

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

January 31, 2019

## Meetings Minutes

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

### **PRESENT:**

Jaffe, Roberta – Chair  
Kelly, Brenton – Vice Chair  
Draucker, Louise  
Post, Mike  
Valenzuela, Hilda Leticia  
Beck, Jim – Executive Director  
Hughes, Joe – Legal Counsel

### **ABSENT:**

Alvarado, Claudia  
DeBranch, Brad  
Furstenfeld, Jake  
Haslett, Joe

#### **1. Call to Order**

Chair Roberta Jaffe called the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 4:00 p.m.

#### **2. Roll Call**

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

A UC Santa Barbara Film and Anthropology student was present and introduced himself announcing that he would be filming the meeting to gain a further understanding of what is happening with the groundwater in the basin for a school project.

#### **3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The pledge of allegiance was led by Chair Jaffe.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Executive Director Jim Beck presented the January 8, 2019 SAC minutes.

Chair Jaffe asked what the status of the Groundwater Conditions chapter is regarding the conditions set by the Board for approval. Woodard & Curran (W&C) Project Manager Brian Van Lienden reported that they received the Cuyama Community Services District (CCSD) water quality data and included it in the revised Monitoring Networks chapter. Chair Jaffe discussed the need for county input on the groundwater conditions chapter.

**MOTION**

Committee member Louise Draucker made a motion to adopt the January 8, 2019 CBGSA SAC minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Valenzuela, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed with a simple majority of Committee Members present.

AYES: Committee Members Draucker, Kelly, Post and Valenzuela  
 NOES: None  
 ABSTAIN: Committee Member Jaffe  
 ABSENT: Committee Members Alvarado, DeBranch, Furstenfeld and Haslett

**5. Groundwater Sustainability Plan****a. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Update**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on GSP activities, which is included in the SAC packet.

Mr. Van Lienden reported that W&C is looking for volunteers to implement sensors in the monitoring wells. Mr. Beck said the CBGSA may want to set a joint Board and SAC ad hoc committee to determine the strategy of installing ten (10) sensors in existing wells. He also mentioned that we would need agreements with the landowners.

Chair Jaffe asked what the purpose of the effort is and Mr. Van Lienden replied that it is to work towards bridging the data gap.

Vice Chair Kelly asked if the sensors will be provided by Lee Knudtson with WellIntel, and Mr. Van Lienden said W&C will need to determine which technology to recommend. He reported that they also have funds for installing surface stream flow meters once the agreements are executed. He said the sensors would likely be for the next season.

In regard to the schedule, Mr. Van Lienden reported that release of the revised Undesirable Results Narrative chapter is being postponed to coincide with the revised Sustainability Threshold chapter.

**i. Water Budget Update**

Cuyama Valley Family Resources Center Executive Director Lynn Carlisle asked Mr. Van Lienden if, during the implementation phase, can groundwater levels decline. Mr. Van Lienden confirmed that you temporarily could, and Mr. Beck added that this is a part of the glide path discussion during the Implementation Plan chapter; however, while levels could temporarily decline the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) would need to see a move toward your sustainability goal for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to remain viable.

Mr. Van Lienden presented the components of the water budget.

Chair Jaffe asked what the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires regarding implementing climate change. Mr. Van Lienden said SGMA requires looking at the 50-year projection and, once the base case is established, W&C will model climate change.

Mr. Van Lienden reported that at last month's SAC meeting they discussed sustainability

goals and this month, they are discussing the water budget, possible water supply projects and demand management allocation approaches. He said this month, W&C would review the information received regarding the supply projects and demand management approaches, and next month W&C will bring modeling scenarios illustrating pumping reductions with and without water supply projects.

Mr. Van Lienden discussed the water budget assumptions for historical, current and future conditions.

Committee member Draucker commented that Cuyama Basin has looked very different historically and in recent years the land use has changed a lot, for example the sage land has been converted to agricultural land.

Ms. Carlisle asked if W&C has discussed implementing mini rainfall models in the different threshold regions. Mr. Van Lienden said they have 30-40 sub-watersheds and each one simulates the inflow and outflows for each section on the Basin.

CBGSA Board Director Jane Wooster asked if the average annual precipitation came from the model or a database. Mr. Van Lienden said it came from the PRISM database, which is actual data that has been extrapolated.

Mr. Van Lienden said the model's land use data is spatial and does not assume future land use expansion. He said they are using the model to see where in each region they need to reduce pumping to achieve sustainability.

Mr. Beck said the Board will be updating the assumptions every five years, but the CBGSA can elect to update this more frequently.

