

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

January 8, 2019

Meetings Minutes

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

PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Vice Chair – Acting Chair
DeBranch, Brad
Draucker, Louise
Furstenfeld, Jake
Haslett, Joe
Post, Mike – *via teleconference*
Valenzuela, Hilda Leticia
Beck, Jim – Executive Director
Hughes, Joe – Legal Counsel – *via teleconference*

ABSENT:

Jaffe, Roberta – Chair
Alvarado, Claudia

1. Call to Order

Acting Chair Brenton Kelly 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).

CBGSA Board Chair Derek Yurosek and Director Bryon Albano participated in the SAC meeting via teleconference and Director Jane Wooster attended in-person.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was led by Acting Chair Kelly.

4. Approval of Minutes

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Executive Director Jim Beck presented the November 29, 2018 SAC minutes.

MOTION

Committee Member Brad Debranch made a motion to adopt the November 29, 2018 CBGSA SAC minutes pending several editorial changes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Joe Haslett, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES: Committee Members DeBranch, Draucker, Furstenfeld, Haslett, Post,

	Valenzuela, and Acting Chair Kelly
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	Committee Member Jaffe

Mr. Blakslee informed the SAC that later in the meeting legal counsel Joe Hughes would be providing an update on the Brown Act. He said as general guidance for CBGSA Directors attending the SAC meetings, they have been advised that they can participate, however they should only ask factual questions or provide factual information, and avoid advocating for a particular position.

Woodard & Curran Project Manager Brian Van Lienden informed the group that W&C's Senior Hydrogeologist John Ayres was planning on attending the meeting in-person but had to participate via teleconference due to sickness.

5. Groundwater Sustainability Plan

a. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Update

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) activities, which is included in the SAC packet. He reported on W&C's progress for November 2018, notably including refinements to the historical calibration and future conditions scenario of the GSP numerical model.

Mr. Van Lienden briefed the group on two potential options for the GSP schedule which would determine the release sequence for the remaining chapters/sections. Option 1 would allow a round of review for each section and then a final review as part of the public draft; however, this option would push the adoption process of the public draft back a month and Board decisions would need to be set at a more aggressive pace. Option 2 would keep the current schedule for the public draft release but does not allow an initial review of the remaining sections prior to being released in the public draft.

Mr. Beck commented that we will seeking the Board's direction regarding the GSP schedule tomorrow. He let the SAC know that neither schedule results in more work for W&C and this decision is primarily to identify how the remaining GSP sections should be sequenced.

Committee member Draucker said she favored the option where there is more time for making decisions.

Committee member DeBranch asked Mr. Van Lienden what option he is more comfortable with. Mr. Van Lienden said Option 2 (the current schedule).

Mr. Beck noted that with Option 2, the SAC and Board may see the water budget section comments prior to the project and management actions being drafted.

Committee member Haslett said that it would make more sense to use Option 2.

Acting Chair Kelly stated that he preferred Option 1 because it would allow more review time for each document.

Acting Chair Kelly took a poll from the SAC to determine which option would be more favorable for the GSP Schedule.

Poll

Option 1: Allows a round of review for each GSP section and a final review as part of the public draft but will postpone the release of the public draft by a month.

Option 2: Keeps the current schedule for the public draft release but does not allow initial review of several GSP sections before being released in the public draft.

Option 1: Acting Chair Kelly

Option 2: Committee Members DeBranch, Draucker, Furstenfeld, Haslett, Post, and Valenzuela

Majority: Option 2

Mr. Van Lienden reported that W&C Principle Lyndel Melton had mentioned at the December 3, 2018 Board meeting that W&C would be discussing how to address the document placeholders. He said they had originally planned to include the placeholders in the public draft, however another option is to include all of the placeholders in a separate document. If all the placeholders were included in a separate document, there would only be about a week to review those placeholders before going into the public draft.

There are two options for the release of the placeholders. Option 1 is to issue the GSP chapters/sections at the time of the GSP public draft release. Option 2 is to issue the newly developed subsections as a single package in March 2019 with a 1-week review and comment period. There will be discussions regarding the subsections at the SAC and Board meetings prior to the document sections being released for review.

Mr. Beck asked Mr. Van Lienden to address the budget implications with each option. Mr. Van Lienden said their budget is very tight and Option 1 would be less of a financial burden and more feasible for W&C staff.

