

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Public Workshops

## March 6, 2019

### Summary of Public Comments

April 4, 2019

## Overview

On March 6, 2019, Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Board of Directors and the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) hosted two community workshops at the New Cuyama High School, New Cuyama, CA. The workshops were noticed by email and U.S. Mail. (*See Appendix A: Workshop Notification*).

The workshop began at about 6:35 pm and concluded at approximately 8:25 pm. The English language workshop was attended by approximately 25 community members and the Spanish language workshop was attended by 12 community members. These figures do not include the CBGSA Board members, SAC members, county staff, and consultants in attendance.

Both workshops offered five presentation topics with time for discussion, questions and answers. The input received at the English and Spanish language workshops are summarized below. Three written comments were received. Presentations included the following topics.

1. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Background and Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Development Overview
2. Cuyama Basin Water Budget
3. Projects and Management Actions
4. GSP Implementation Plan
5. Next Steps

## Comments and Questions

### Presentation 1 - SGMA Background and GSP Development Overview

There were no questions or comments.

### Presentation 2 - Cuyama Basin Water Budget

Questions from the English Language Workshop

Question: What is the sustainable yield of the Cuyama Basin?

Answer: Total sustainable yield in the Basin is about 21 thousand-acre-feet (taf)

Question: The concept of regions is confusing because the conceptual model is detailed while the defined regions are fairly blocky. How defined will be boundaries of these regions be?

Answer: The CBGSA previously approved regions to be used for developing groundwater level thresholds; however, these regions will not be used as Management Areas. As determined by the CBGSA Board, management area boundaries will be estimated using numerical modeling results.

Question: Is the Ventucopa Management Area set in the town? What is the Ventucopa Area?

Answer: On March 6, the Board approved using preliminary Management Areas defined by groundwater level changes estimated by the Cuyama Basin numerical model of greater than 2 feet per year.

Question: When will the model runs that include Climate Change be available?

Answer: Modeling results that incorporate climate change will be shown at the April CBGSA Board meeting.

Questions from the Spanish Language Workshop

Question: Is climate change included in the model?

Answer: Not yet, but the model will be run with climate change assumptions provided by DWR.

Question: Why is the word “draft” on a number of the slides?

Answer: The analysis is not quite completed so the word draft was added where appropriate.

Question: What is the “Woodward and Curran technical team”?

Answer: This is the consultant team developing the GSP for the Cuyama Basin under contract with the CBGSA.

Question: In New Cuyama, how far down is the water?

Answer: The well is about 800 feet deep and the groundwater level is around 200 feet deep.

Question: Will the water quality improve if the aquifer is recharged?

Answer: We don’t know.

### Presentation 3 – Projects and Management Actions

Questions from the English Language Workshop

Question: The pumping reduction numbers seem high? I am not convinced by the pumping reductions-only scenario. There are roughly 16,000 irrigated acres, 3 feet = 8,000 acres. Half of those taken out = balanced.

Answer: The projected pumping reductions needed to reach sustainability reflect the best estimate of the numerical model given the current available information. The model is not perfect as there are data gaps. It should be noted that the required pumping reduction will be greater than the projected overdraft. Need to take into consideration the reduction from deep percolation.

Question: Will taking crops out of production (fallowing land) be a primary tool to become sustainable?

Answer: Yes.

Question: If the Department of Water Resources (DWR) will take 2 years to review the GSP, what happens in those 2 years?

Answer: The assumption is that the Cuyama GSP will be implemented on the schedule submitted with the GSP. The DWR will have to review annual reports as well.

Question: Who is paying to implement projects?

Answer: The CBGSA Board will have to determine this and the funding strategy is likely to be reflective of a philosophy that the costs should be paid by the beneficiaries.

Question: Has cloud seeding been tried over the Cuyama Basin?

Answer: No, but it has been used in Santa Barbara County and other locations.

Question: Is there a risk of toxicity for fruits and nuts that are being grown?

Answer: There is no significant toxic effects as measured thus far.

Question: What is the history of cloud seeding? How long has this technique been used and monitored for toxicity? Has toxicity been measured?

Answer: Cloud seeding has been performed over many decades in many watersheds across California. For example, cloud seeding has been utilized in the Kern River area for over 30 years. These other basins have not experienced major issues with toxicity.

Question: How to test effectiveness (of cloud seeding)?

Answer: Once cloud seeding is implemented, it is difficult to estimate exactly how much additional precipitation results because there is no opportunity to test with and without conditions for the same year.

Question: Someone did a master's thesis on Cottonwood Canyon runoff potential. Did Woodward & Curran use information from canyons that run when there is over 1 inch of rain?

Answer: The model simulates water flows from the canyons. The Woodward and Curran team would be glad to look at the person's master's thesis.

Question: Do cost estimates include annual costs?

Answer: The cost estimates include both implementation and annual costs.

Question: Since the Central Region is so overdrafted, would those in the Central Region pay for potential projects?

Answer: Most likely project costs would be paid by those landowners who derive the greatest benefit.

Question: Silting has shutdown projects in Ventucopa, could this be a big issue here?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Have you considered streambed restoration to slow water? Sounds like the natural function of a stream is being described.

