

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

January 4, 2022

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Chair
DeBranch, Brad – Vice Chair
Furstenfeld, Jake
Gaillard, Jean
Haslett, Joe
Jaffe, Roberta
Beck, Jim – Executive Director
Brian Van Lienden, Woodard & Curran
Blakslee, Taylor – Project Manager
Dominguez, Alex – Legal Counsel

ABSENT:

Draucker, Louise

1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Vice Chair Brad DeBranch called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. and Hallmark Group Project Manager Taylor Blakslee provided direction on the meeting protocols in facilitating a remote meeting.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Kelly led the pledge of allegiance.

4. Adopt Resolution No. 21-111 Authorizing Use of Teleconferencing for Public Meetings Under AB 361

CBGSA legal counsel Alex Dominguez presented a resolution authorizing the use of teleconferencing under assembly bill 361.

MOTION

Committee Member Haslett made a motion to adopt Resolution 21-111 authorizing use of teleconferencing for public meetings under AB 361. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES: DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Draucker

5. Election of Officers

CBGSA Executive Director Jim Beck presented options to continue current slate of officer or consider other nominees. Current Chair Kelly and Vice Chair DeBranch said they were willing to continue to serve. Committee Member Furstenfeld commented that he appreciated Mr. Kelly and Mr. DeBranch’s service.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to appoint the current officers to continue serving as Chair and Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Furstenfeld, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

- AYES: DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Jaffe, Kelly
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: Draucker, Haslett

6. Update on SAC Membership

Chair Kelly reported that there remain two vacancies for representatives of the Hispanic community and said if anyone knows someone that is interested in serving to let himself or Mr. Blakslee know.

7. Approval of Minutes

Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the October 28, 2021, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

MOTION

Committee Member DeBranch made a motion to adopt the October 28, 2021, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Furstenfeld, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center Executive Director Lynn Carlisle asked when the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) would provide the aerial electromagnetic information and Mr. Van Lienden said DWR expects to provide this information in February or March 2022.

- AYES: DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: Draucker

8. Groundwater Sustainability Plan

a. Direction on Management Area Policies in the Central Management Area

Executive Director Jim Beck provided background on the development of policies in the Central Management Area. He reported that at the November 3, 2021, Board meeting, the Board directed staff to meet with an ad hoc to identify key policy points for discussion at the January 2022 Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) and Board meetings.

Mr. Beck outlined the following five (5) key policy points, staff options and Board ad hoc feedback for each option which are included in the SAC packet.

1. Allocation options

a. What is the basis for the allocation?

Chair Kelly asked if the Management Area boundary can be revisited during the 2025 Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) update. Mr. Beck confirmed the CBGSA can update any components of the GSP that are appropriate during the 2025 update. Committee Member Furstenfeld commented that he does not believe it is fair to change the GSP because folks do not like the results. Committee Member Jaffe thanked staff for the work on this and stressed the importance of adhering to the GSP. Committee Member Haslett agreed with sticking with the GSP in implementing a reduction in the Central Management Area.

Stakeholder Casey Walsh asked if the CBGSA is taking into account the management of individual well levels and Mr. Beck replied that the CBGSA still has to manage the basin to the thresholds that were set for representative wells.

Stakeholder Kathleen March asked why legal counsel has not filed a stop motion, but Chair Kelly noted that we will discuss her comments related to the adjudication during the appropriate agenda Item No. 12.

Local stakeholder David Lewis said the Management Area could be influenced by pumping outside of that zone and said he believes it would be prudent to monitor the boundary of the Management Area to determine if changes should be made.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that he is in favor implementing an allocation in the entire basin.

A summary of the Committee's position on the allocation strategy is included below:

Implement allocation in Central Management Area:

- Furstenfeld
- Gaillard
- Haslett
- Jaffe
- Kelly

Do not limit implementation of allocation to just Central Management Area:

- DeBranch

No feedback (absent):

- Draucker

b. What is the sustainable yield for the Management Area?