Acting Chair Kelly said his personal preference is to review the GSP sections initially as complete documents and then review the public draft.

Acting Chair Kelly took a poll from the SAC to determine which option would be more favorable for the placeholder strategy.

Poll

Option 1: Issue subsections for review at time of GSP public draft.

Option 2: Issue the newly developed subsections as a single package in March with a 1-week review and comment period.

Option 1: Committee Members DeBranch, Haslett, Post

Option 2: Committee Members Draucker, Furstenfeld, Valenzuela, and Acting Chair Kelly

Majority: Option 2

b. Technical Forum Update

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the December 14, 2018 technical forum call. A summary

of the issues discussed is provided in the SAC packet.

c. Groundwater Conditions Chapter Adoption

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of Groundwater Conditions chapter.

Mr. Beck read SAC Chair Robbie Jaffe's following comments regarding the Groundwater Conditions chapter:

*"To the members of the SAC and stakeholders present:
Happy New Year. This will be a very important year for the Cuyama Basin. This is when we put forward our plan for the sustainability of the Cuyama Valley groundwater basin. I hope this plan will ensure that there is enough groundwater for future generations to thrive. Thank you for your participation. I am sorry to miss this important meeting. Unfortunately, it coincides with long-term plans I have had to be away. I've reviewed the packet, focusing on the thresholds and I appreciate Jim sharing my comments with you when appropriate in the agenda."*

5c. Groundwater Conditions Chapter:

I reviewed the comments and actions taken. This is an important chapter in laying the baseline for our plan. In the comments there were extensive comments from the County hydrologists with concerns that there were inaccuracies about:

- *the characterization of the wells and the lumping of the categories*
- *groundwater trends*

It seems that it is important to have these characterizations accurately reported for our baseline. And I'd want the Counties to sign off that their comments and concerns have been resolved based on scientific feedback before approving this section.

In addition, there were a few comments regarding Groundwater Quality that raised questions related to CCSD data. Woodard and Curran's response were that they did not receive water quality data from CCSD. CCSD is required to collect and report this data and it seems every effort needs to be made to include this data in the Groundwater Conditions Chapter."

Acting Chair Kelly said he had discussed the lack of data from the Cuyama Community Services District (CCSD) with Vivian Vickery and Paul Chounet, and they had informed him that there is a lot of information available online. CBGSA alternate Board Director John Coates said water quality data is public and has to be posted annually. Mr. Van Lienden said water deliveries is all the data W&C received from the CCSD. Mr. Beck suggested Mr. Van Lienden speak with the rest of the W&C team regarding the CCSD water quality data and report back. He said this data should be added if available.

Mr. Ayres let the SAC know that Mr. Ayres said a number of wells were mischaracterized as California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) wells when they were actually from DWR's data set and belonged to different entities.

Acting Chair Kelly provided the following personal comments in regard to the Groundwater Conditions chapter public responses:

"General Comments:

The quality and integrity of this Chapter follows the trend of the developing Plan, that is, with consistently unsatisfactory representation of the actual conditions of the Cuyama Groundwater Basin. The chosen Representative Monitoring Sites are insufficient to provide true science based, data driven interpretations of the groundwater conditions.

However, Considerable effort by many stakeholders have contributed an enormous amount of constructive editorial input (13 stakeholders with 183 Comments) which do not seem to have been incorporated into the text, even when the response from W&C was favorably. This Chapter should along with the HCM, describe the general groundwater conditions but the text is poorly written and does not accurately reflect the Basin. The general disregard for the considered comments from stakeholders, including the SB & SLO County's, is most discouraging. Woodard & Curran should use & value this regional knowledge and experience to a much greater extent. It is a waste of everyone's time if this process does not legitimately contribute to a quality end product.

And, I continue to repeat my comment that the missing components of this chapter are significant and disturbing. Groundwater Storage, Surface Water Interactions, and GDE are the groundwater conditions of greatest concern to most every stakeholder with the possible exception of those mining the groundwater. When will we see & approve whatever W&C has for these Sustainability Indicators? Also, Data Gaps, which have begun to be developed for the other chapters of this GSP, are an inexcusably omission in this Chapter. Why can't this subsection be written? We already know which parts we don't have the data points for. They should be described now not wait any later.

Specific Comments to Responses:

Comment # 5; Ventucopa Badlands is now a significant part of the text as a Threshold Region in the GSP and should be included in fig. 2.2-1.

