

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

November 29, 2018

Meetings Minutes

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center, 4689 CA-166, New Cuyama, CA 93254

PRESENT:

Jaffe, Roberta – Chair
Kelly, Brenton – Vice Chair
DeBranch, Brad
Draucker, Louise
Furstenfeld, Jake
Haslett, Joe
Beck, Jim – Executive Director

ABSENT:

Alvarado, Claudia
Post, Mike
Valenzuela, Hilda Leticia
Hughes, Joe – Legal Counsel

1. Call to Order

Chair Roberta Jaffe called the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Hallmark Group Project Coordinator Taylor Blakslee called roll of the Committee (shown above).

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Board Chair Derek Yurosek participated via teleconference in a listen-only capacity, and CBGSA Directors Byron Albano, George Cappello, and Jane Wooster attended in-person; however, Director Cappello left the meeting shortly after arriving and before Director Wooster arrived.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was led by Chair Jaffe.

4. Approval of Minutes

CBGSA Executive Director Jim Beck presented the November 1, 2018 CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

MOTION

Vice Chair Brenton Kelly made a motion to adopt the minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Louise Draucker and the motion passed.

AYES: Committee Members DeBranch, Draucker, Furstenfeld, Haslett, Jaffe and Kelly

NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Committee Members Alvarado, Post and Valenzuela

5. Groundwater Sustainability Plan

a. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Update

Woodard & Curran (W&C) Project Manager Brian Van Lienden provided an update on GSP activities, which is included in the SAC packet.

Vice Chair Kelly asked for clarification on the Board sustainability threshold numbers approval process. Mr. Van Lienden said they are looking for approval of rationales that will be used to set threshold levels on each representative well (which will receive Board approval). Mr. Van Lienden said these approved threshold numbers will then form the basis for writing the sustainability chapter. Mr. Beck said the goal at this month's SAC and Board meetings is to come to a consensus on the rational for the various threshold regions. He said if we succeed, then W&C will develop draft preliminary threshold numbers for each representative well for SAC and Board approval.

b. Groundwater Conditions Chapter Adoption

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the Groundwater Conditions Chapter.

Chair Jaffe opened discussion up to Committee members.

Vice Chair Kelly asked why the SAC is being asked to approve a document that is missing half of the content. Mr. Van Lienden replied there will not be as much content for those pieces due the data that is available and the SAC is being asked to approve only the content that is being provided at the meeting, not the placeholders to be written once additional data is available.

Vice Chair Kelly asked how the model will generate a calculation when there is no gage for the numbers. W&C Senior Hydrogeologist John Ayers said they are required by the regulations to have an estimate and will not have any content for those sections without the model. Vice Chair Kelly stated that he would like the document to say that there is not a water gage that exists and the model is the only way to determine this estimate.

Vice Chair Kelly also commented that he was concerned with the data gap placeholder language. Mr. Beck asked Vice Chair Kelly if he had language for W&C to consider using in place of W&C's language for those pending sections. Mr. Ayres said part of the reason the data gap section is incomplete is to allow stakeholders an opportunity to identify the data gaps at the times most suitable to do so.

Mr. Beck suggested a motion to approve the sections provided to the Committee today. Vice Chair Kelly said he would accept this method, or he is comfortable waiting.

Chair Jaffe said her concern is with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) chapter process. She understood that due to the Holidays, there was a delay with the revised section and the comments matrix. However, she said the review is difficult and there needs to be time allowed to review the sections more thoroughly. Chair Jaffe said a number of comments were from Santa Barbara County Water Agency and the County of San Luis Obispo, and she would like to hear what they have to say on how their comments were addressed. She expressed concern regarding her comments and felt as

if some were dismissed.

Vice Chair Kelly asked when the model results will be available to write the remaining content of the Groundwater Conditions Chapter. Mr. Van Lienden said around January 2019, when the Water Budgets section is released.

Chair Jaffe pointed out that comment No. 64 in the Groundwater Conditions comment matrix related to nitrogen, however the comment was meant to relate to the CBGSA not having the authority to regulate nitrates. Mr. Ayres commented that W&C described level monitoring within the section for data background, but the topic of monitoring will be covered in the Monitoring Network section. Additionally, this question leads to another potential discussion regarding projects and management actions and whether the CBGSA can perform any sort of management that would affect the levels at all. Chair Jaffe said that would have been an appropriate response to comment No. 64. Mr. Ayres let her know he cannot write multiple paragraphs to all of the comments made on each section.