Vice Chair Kelly asked if the crops are listed with their consumptive use in the model, and Mr. Van Lienden said the types of land use have been applied in the model, however they are not in order of consumption. Vice Chair Kelly suggested that staff can address the manipulation of the bar graph through reducing pumping over acreage. Vice Chair Kelly expressed interest in identifying each crop's water use in the future.

Landowner Steve Gliessman said that he has observed a more common agricultural practice recently that involves farming perennials for 20-25 years and then pulling the whole crop out and planting something else which can affect the water usage quite dramatically. He asked if the model can consider this practice. Mr. Beck said this is a good point, but due to timing, suggested it would be appropriate to document this in future model development.

Mr. Van Lienden reported that W&C took the inflows and outflows and ran the model to develop two water budgets: (1) a basin-wide future conditions *land surface* water budget and (2) a basin-wide future conditions *groundwater* budget.

Ms. Carlisle asked how the applied water value changed from the December 3, 2018 Public Workshop presentation for the model results. Mr. Van Lienden said the value shown in December 2018 was a very rough first cut and improvements have been made to the model since then. She commented that the model results changed fairly drastically

and said it would be good to know what and why things changed.

Mr. Beck said a decision was made to present a preliminary version, but now they are presenting something that is much closer to the final version. He said the information in the final budget will be well documented, however W&C does not have the time or budget to go back and capture the reasons for the water budget change. Ms. Carlisle said from a process standpoint, it is important to make those numbers very defensible.

Vice Chair Kelly asked why the precipitation for the water budget was 11.4 when it should be 13.1 for the entire basin. Mr. Van Lienden said W&C will look into this.

Mr. Van Lienden reported that for the groundwater budget, the model showed an annual deficit of 26 thousand acre-feet (TAF) using current conditions assumptions.

He reported that W&C modeled the annual average storage change conditions for each threshold region and virtually all threshold regions are in balance except the central basin which was modeled with a deficit of 25 TAF. Mr. Beck asked if the sensitivity reference for minus one TAF shown in the northwestern and eastern regions is significant. Mr. Van Lienden said that it is statistical noise and indicates that those regions are essentially in balance. Mr. Beck clarified that threshold regions were used to look at numbers and we are not recommending using those threshold regions for management areas.

Chair Jaffe commented that reporting that the northwestern region of the basin will be in balance in the future conditions model should be clarified to include that we do not have robust data yet and do not know the true impacts.

Chair Jaffe asked how her well (Opti well No. 571) level is projected to increase when those levels are currently decreasing somewhat. Mr. Van Lienden said the model is showing that the wells are essentially in balance in that area.

Mr. Van Lienden said in the central region, CCSD Opti well No. 72 levels have increased since an adjacent landowner stopped pumping thus allowing groundwater conditions to improve in that localized area.

Mr. Van Lienden said the most challenging region was modelling the eastern region. He said since minimum thresholds were set with consideration to the nearby well, levels are shown to be below those minimum thresholds. Vice Chair Kelly said it would be important to track the bottom of the wells. Mr. Beck said it is important to consider both the minimum thresholds and the model results when evaluating the results.

Committee member Post asked if there is prioritization between residential domestic usage and commercial crop usage. He said there is a domestic water crisis in Ventucopa at the moment and asked if that takes a different priority within the GSP than the irrigation of crops. Mr. Van Lienden said that is not prioritized in the model, but this would be addressed in the projects and management actions.

Mr. Van Lienden reported that groundwater level changes focused in the central basin and somewhat in the Ventucopa river channel area are due to agricultural use.

Grapevine Capital's Ray Shady asked if precipitation is modeled within the groundwater bulletin 118 boundary, or the Cuyama watershed, and Mr. Van Lienden said the latter.

ii. **Preliminary Discussion on Project and Management Actions**

Mr. Van Lienden presented an overview of several proposed projects and management actions. He said these ideas were developed through Santa Barbara's water augmentation study, CBGSA public workshops, other basin presentations and the technical forum. Mr. Van Lienden said he is looking for feedback on what projects make sense to pursue so W&C can include them in the modelling to run with and without scenarios.

Committee member Post asked if we know what restrictions are placed on us by Cuyama's downstream users. Mr. Van Lienden said we do not have a clear picture on that but will address this more during the Stormwater Capture project.

*New Pumping Well in the CCSD and Ventucopa Areas* – **Recommended** by W&C

Mr. Van Lienden reported that the new pumping well is more of a mitigation effort.

Committee member Draucker asked why the water problems in old Cuyama are not being considered. Mr. Van Lienden said he was unaware of water complications in old Cuyama and will have staff look into this.