Comment # 11,12, 56 & 63; What data would be sufficient to be definitively conclusive regarding the relationship between groundwater extraction and water quality? The best science indicates a strong relationship. This should be in the missing Data Gap section.

Comment # 13; Age dating and other anthropogenic tracers must be used to find where and how much recharge is percolating down to the main zone of extraction. All the best local science indicates an impaired recharge rate due to complex hydro stratigraphy in the Morales Formation. (see comments # 171 & 181)

Comment # 20; Reference to the HCM and the effects of hydro stratigraphy must be considered in the discussions of "vertical gradients, hydrograph comparisons, and groundwater elevation contours" A change in the text is required for the document to be descriptive, accurate and a true representation of the groundwater conditions in the Cuyama Basin.

Comment # 24 & 25; These unsupported statements do require a change to the document. Include the data that suggests this conclusion. What hydrograph is available to support this statement?

Comment # 40; The text was not revised for clarity as to any difference between loss of the aquifer due to subsidence and storage loss capacity. This is a significant sustainability Indicator

that needs full consideration and a clear description. The Appendix Z (Subsidence White Paper) requires further explanation and clarification. The Cuyama Basin is not the same as the San Joaquin and should not be looked at the same. Where in the San Joaquin do GW elevations plummet >500' over such a short horizontal distance?

Comment # 58; Any accurate description of the condition of the Groundwater in Cuyama must more fully address the historic trends of 500+ feet of elevation declines over 6+ decades of chronic overdraft. This level of detail and accuracy is very much called for in this Section and understating the chronic conditions is not going to help solve it.

Comment # 63; If you recognize that the relationship between depth to groundwater and constituent concentrations is not yet well known, then what data gap needs to be filled and how.

Cathy Martin, SLO county, 40 comments

Comments # 99,101, 104, 105, 106 & 108; The water quality section is unreadable, inaccurate and unnecessarily confusing. Explanations are needed in the text for the justification of constituent choices and the MCL standards chosen from the various options. Why just these three indicators, and why have you chosen these MCL standards over any other? Explanatory text was asked for, the response was that "text has been revised for clarity", yet the explanation is not given, and clarity was not achieved.

SBCWA, 3 staff members, 75 Comments

Comment # 109; This section as a whole requires significant revision...and contains minimal analysis, with little explanation or interpretation. This does not accurately describe the groundwater conditions of the Cuyama basin. A technical editor or senior W&C staff should review these sections prior to distribution.

Comments # 116, 119, 120, 121, 122; Data accuracy section is needed Not entirely True...confusing...mostly accurate, but missing...not entirely true...missing a few. The accuracy and completeness of this document is called into question when so many errors and omissions are of concern.

Comment #131-135; There needs to be a separate data validation section that addresses QC/QA amongst different data sources. This data comparison between private and public data sets is mostly irrelevant, misleading and illustrates nothing informative at all.

Comment # 151; The discussion on west end hydrographs and the related Figure 2.2-15 is misleading. The trends indicate the yearly hydrologic minimum continues to drop, yet the text does not adequately or accurately describe this trend.

Comment #170; A summary of the conclusions drawn about water quality conditions is needed. No interpretive conclusions are presented about the groundwater quality conditions. No good explanation of why constituents were or weren't selected.

Comment #171; Age dating does provide information on groundwater water quality and its movement within the aquifer. The best science indicates it is very relevant, especially in a basin as stratigraphically challenging as Cuyama.

Comment # 176; Include a line showing MCL on the water quality hydrographs. This was favorably responded to as "MCL lines have been added to the figure". Yet no revised lines appear in the Figure. A good suggestion well received and then thoroughly ignored.

Comment # 181; This quote from the USGS Literature makes the determination "that groundwater movement favors movement of brackish water from the north of the Cuyama River towards areas of groundwater depletion, and that return of some water applied during irrigation and needed for leaching the soil carries dissolved salts with it to the water table (Singer and Swarzensky, 1970)." This more than suggests that irrigation activities contribute to the movement and concentrations of constituents and can directly impact groundwater quality over time.

I continue to believe that we are all working with a goal to make this Groundwater Sustainability Plan as accurate and representative a document as is possible under the legislative time restraints. I also believe it is the job and duty of the Standing Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the GSA to affect those goals. This compilation of unsatisfactory responses to stakeholder comments is an effort to that effect. There is no reason not to produce a good product, but this is not yet a good product."