Answer: There is a component of natural recharge, but the concept of stormwater capture is to divert water than would otherwise be lost downstream due to high flows in the river.

Question: Can you increase seepage in the river bottom?

Answer: This would need to be studied to assess the benefits and whether there would be any negative environmental impacts.

Questions: Do you have to do projects?

Answer: SGMA requires that sustainability be reached, and projects can help bring the Cuyama Basin into balance by 2040. You don't have to do projects, but it is prudent because every acre of farming that you lose has an economic impact associated with it.

Questions from the Spanish Language Workshop

Question: If pumping increases outside of the Central Region and Ventucopa Area, could more management areas be created?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Currently, there is not much requirement to measure your water use, with the GSP will there be required metering?

Answer: Not for those with private wells using less than 2 acre-feet per year, but metering may be required in other locations—the exact mechanism for tracking water use still needs to be determined by the CBGSA Board.

Question: Why are the groundwater conditions in the Central region and the Ventucopa area so different.

Answer: The Central Region has more pumping and the Ventucopa area has more recharge; additionally, wells in Ventucopa are much shallower than those in the Central region.

Question: How will the new community wells be paid for?

Answer: We hope to get grant funds.

Question: With cloud seeding, how do you measure for toxicity?

Answer: Toxicity has not been a problem in other areas using cloud seeding.

Question: If the projects proposed do not work, then what happens?

Answer: Pumping would have to be further reduced.

Question: Which is implemented first, is it projects followed by pumping reductions?

Answer: Pumping reductions would be implemented first followed by projects.

Question: Is there information on every well in the Cuyama Basin? If not, why not?

Answer: No. Not every well was added to the State's database.

Question: How soon will monitoring start, is there a deadline for when it must begin?

Answer: There is not a specific schedule. Developing the detailed monitoring network and monitoring plan will be part of the initial work to be done.

Question: The Cuyama Community Services District (CCSD) well is not impacting the Cuyama Basin like agricultural pumping is, right?

Answer: Correct.

## Presentation 4 - GSP Implementation Plan

### Questions from the English Language Workshop

Question: Do less aggressive pumping reductions mean lower levels of groundwater?

Answer: Yes, less aggressive pumping reductions would result in lower groundwater levels initially; however, the CBGSA will need to bring levels above the minimum thresholds approved by the CBGSA Board by 2040.

Question: Are the monitoring wells new wells or converted ag production wells?

Answer: Both.

Question: What is an assessment?

Answer: SGMA gives GSA's the authority to implement assessments which will likely be property assessments based on acreage, or they could be based on something else. The CBGSA Board of Directors will decide the strategy. An assessment that includes pumping is a likely component of any future assessment.

## Questions from the Spanish Language Workshop

Question: How are the socio-economic impacts being evaluated? With pumping reductions by the large ag growers, looking at the socio-economic impacts is crucial.

Answer: An economic assessment will be performed prior to any project or pumping allocation implementation.

Question: Can the CBGSA staff talk to the large employers in the Cuyama Basin and ask them to encourage their employees to be involved as this process continues to go forward over the coming years? The employees don't seem to know about what is needed to achieve sustainability in the Cuyama Basin. The employers and employees need to be encouraged to talk about what is coming.

Answer: The GSA has an active outreach process that is designed to try to include as many local residents in the process as possible.

## Written Comments Received

- It seems that an aggressive implementation of pumping reductions would be best for keeping the native ecological balance in the riparian areas with the least loss of the rich natural areas that provide quality of life for the inhabitants of the region.
- The pumping reductions might mean financial loss for some, but most of the financial gain from the use of the valley's water does not stay in the valley to provide benefits for the local population, but rather it goes to communities outside of the valley.
- Can a program to educate/provide more efficient irrigation systems like improved water delivery equipment or means to reduce evaporation be developed?
- Is there a way to use a little less technical language and simplify things by using more general terms with more diagrams? Some of the text slides need simplification.

## Appendix A – Workshop Notification Timeline

1. **January 22, 2019:** The CBGSA Newsletter, edition 4, which announced the March 6 workshops, was emailed to the stakeholder list which includes partners at the Family Resource Center, Community Association, BlueSky, and various county contacts.
2. **February 1:** Cuyama Valley Recreation District newsletter was distributed to all P.O. Box holders in New Cuyama. It included the English and Spanish language versions of the CBGSA Newsletter, edition 4.
3. **February 5:** The English and Spanish versions of the workshop notice were electronically distributed to CBGSA stakeholder list.
4. **February 5:** Workshop notices, in English and Spanish, were posted to the website.
5. **February 8:** Postcard announcing the March 6 workshops was mailed to all parcel owners in the Cuyama Basin.
6. **February 8 through March 5:** SAC member Jake Furstenfeld assisted by posting the workshop notices in the "finger" areas in the Cuyama Basin.
7. **February 6 through March 5:** Workshop notices distributed throughout the Cuyama Basin by volunteers at the Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center.
8. **Late February:** San Luis Obispo County staff emailed the workshop notices to the county's stakeholder list for Cuyama.
9. **February 27:** A reminder email was sent to stakeholder email list.