Committee member Post asked what the cost split is for the two wells. Mr. Van Lienden said about 80-90% for the CCSD well. He reported that a well in Ventucopa would cost a couple thousand dollars. Committee member Draucker said the new wells are probably the most logical projects to include.

Vice Chair Kelly asked what the conditions of the old townsite is. Mr. Van Lienden said that during his discussions with Paul Chounet he had indicated that he was unaware of an issue in old Cuyama. Mr. Van Lienden said W&C would not include this information in the model but would provide a narrative in the GSP.

Committee member Post said Ventucopa is trucking water and they are not on an even playing field. Mr. Beck said projects that mitigate against undesirable affects can be prioritized in the Implementation Plan Chapter.

*Flood & Stormwater Capture* – **Recommended** by W&C to do more analysis

Ms. Wooster said Paso Robles Basin has done surface recharge areas on grazing land and it does not involve taking any land out of production.

Mr. Van Lienden said a study could look at groundwater decline areas and overlay soil conditions with recharge rates and estimate a rough number for recharge on those areas for the model.

*Municipal Area Rainwater Capture* – **Not Recommended** by W&C

Mr. Van Lienden said the municipal area rainwater capture is fairly expensive.

Committee member Post said there is a linkage between a new well and this program.

He asked why taxpayers would subsidize a new well if they are not trying this type of conservation program first.

Mr. Beck said you need to evaluate projects considering the economics as well as water supply improvements.

Committee member Post said he does not think he could vote for a new well if they have not implemented significant water conservation/reduction strategies first.

Vice Chair Kelly commented that the majority of homes in Cuyama use swamp coolers and use more water which can be addressed through a conservation effort; however, he stated it would likely be via a separate effort.

Mr. Van Lienden suggested that a domestic conservation strategy could be included in the plan, but would not be included in the model. Vice Chair Kelly supported not including the municipal area rainwater capture.

*Rangeland and Forest Management* – **Not** Recommended by W&C

Committee member Post commented that this option is at risk to significant litigation.

Vice Chair Kelly said the forest service would be behind this since they are in favor of managing wildfires and he would recommend this option. Committee member Post said the forest is such a small part of the basin it is not worth discussing.

Mr. Van Lienden asked if anyone knows how much forest is in the basin. Vice Chair Kelly said he will get more information from the forest service. Mr. Beck said the question is if it will be worth it to commission a study to determine the yield and feasibility of this project.

*Water Supply Imports via Pipeline* – **Not** Recommended by W&C

*Water Supply Imports via Exchange* – W&C Recommends adding this option to a future study list. The idea is to capture flows that would be captured by Twitchell Reservoir and purchase the water. This will allow you to capture additional stormwater.

*Precipitation Enhancement* – **Recommended** by W&C

Committee member Post said this is not a very effective option. Mr. Beck said it is very challenging to apply the with and without analysis to cloud seeding. Vice Chair Kelly said the nature conservancy has determined that cloud seeding over the Sierras has not resulted in higher levels of toxicity.

USDA Forest Service Mount Pinos Ranger District Resource Officer, Los Padres National Forest Ivana Noell said the mountains that would be seeded would need permission by the forest service and Los Padres Hydrologist Heidi George expressed concerns with cloud seeding and would like her to comment on this proposal.

**Summary chart of SAC direction on projects:**

Project	W&C Recommendation	SAC Recommendation
New Pumping Well in the CCSD and Ventucopa Areas	Yes	Yes
Flood & Stormwater Capture	More analysis	Yes
Municipal Area Rainwater Capture	No	Mixed. Possible add this under a new project category titled "Ensure Reliable Water Supply for Domestic Areas" to include: Conservation Strategy, New Wells, Rainwater Capture, and others.
Rangeland and Forest Management	No	Future study list
Water Supply Imports via Pipeline	No	No
Water Supply Imports via Exchange	Future study list	Future study list
Precipitation Enhancement	Yes	2 – No (Draucker and Post) 1 – Yes (Kelly) 2 – More study (Jaffe and Valenzuela)

**Demand Management / Allocation Approach:**

Mr. Van Lienden discussed examples of safe yield allocation methods and let the SAC know we will have a more in-depth discussion next month and is not looking for a decision or recommendation. He presented four options for consideration: (1) pro rata allocation per overlying acre, (2) pro rata allocation per irrigated overlying acre, (3) allocation based on fraction of historic pumping, and (4) hybrid option (combination of all three).

Ms. Carlisle asked what the terms appropriative and correlative rights related to. Mr. Beck said they apply to surface and groundwater rights. He said appropriative is based on historical use and correlative rights determine rights in groundwater based on ownership of land. He said a prescriptive right is obtained through the adverse possession of someone else's water right.

