haslett agreed and recommended the Board establish a fixed variance pool volume.

Small Farmers and Ranchers Network Letter:
- Mr. Blakslee stated that the ad hoc felt the concerns raised in the letter were already addressed through the other policy points discussed.
- Committee Member Jaffe agreed that the key components of the letter were reflected in the recommendations presented.

Additional Program Improvements (Penalty Fee Tiers):
- In favor of considering penalty fee tiers: Jaffe, Kelly, Caufield, Kelly, Haslett
- Don't reconsider: DeBranch, Gaillard

**c. Direction on Implementing a Carryover Policy for Areas Subject to Allocations**

Mr. Blakslee reviewed the carryover policy potential landowner benefits, basin impacts, and costs to implement. He provided an overview of what other basins are doing in terms of a carryover policy.

Committee Member Gaillard noted that under a sustainable-yield-only carryover approach, illustrated in the packet, very little water would be available to carry over, and questioned the need for further work on the policy.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that too much remains uncertain due to the pending adjudication to implement carryover at this time, and that the six-week allocation exchange window functions as a limited, sale-only substitute in the interim.

The SAC agreed with the ad hoc recommendation not to implement a carryover policy for 2027.

**d. Direction on Adaptive Management**

Mr. Blakslee reviewed the Adaptive Management Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and reported that four wells identified as below the minimum threshold (MT). He noted that staff is asking for SAC feedback on whether to further investigate these wells under the SOP.

There was general support for staff to proceed with further investigation for the wells below the minimum threshold.

**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. July Groundwater Conditions Report**

Mr. Van Lienden reviewed the groundwater conditions report from July 2026. He reported that multi-completion wells 77, 420, and 421 were below their minimum thresholds; Well 107 had fallen below its minimum threshold; and Well 573 had entered the adaptive management zone.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster noted that the decline at Well 573 warranted further investigation, because the property's water use had not changed.

**10. Administrative Updates**

**a. Report of the Executive Director**

Nothing to report.

**b. Board of Directors Agenda Review**

Ms. Bianchi briefly reviewed the September 2, 2026, CBGSA Board Meeting agenda, which is provided in the SAC packet.

**11. Update on the Community Alliance with Family Farmers Groundwater Report**

Chair Kelly summarized findings from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers and University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources report regarding groundwater fees, markets, allocation methods, adjudications, governance, and protections for small farmers and minor extractors.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that the report is relevant to Cuyama because the definition and impacts of small farming vary by region and pumping volume.

Committee Member Haslett encouraged members to review the report's recommendations concerning GSA structure and support for small farmers.

**12. Items for Upcoming Sessions**

Committee Member Haslett requested a future discussion regarding expectations for in-person SAC attendance.

**13. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

**14. Adjourn**

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: Brenton Kelly
Brenton Kelly (Nov 9, 2026 14:57:56 PST)

ATTEST:
Vice Chair Haslett: Jon Haslett (Nov 6, 2026 09:34:38 PST)