Committee Member Jaffe asked if metered data will be used to refine the sustainable yield. Mr. Beck said we will have a full year of meter data starting in 2023, but since the pumping reductions need to begin in 2023, we will need to use the most recent water use data from 2021.

Committee Gaillard asked if just focusing on the Central Management Area will achieve sustainability in the basin. He noted that just reducing pumping in the Management Area will not likely achieve sustainability in the entire basin and Committee Member

DeBranch agreed with his comments.

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on how the sustainable yield for the Management Area was determined and noted that some of the reduction in the model was from the Ventucopa Area which the Board deferred pumping reduction actions at this time.

Committee Member Jaffe said she does not want the CBGSA to forget about thresholds and said her understanding is that we are specifically managing the overdraft in the Central Management Area, but we need to continue managing potential new areas of overdraft in the entire basin.

Stakeholder David Lewis asked how many acres are in the Central Management Area and Mr. Blaklee reported that there are 24,621 acres in the Management Area and 241,695 total acres in the basin.

c. What is the sustainable yield allocation strategy for the Management Area?

Committee Member Brad DeBranch said that an allocation based on historic pumping makes the most sense. Committee Member Jaffe said it is important to understand what type of irrigation systems are being used. She noted that historic pumping is what got us into the overdraft situation we are in, and Committee Member Furstenfeld agreed with this. Committee Member Haslett said he does not think there is a right answer, but we need to focus on the model and the glidepath set in the GSP. He said an acreage basis likely makes the most sense. Committee Member DeBranch asked why folks would be opposed to an allocation based on historic pumping if the required reduction is achieved in the Management Area.

David Lewis said he has 40 acres of pistachios and has observed a large amount of water use occurring in the Central Management Area and said basing the allocation on historic use is negatively impacting folks like him.

Mr. Walsh said he believes that an allocation based on acreage makes more sense to him.

Chair Kelly noted that several Committee members did not support an allocation based on historic use except for one ad hoc member and several expressed support for an acreage-based allocation.

2. Funding options

a. How can the CBGSA fund implementation of the pumping reductions in the Management Area?

Several comments were made that adding an additional fee under a Prop. 218 could be prohibitive for landowners. Chair Kelly asked staff if a Prop. 218 would be basin-wide, or just implemented in the Central Management Area. Staff confirmed that a Prop. 218 would occur just in the Central Management Area. Ms. March commented that she does not believe a Prop. 218 can pass and should not be placed on cattle ranchers.

b. How should the CBGSA handle current Management Area expenses prior to implementing a funding mechanism?

Mr. Beck commented that staff will be discussing this issue in more detail with the

Board.

3. How to manage reduction

a. How should the CBGSA administer the reduction of pumping in the Management Area?

Mr. Beck noted the ad hoc did not provide specific feedback on this item and it will be discussed in more detail with the Board.

4. Increased water usage outside and inside Management Area

a. How should the CBGSA handle potential increases of water use inside and outside the Management Area?

Mr. Beck commented that this item is something the Board will need to address at a future time or during the GSP update. Committee Member Jaffe commented that she recognizes this topic is outside the scope of current discussions but requested this be taken up at a subsequent meeting.

5. Revised sustainable yield based on updated model

a. Components of the Management Area need to be evaluated once the current modeling is complete in July 2022

Mr. Beck noted there are several other policy issues that will be brought up with the Board at a subsequent meeting.

b. Direction on Adaptive Management Actions

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the technical analysis staff performed to evaluate if wells are in danger of going dry due to decreasing groundwater levels. Committee Member Jaffe asked who was on the Adaptive Management ad hoc and Mr. Blakslee replied that it is composed of Directors Bantilan, Shephard, Vickery, and Yurosek. Chair Kelly asked how many potential adaptive management options would require a GSP amendment and Mr. Van Lienden replied that options 2-4 would. Committee Member DeBranch noted his support for the Adaptive Management Ad hoc recommendation. Committee Member Haslett said the age of the well and the condition of the well should be considered in this analysis.