Mr. Melton asked Mr. Van Lienden if we delaying the adoption of the Groundwater Conditions section by a month would that affect the current schedule. Mr. Van Lienden said it would not. Mr. Melton suggested delaying the section approval to next month and working with Acting Chair Kelly on his comments. Acting Chair Kelly said he would appreciate this and would like to work these things out.

Landowner Sue Blackshear said it sounded like Santa Barbara County Water Agency and San Luis Obispo County are accustomed to using redline strikeout versions and cannot understand why we are not doing this. Mr. Van Lienden commented that W&C is currently providing more services than other GSP consultants. Mr. Beck said we have not been using red line strikeout because it becomes expensive and cumbersome when commenters provide comments on the same items.

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center's Executive Director Lynn Carlisle suggested creating a detailed feedback loop so that if commenters feel as though their comments were not addressed, they know what to do.

Committee member Post said he believes Acting Chair Kelly should not report his personal comments regarding the Groundwater Conditions chapter to the Board tomorrow and Acting Chair Kelly agreed.

d. Adoption of Threshold Numbers for Representative Wells

Mr. Ayres let the SAC know that they are looking for approval of preliminary threshold numbers that have been applied to representative wells. He reported that W&C used the Board-directed rationales for the thresholds and 5-years of storage for setting the measure of operational flexibility. He reported that three wells were removed because there was not a method that was available to set a reasonable measurable objective and they were near other wells.

Acting Chair Kelly asked if there will be an impact on the water budget after we generate the preliminary numbers and thresholds. Mr. Ayres said the water budget is a separate technical evaluation and does not interface directly with thresholds.

Mr. Beck said once you have the water budget you will have to adjust the model with management actions and potentially adjust threshold levels.

Mr. Ayres suggested addressing the thresholds as 'proposed' rather than 'preliminary'.

Mr. Beck read SAC Chair Robbie Jaffe's following comments regarding the "proposed" threshold numbers:

"5d. Minimum Thresholds and Measurable Objectives.

I want to thank and acknowledge Woodard and Curran for working over the holidays to develop this important data where we can look at what we are setting as operational goals for the representative wells in the Basin.

I am very pleased to see the addition of representative wells in the Western and Northwestern region. I think these additions will provide a much better data set to analyze the progress and impact of water use in these areas.

In looking through the table and hydrographs sent to us on 1/4/19 I have several comments:

According to the DWR we are a high priority, critically over drafted Basin. Thus, overall, we are extracting more water than is being replenished and our plan needs to stop this trend in order to have a sustainable Basin. In general, the Minimum Thresholds for representative wells

throughout the regions are set below or at the lowest groundwater level of these wells. In many instances the Measurable Objective is below the average groundwater level of the well and sometimes below the lowest point on the graph.

Will MTs that in general are below the lowest groundwater level of wells meet the criteria of a GSP and SGMA?

Is that what we as stakeholders, especially those of us on the SAC who are here to represent the community and advise the GSA, want to put forth as the guidelines and goals for our GSP? Personally, I would like to see Minimum Thresholds not be below the lowest points of wells and Measurable Objectives set to reach a goal that will really replenish wells to before the 2015 drought.

Specifically:

Southeast region:

Is it possible to add more wells?

2 continues to be problematic as previously discussed

89 the MT is below the lowest graph point and the MO is below the average high

Eastern region:

#62- MT is below the lowest this well has ever been

MO is below the level at the end of 2015 drought...and the well has gone consistently down from there

Central region:

#422- this is one of the shallowest representative wells in the region. The MT is slightly below the

lowest point the GW level has ever been (and its current reading) and it is less than 20 feet from the bottom of the well. Is this a problem?

Western region:

Many of the wells in the western region have steady graph lines, yet the MTs are set below where these well levels have been. This would ideally be adjusted so that they maintain their stability, rather than allowing them to drop below where they have been.

Northwest region:

Wells #119, 121, 830, 832, 835 all MTs are lower than well depth

Wells #831, 833, 834, 836, 840, 841, 843, 845, 849 all have Measurable Objectives (i.e. the goal of where we are setting the optimal level of these representative wells) at 100 feet or more below the current level of these wells. Why wouldn't we set a MO that maintains a steady state for these water levels? It is especially concerning in that there is no recharge or pumping data available. It does not seem the intention of SGMA that groundwater levels be further reduced in a critically over drafted basin. I urge the SAC to recommend MOs to be set at a level within the current water level measurements of these wells.