Mr. Beck said he is not supportive of pushing the chapter back by three months, but he recommended the section adoption be pushed back by a month and individuals work directly with W&C regarding their comments. However, he stated that the schedule will not allow for an additional cycle of comment revisions.

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center Executive Director Lynn Carlisle commented that she believes the SAC members are not comfortable voting to approve a section that is incomplete, therefore can the sections be more complete prior to adopting in the future. Ms. Carlisle also requested audience members raise their hands when they want to talk.

Landowner Karen Adams stated she was a paralegal for most of her life and feels that the sections that do not have data or information seem like they are being whitewashed. Mr. Van Lienden said W&C does state in the documents that they do not have the data. Ms. Adams said then they are not placeholders.

Vice Chair Kelly said he would like the comments and responses matrix for the GSP sections in an editable format. He said a number of the comments on water age went unanswered.

Mr. Beck commented the Hallmark Group and W&C have transparency on the top of their list and work hard to ensure the work on the GSP is being done in an inclusive manner.

The SAC tabled this item until the January 3, 2019 SAC meeting.

c. Discussion on Data Management Chapter

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the Data Management Chapter.

Chair Jaffe asked if the wells within the Data Management System (DMS) are all the monitoring network wells. Mr. Van Lienden said that the DMS is reflective of what happened in the past, not necessarily what is there going forward.

Mr. Van Lienden reported that the additional well perforation data that he initially thought was there has now been included. Vice Chair Kelly asked if the Forest Service precipitation data was included in that data. Mr. Van Lienden said it was duplicative of the data received by the counties.

Vice Chair Kelly asked if we will see another layer to the monitoring network. Mr. Van Lienden said not as part of the GSP development process, but the CBGSA can elect to do this going forward.

Chair Jaffe clarified that all monitoring wells will be in the system and Ms. Long said that is the goal.

Vice Chair Kelly asked if the DMS is a useful tool for the W&C team currently or if it will be helpful in the future. Mr. Ayres replied that it has been helpful and he has pulled data from the DMS to build hydrographs.

Vice Chair Kelly asked if the GSA can pay to have the data inputted in the implementation phase. Mr. Van Lienden said this is something we could put in the implementation plan.

d. Review of Preliminary Threshold Numbers

Spike of Water in Schoolhouse Canyon Area

Mr. Ayres first presented an explanation of a spike of water observed in a hydrograph in the Schoolhouse Canyon area. It showed that starting in May 2017 a “slug” of water moved down the canyon which caused well levels to peak and then stabilize near previous levels. He said this indicates that the basin is relatively full in that area.

Landowner Steve Gliessman commented that since these are shallow wells, the observed spike of water may be occurring in the subsurface and may not be indicative of the deeper aquifer conditions.

Mr. Albano said he thinks Mr. Ayres’ presentation on this was very good and appreciated it.

Review of Preliminary Threshold Numbers

Mr. Ayres provided a refresher on the November 7, 2018 Board direction to use threshold regions to develop rationales.

Chair Jaffe asked if the SAC is being asked to provide input at the January 3, 2018 meeting on threshold rationales and Jim confirmed that this is correct.

Ms. Adams asked how the 20% number was decided on for the range and asked if it is an industry standard. Mr. Ayres said it is a value that he used based on his professional experience.

Vice Chair Kelly asked how the 5-year period was decided on. Mr. Ayres said it was his professional opinion to use this as a starting point but stressed that setting thresholds is a starting point and they will need to change this number as more data is gathered.

W&C recommended rationales for the below regions.

SOUTHEASTERN REGION

W&C proposed 20% of range for the minimum threshold and 5 years of storage for the measurable objective.

Director Albano said it appears we are looking at an underground stream in this area that it does not respond as a typical groundwater storage system. He said the assumption is that the pumpers in

that area will be responsible to keep that portion of the basin sustainable and does not see how they can affect the flows of a groundwater storage system that acts like a stream. Mr. Ayres said those are all fair points and the answer is he does not know, but they need to start somewhere and will need to update things going forward.