MOTION

Committee Member Haslett made a motion to adopt the Adaptive Management Ad hoc Committee's motion to perform additional data gathering and analysis to confirm condition of wells identified in the well status analysis: (1) Desktop analysis and phone outreach to be performed by W&C, (2) Field verification to be performed by Provost & Pritchard. The motion was seconded by Committee Member DeBranch, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the motion could be amended that based on the findings, specific actions will be considered. She said she does not believe the motion is strong enough. However, the motion remained as it was made.

AYES: DeBranch, Gaillard, Haslett

NOES: Furstenfeld, Jaffe, Kelly

ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Draucker

c. Direction on Adding New Monitoring Wells

Mr. Beck provided an overview of an offer from Grimmway Farms to add a dedicated monitoring well to the CBGSA groundwater level monitoring network.

d. Approve DWR 2022 Grant Application Projects

Mr. Blakslee provided background on the development of eligible projects for the upcoming DWR implementation and planning grant and Mr. Van Lienden gave an overview of each item and its purpose.

MOTION

Committee Member DeBranch made a motion to approve the grant project list and authorize staff to work with an ad hoc to develop the application including the Spending Plan and scoring matrix and submit to DWR. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

AYES: DeBranch, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Draucker

e. Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities

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

f. Update on Water Year 2020-2021 Annual Report Development

Mr. Van Lienden provided an updated on 2020-2021 Annual Report development which is included in the SAC packet.

g. Update on Monitoring Network Implementation

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on implementation activities which is summarized in the SAC packet. Several Committee Members noted that the difference in Cuyama River surface flows between the Ventucopa and Spanish Ranch gauge locations are due to the river flowing underneath the surface or possibly sinking down an abandoned well.

9. Groundwater Sustainability Agency

a. Report of the Executive Director

Mr. Beck let the SAC know that DWR may incorporate feedback on the CBGSA tech memo into their final GSP determination due January 28, 2022. He also reported that staff is following Santa Barbara COVID-19 safety protocols to determine when it is appropriate to meet in-person again.

b. Report of the General Counsel

Nothing to report.

c. Board of Directors Agenda Review

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the January 5, 2022, CBGSA Board of Directors meeting agenda which is provided in the SAC packet.

10. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Committee Member Jaffe requested the SAC agendaize and discuss how the CBGSA handle potential increases of water use inside and outside the Management Area.

11. Committee Forum

Committee Member Jaffe noted that Northfork Vineyard applied for three reservoir permits and were required to submit an EIR which is currently open for public comment and interested parties can review that information online or contact her for more information.

12. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Mr. Blakslee reported that two emails were received from stakeholder attorney Kathleen March regarding the adjudication and are included in the SAC packet.

13. Correspondence

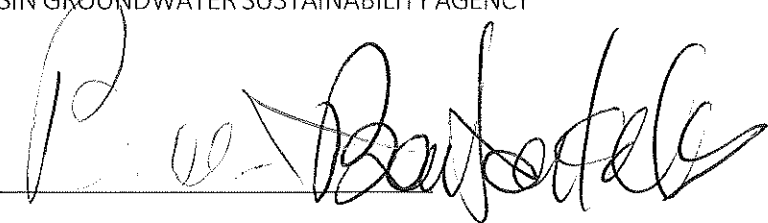
Mr. Blakslee reported that UCSC Professor Emeritus of Agroecology and Condor’s Hope Ranch farmer Steve Gliessman submitted a letter regarding the development of groundwater markets/trading and is included in the SAC packet.

14. Adjourn

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Minutes approved by the Standing Advisory Committee of the Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency the 24th day of February 2022.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: 

ATTEST:

Vice Chair DeBranch: 