Thank you."

Acting Chair Kelly asked if staff would like to respond to her comments.

Mr. Beck said some of comments go against the viability of the threshold rationales and are not strictly related to the question "do the thresholds appropriately reflect application of the rationales."

Acting Chair Kelly asked what staff thinks about her specific well threshold issues.

Mr. Ayres said he reviewed the wells thresholds that she presented in the northwestern region and agreed that the threshold levels may need to be adjusted for that region.

Mr. Melton said one of Chair Jaffe's questions was if we could add additional wells. He said we cannot at this point because we have added all the wells in the monitoring network as representative wells, unless private landowners would like to come forward and offer the use of their wells.

Mr. Melton said in the eastern region, well #62's levels are only 1-2 feet below the groundwater elevation. He stated that regarding the drop in Central region well #422, this well is a monitoring well and does not reflect production in that area.

Acting Chair Kelly asked for clarity on what type of input we are looking for. Mr. Beck said input for any wells that they do not feel the results make sense, and Mr. Ayres added he is looking for input on the potential update schedule for changing thresholds. Committee member Haslett said Mr. Ayres has said for months that there is not enough data, but over the next years we will understand more as we monitor 65 wells on a monthly basis and will paint a much more detailed picture of what is going on.

Committee member Haslett said he disagreed with one statement that Chair Jaffe had made in regard to regions outside the central basin being in critical overdraft.

Committee member Draucker said the reason Cuyama is being more conservative than other areas is because groundwater is all they have.

Ms. Carlisle said she is concerned that with 20-30 thousand acre-feet of water, if there is no will or budget to review these minimum thresholds, will this be business as usual. Mr. Beck replied that Ms. Carlisle’s question relates to determining the glide path to reach sustainability, which is an iterative process. Mr. Beck said a basin can continue to overdraft for five years as they decide on management actions but at some point, you need to flatten out and DWR will be monitoring this for compliance.

Mr. Van Lienden said thresholds have been set by the Board where they have determined if levels fall below the minimum thresholds it is an undesirable result.

Ms. Blackshear commented that thresholds in the western area are reasonable for business, but not necessarily appropriate for others.

Committee member Post said wells in the northwestern region are relatively shallow because they have never needed to be deeper and we do not know where the bottom of the basin is.

Mr. Beck asked if we need resolution on the five wells in question now or can they push decisions on these five wells back a month.

Mr. Van Lienden and Mr. Ayres discussed moving these wells into the western region and applying the thresholds used in that area since thresholds on those wells are below the well depth.

Mr. Melton said if you set the minimum threshold at current water levels, that means you are going to reduce pumping de facto, but setting the levels a little lower allows the opportunity to adjust pumping overtime to obtain a balanced basin.

Mr. Ayres said they missed the minimum threshold being below the well depth for these five wells and they should be adjusted.

Acting Chair Kelly took a poll from the SAC to approve the proposed threshold numbers for representative wells; however, in the Northwestern Region, 2 wells should be removed due to inappropriate threshold results and 3 wells should have the Western Region rationale applied.

Poll

AYES: Committee Members DeBranch, Draucker, Furstenfeld, Haslett, Post, Valenzuela, and Acting Chair Kelly

NOES: None

The SAC reached general consensus to review thresholds numbers the first year and implement changes in the second year.

e. Stakeholder Engagement Update

GSP Outreach the Catalyst Group’s Charles Gardiner provided an update on stakeholder engagement activity.

Acting Chair Kelly said he prefers the workshops at the Recreation Center.

Committee Member Post left the meeting at 6:17 pm

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 January 9, 2019 CBGSA Board of Directors agenda.

c. Report of the General Counsel

Legal Counsel Joe Hughes addressed the SAC regarding Brown Act and SGMA issues arising from CBGSA Board members, SAC members and Cuyama Water District Board members attending the meetings of one another. An important conclusion was that CBGSA Board members may attend SAC meetings, but should not advocate to the SAC regarding the advice and input the SAC gives to the CBGSA Board.

Ms. Wooster asked when she would be able to have her opinions expressed as a major stakeholder in the Cuyama Basin, and Mr. Hughes said she would express those opinions at the CBGSA Board meeting.

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

Acting Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 6:39 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 Tuesday, January 8, 2019, by the Cuyama Basing Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee.

Jim Beck

Dated: January 31, 2019