Mr. Albano suggested setting much broader thresholds and Mr. Ayres asked what percent of range Mr. Albano had in mind. Mr. Albano suggested a minimum threshold (MT) of 100% of range. Vice Chair Kelly said that proposal is concerning.

Committee member Haslett asked if Mr. Ayres considered the wells to be impacted by streamflow. Mr. Ayres said the well is near the river, but he does not have enough data to make a professional opinion on that.

Mr. Albano asked if the measurable objective would change if depth to water raises. Mr. Beck said the thought is that you will set them in the plan at a depth to elevation and they would not move based on recharge events automatically.

Ms. Carlisle asked if the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) would approve a MT of 100% of range. Mr. Ayres said yes, because it does not cause undesirable results and it would not dewater wells in that area.

Mr. Beck reminded folks that the threshold numbers will be very flexible since we expect them to change as we get more data and that we may not have management actions in certain areas if we do not have sufficient data.

Mr. Albano said the proposal is a reasonable starting point given the fact that we do not have enough data.

Vice Chair Kelly said he is very frustrated that we are trying to determine rationales without an understanding of how this affects the water budget and ultimately sustainability. Mr. Beck said in an ideal world we would have 10 years of data, however we are looking at discrete areas in the basin.

Chair Jaffe commented that the MT is set at 2015, which is at the end of a drought period.

Southeastern Region Recommendation

The SAC reached the following recommendation on the proposed rationale for the Southeastern Region with a minimum threshold of 20% of range and a measurable objective of 5 years of storage:

DeBranch – Yes

Draucker – Yes

Haslett – Yes

Jaffe – Yes

Kelly – Yes

EASTERN REGION

W&C proposed 20% of range for the minimum threshold and 5-years of storage for the measurable objective in the Eastern Region.

Vice Chair Kelly commented that the well depth for Opti Well 85 is 233 feet and undesirable results

are shown near 220 feet under the 20% of range proposal which does not make sense for this well. A recommendation was made to change the minimum threshold to 2015 levels.

Eastern Region Recommendation

The SAC reached the following recommendation on the proposed rationale for the Eastern Region with a minimum threshold at 2015 levels, and 5-years of storage for the measurable objective:

DeBranch – Yes

Draucker – Yes

Haslett – Yes

Jaffe – Yes

Kelly – Yes

CENTRAL REGION

Mr. Ayres presented the three rational options for the Central basin which were: (1) use 20% of range for the MT, (2) using 2015 as the MT, and (3) use 2015 as the measurable objective (MO). Mr. Ayres let the SAC know W&C is not making a recommendation but presenting three options for SAC consideration.

Ms. Carlisle asked if this was applied to some wells that have a steeper drop. Mr. Ayres said the example (Opti Well 421) is actually a fairly steep drop but does not appear that way due to the hydrograph scaling. Ms. Carlisle asked how setting thresholds in the basin affects overdraft. Mr. Ayres said regardless of where we set thresholds, they must not go down and need to flatten out.

In explaining the differences between the threshold options, Mr. Beck said if you believe there are not undesirable results in this area, you likely want to keep the minimum threshold low, however if you think there have been, you likely want to keep it higher.

Committee member DeBranch asked if there is a disadvantage of starting in the red. Mr. Ayres said if you start there then your management actions have to be more aggressive.

Mr. Gliessman said an advantage in the central basin is more data and it provides a better justification for choosing 2015 as the minimum threshold.

Committee member Draucker said we need to determine how to ensure that the minimum threshold does not go any lower.

Committee member Haslett said he likes using 2015 as the measurable objective because it allows some flexibility. Mr. Ayres said DWR intends for GSAs to meet measurable objectives, but the regulatory teeth are based on minimum thresholds.

Mr. Gliessman commented that he is concerned that the hydrograph does not show more data. Mr. Ayres said he choose the well because it was a USGS well that has more data points and with the understating that we already know there is an elevation problem in the Central Basin.