GSP Outreach Catalyst Group's Principle Charles Gardiner made the comment that we are presenting an allocation methodology, but SGMA and GSAs cannot dictate who can and cannot pump groundwater.

Pro Rata on irrigated acres

Committee member Post said this is a litigation concern, and Mr. Beck agreed that this method has a greater risk of litigation.

Mr. Beck clarified that under this option landowners not using their groundwater are not compensated for landowners using groundwater since the safe yield would be allocated to those using it and reallocated when a landowner wants to start using groundwater.

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*Committee Member Post left the meeting at 6:37 pm and the SAC lost a quorum*  
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Fraction of Historic Use

Vice Chair Kelly asked if the data is extrapolated or based on meters. Mr. Van Lienden replied that ideally it would be on meters.

Mr. Beck said in most basins, allocations are set up so that costs follow allocation and you should be thinking of who will be paying for SGMA implementation.

Ms. Carlisle asked if the option to only allocate problem areas has been considered. Mr. Beck said you can do this, but it can be challenging to determine the fringe of impacts. He said you can also create more than one allocation.

Committee Member Draucker asked if New Cuyama is in the red zone. Mr. Van Lienden said it is in the drawdown, but you can treat Municipal and Industrial separately.

Lastly, Mr. Van Lienden reported on key components of the Implementation Plan.

**iii. Presentation on Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems**

W&C Senior Hydrogeologist John Ayres described the SGMA regulations related to Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDE). He said the law requires you to identify and describe impacts of management actions on the GDEs, but the regulations and legislation does not require GSPs to do any specific management actions to protect GDEs.

Mr. Ayres said that he will be presenting W&C's analysis of GDEs in the basin using the California Department of Water Resources Natural Communities data set.

Mr. Ayres recommended using piezometers to monitor GDEs. He explained that a piezometer is shorthand for a small, shallow, localized well that is used for a 20+ year period.

Vice Chair Kelly asked what the protocols were for determining the verified GDEs. Mr. Ayres said the biologist described the biotics of each GDE and an update will be included in the Groundwater Conditions section.

Vice Chair Kelly asked if the biologist was able to visit all of the sites in the field over a day. Mr. Ayres said his approach was based on visual and aerial analysis. For the sites that he was not sure of a GDE, he visited those sites in-person and applied that information to other similar areas.

Chair Jaffe said she was astounded that 1,500 acres have been removed from the GDEs and asked Mr. Ayres what his opinion was on this. Mr. Ayres said he was not surprised since Cuyama has been dry for a very long time. He said there are geologic faults and features that cause water to upwell and support the GDEs shown in the report.

Vice Chair Kelly said there is a lot more going on in Cuyama than 500 acres of GDEs and asked if this is more of an issue of defining a GDE. Mr. Ayres said the memo describes the biologist's decision-making process and criteria, which focused on plant life present and remote sensing. Mr. Ayres stressed that GDEs can be evaluated, researched and updated.



Vice Chair Kelly said he appreciated the slide that showed regional monitoring is ineffective in monitoring GDEs and supports specific monitoring of GDEs.

**b. Technical Forum Update**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the January 25, 2019 technical forum call. A summary of the issues discussed is provided in the SAC packet.

**c. Monitoring Networks Adoption**

*This item was covered earlier in the meeting to ensure a quorum for approval.*

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of Monitoring Networks chapter.

Chair Jaffe and Vice Chair Kelly appreciated the redline strikeout version of the chapters.

**MOTION**

Vice Chair Kelly made a motion to recommend adoption of the Monitoring Networks chapter. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Draucker, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed with a simple majority of Committee Members present.

- AYES: Committee Members Draucker, Jaffe, Kelly, Post and Valenzuela
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: Committee Members Alvarado, DeBranch, Furstenfeld and Haslett

**d. Data Management Adoption**

*This item was covered earlier in the meeting to ensure a quorum for approval.*

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of Data Management chapter.

**MOTION**

Vice Chair Kelly made a motion to recommend adoption of the Data Management chapter. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Valenzuela, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed with a simple majority of Committee Members present.

- AYES: Committee Members Draucker, Jaffe, Kelly, Post and Valenzuela
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: Committee Members Alvarado, DeBranch, Furstenfeld and Haslett

Mr. Van Lienden said a number of improvements have been made to the Data Management System itself.

**e. 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 February 6, 2019 CBGSA Board of Directors agenda.

**c. Report of the General Counsel**

Nothing to report.

**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 7:26 p.m.

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Minutes approved by the Standing Advisory Committee of the Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency the 28th day of February 2019.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_



ATTEST:

Vicechair Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_  