Central Region Recommendation

The SAC reached the following recommendations on the proposed rationales for the Central Region, which include the following options:

(1) *20% of range as the MT*

(2) *2015 as the MT*

(3) 2015 as the MO

DeBranch – Option 3
Draucker – Option 2
Haslett – Option 3
Jaffe – Option 2
Kelly – Option 2

WESTERN REGION

W&C proposed 2018 as the MO, and 10 feet below that as the MT. Mr. Ayres commented that thresholds were selected for this area since we do not have much data and levels appear to be full in this region. He said he understands residents in the western region want protective thresholds and used a conservative recommendation.

Committee member Haslett said he has had a drop of 20 feet over 20 years. Chair Jaffe and Committee member Haslett agreed that conditions in Schoolhouse Canyon are very different than conditions in Cottonwood Canyon and that may not be the best case to look at.

Committee member Haslett said John Jones has a well in Cottonwood Canyon that has data dating back to at least 2015. He mentioned they may want to consider using that data because it may be more illustrative. He commented that the minimum threshold is too conservative. Mr. Gliessman disagreed and suggested the minimum threshold is not conservative enough. Mr. Gliessman said their well has not dropped in 20 years except for the last two years.

Mr. Albano commented that he thinks thresholds are overly strict in all the areas except the main basin. Landowner Ann Myhre said she thinks Mr. Albano has a point regarding areas with runoff in some of the canyons. She said she thinks we will discover areas where water is perched and once it is gone, we will not see it there again. Ms. Myhre commented that at least we know water is moving through the area and it is not perched. Mr. Gliessman said we do not know how much water is moving through the area.

Chair Jaffe asked if Mr. Ayres were to use the data from Cottonwood Canyon would it affect their recommendation. Mr. Ayres said the data only goes back a year and a half.

Mr. Beck said since we will likely revisit this topic in a year, is the SAC comfortable using W&C's recommendation and reworking the minimum threshold once more data is received. Mr. Beck asked Chair Jaffe and Mr. Gliessman if their well's operations would be affected if levels fall below 20 feet depth to water. Mr. Gliessman confirmed that that would affect their energy load to pull water up and they would need to lower their bowls.

Ms. Myhre said SGMA is not about a landowner needing to deepen their well slightly but is about considering depleting aquifers. She also commented that if you have been able to pump at 20 feet that has been a blessing. Ms. Wooster commented that people should be mindful and responsible for all residents and not just your personal interests.

Mr. Albano said it seems to him it makes sense to set looser thresholds and adjust levels as problems arise. Mr. Albano said everyone will have to pitch in to solve the overdraft in the basin, but there needs to be room to breathe.

Ms. Wooster said it does not make sense to set a 10-foot threshold at wells near the Caliente Springs, that is not part of the problem.

Committee member Haslett commented that Ms. Wooster's property and Schoolhouse Canyon are not in overdraft and there are certain areas that are not in overdraft. He said the Central Basin is in overdraft and that is the reason for the basin is in the predicament it is in. He said he is not worried about the levels in his well and that he agrees with Mr. Albano that thresholds need to be treated differently in other areas.

Mr. Ayres commented that if we set levels that are too draconian, they may not be defensible and may be challenged by other stakeholders.

Vice Chair Kelly said his concern is that he knows there are wells in the area with better data to set a rationale for the region. Mr. Ayres said they have asked for data many times and this is all the data they have.

Chair Jaffe stressed how challenging it is to set a rationale in the western region since its hydrology is so complex.

Mr. Albano suggested that setting strict levels to prevent Chair Jaffe's concern of Grapevine's potential effect on their groundwater levels unduly punishes other landowners in the area such as Ms. Wooster and pumping monitoring may be better to track this.

Mr. Albano commented it seems ridiculous drawing such tight timeframes around limited data sets. Ms. Wooster said she has well data going back much farther, but Mr. Ayres reminded the group that they have to set thresholds based on a current monitoring network.

Western Region Recommendation

Chair Jaffe asked the SAC to table a recommendation on this area due to complexity of the hydrology and limited data.

Northwestern Region

Mr. Ayres presented the following three rational options: (1) use 2015 as the MT, (2) using 2015 as the MO, and (3) calculate the MT based on subsidence and saturated aquifer thickness.

Mr. Shady said the aquifer they are in is an awesome aquifer and the Upper Morales dips down over 700 feet. He said the performance actually improves each year since you improve the aquifer's ability to recharge as you draw it down some which creates a cone. Mr. Shady said they looked at how to utilize the aquifer responsibly as a storage tool and limit subsidence and they feel the thresholds they presented would prevent subsidence.

Chair Jaffe said calculating the MT based on subsidence and saturated aquifer thickness (option No. 3) completely concerns her in that it will cause undesirable results. Mr. Shady asked Chair Jaffe what the undesirable result would be. She said there would be a drawdown of the aquifer. Chair Jaffe said she feels option No. 3 is setting up a precedent for going the same way as the Paso Robles basin.

Mr. Gliessman commented that groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDE) rely on groundwater at the surface and if you draw down the water you will eliminate that GDE.

Mr. Albano asked how we determine what appropriate thresholds are that protects against undesirable results but also does not put Grapevine Capital out of business.

Chair Jaffe asked if that vineyard is appropriate in that region without over drafting the basin. Mr. Albano said that is the question but feels that we are talking about cutting them at the bud and not finding out what the impacts would be.

Ms. Wooster said she would expect draw downs, but we need to start with the supposition that not all water use is bad and that not all farming is bad, but we are going to responsible for use under SGMA. However, she said we do not know what responsible use is for this area and they should be allowed to demonstrate this. She said she felt decisions are being driven by fear on this. Ms. Wooster said the assertion that it may impact downstream users is not a scientific approach.

Chair Jaffe asked how GDEs will be impacted. Mr. Ayres said they are still working on that map and will need to look at where those are and how to protect those.

Mr. Gliessman asked if pumping to 220 feet will create a cone of depression. Mr. Shady said if it does Ms. Wooster will let him know.

Mr. Ayres said they will be monitoring monthly for the first three years and will have a lot of valuable data to make decisions on.

Mr. Albano asked how they will know the impact on Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Ayres said SGMA requires that we report pumping. He said we will be monitoring over 100 wells in the basin monthly. Mr. Ayres said if levels do not change and land use does not change, there are inferences to make.

Chair Jaffe asked how quickly you can change practices. Mr. Ayres said how fast you change things is more a function of your Board's direction.

Ms. Carlisle commented that if you pump as much as possible, even without causing undesirable results, will you be able to replenish the aquifer if your threshold is set too low.

Mr. Shady commented that holding pumping to a certain level near current levels is not based on causing undesirable results.

Ms. Wooster said none of us really know what is going to happen and we should rely on the monitoring network and not be punitive of other landowner's operations.

Mr. Shady commented that the scale of the hydrograph does not show the depth of the aquifer, which is roughly at 800 feet.

Vice Chair Kelly expressed his concern of setting thresholds without data and thinks we need to be conservative when operating without adequate data.

Ms. Carlisle asked when thresholds can change. Mr. Ayres said DWR requires updates every 5 years, but the GSA can update yearly.

Northwestern Region Recommendation

The SAC reached the following recommendations on the proposed rationale for the Northwestern Region, which include the following options:

- (1) 2015 as the MT
- (2) 2015 as the MO
- (3) MT based on subsidence and saturated aquifer thickness.

DeBranch – No recommendation
Draucker – Option 3
Haslett – Option 3
Jaffe – Option 2
Kelly – 2018 as the MO, 5-years of storage for the MT

e. Technical Forum Update

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the October 23, 2018 technical forum call. A summary of the issues discussed is provided in the SAC packet.

f. Stakeholder Engagement Update

GSP Outreach the Catalyst Group’s Mary Currie provided an update on stakeholder engagement activity.

6. Groundwater Sustainability Agency

a. Report of the Executive Director

Nothing to report.

b. Board of Directors Agenda Review

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the December 3, 2018 CBGSA Board of Directors agenda.

c. Report of the General Counsel

None.

7. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Nothing to report.

8. Committee Forum

Nothing to report.

9. Public comment for items not on the Agenda

Nothing to report.

10. Adjourn

Chair Jaffe adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

I, Jim Beck, Executive Director of the Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a fair statement of the proceedings of the meeting held on Thursday, November 29, 2018, by the Cuyama Basing Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee.

Jim Beck

Dated: January 8, 2019