

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

January 7, 2021

Meetings Minutes

PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Chair
DeBranch, Brad – Vice Chair
Draucker, Louise
Haslett, Joe
Jaffe, Roberta

ABSENT:

Furstenfeld, Jake

1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Vice Chair Brad DeBranch called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and Executive Director Jim Beck provided direction on the meeting protocols to facilitate a remote-only meeting.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Kelly led the pledge of allegiance.

4. Update on SAC Membership

Chair Kelly let the SAC know Committee Member Furstenfeld can attend future meetings if the meeting time can be pushed back an hour to 5 p.m.

Committee Member Jaffe suggested that moving the SAC meeting time may facilitate adding additional SAC members and asked what the process for moving the time is. Mr. Beck said the process for changing the time is for the SAC to come up with a proposal and we will add it to the Board agenda for their consideration.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the SAC could provide direction on moving the time to 5 p.m. and Chair Kelly asked for a motion.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to move the SAC time to 5 p.m. Committee Member DeBranch seconded the motions, a roll call vote was held, and the motion passed.

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

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Draucker, Furstenfeld

5. Approval of Minutes

Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the October 29, 2020 CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

Committee Member Draucker arrived at 4:28 p.m.

Chair Kelly let staff know that Committee Member Furstenfeld was in attendance at the October 29, 2020 SAC meeting.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to adopt the October 29, 2020 CBGSA SAC meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member DeBranch, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

6. Groundwater Sustainability Plan

Woodard & Curran's Technical Project Manager Brian Van Lienden provided an update on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) activities and the overall project schedule which are included in the SAC packet.

a. Consider Modifications to the Groundwater Level Monitoring Network

Mr. Beck and Mr. Van Lienden presented options for reducing the monitoring network. Mr. Beck let the SAC know that the CBGSA always intended to modify the monitoring network and the presented options are following through with that direction. Mr. Van Lienden let the SAC know the groundwater level monitoring network was set initially planned for 101 wells (60 of those are representative wells) and Provost & Pritchard (P&P) was hired to take monthly groundwater levels. In evaluating the monitoring network density, W&C considered level data collected from P&P and the recommended spatial density guidance from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to come up with the following options for modifications to the network:

1. Current network (101 wells)
2. Remove duplicative wells (58 wells)
3. Conservative DWR requirement (25 wells)

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the DWR criteria was based on Cuyama-specific parameters and Mr. Van Lienden let her know they were not but used by the State as general well density guidelines.

Committee Member Haslet asked if the quality of the well was considered in the recommended reduction options and Mr. Van Lienden let him know that did play a factor.

Stakeholder Jean Gaillard commented that he recommends adding additional wells in the management area and not to just reduce the groundwater levels monitoring network randomly.

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center Executive Director Lynn Carlisle asked if we will be asking the Board for direction on reducing the network and Mr. Van Lienden confirmed this, but let her know we will need to present the potential impacts of a directed reduction at the March 2021 Board meeting. Mr. Beck said the feedback on the network will also be needed for budgeting purposes. Ms. Carlisle said she believes the monitoring network is a key in meeting data gaps and is concerned with reducing the quantity of data. Ms. Carlisle also commented that the DWR recommendation might apply in a more contiguous area, but Cuyama is very different. She noted that the letter from the water Board is requesting more monitoring and asked the SAC perform an analysis of each well before deciding to remove that well from the monitoring network.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if we are considering the depth of wells (shallow versus deep) and Mr. Van Lienden said we are to a degree, but in some cases, we do not have many options to choose from. Ms. Jaffe said she is very concerned with moving to 25 wells and thinks reducing the frequency of monitoring makes more sense.

Ms. Carlisle commented that reducing the network when the Cuyama Valley is going through significant land use changes concerns her. She also requested the SAC make a recommendation for W&C to provide a well-by-well justification for each recommended well removal.

Mr. Beck let the SAC know that the reduction to 58 is a fairly straightforward decision based on duplicative results. He said the reduction to 25 wells would require more work to justify. He said as staff, we are providing the brackets for the SAC and Board to consider but need a basis for establishing monitoring costs in the coming fiscal year. He recommended a motion to support the 58 well network.

Chair Jaffe said she could support an elimination of duplicative wells but wants to know the criteria for determining what wells are duplicative.

MOTION

Committee Member DeBranch made a motion to modify the groundwater level monitoring network to 58 wells based on duplicative results. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

b. Adopt Process for Accepting Groundwater Level Transducer Data from Landowners

Mr. Blakslee let the SAC know that several landowners have transducers installed in their wells and are providing the data and let the SAC know the question staff is posing is whether the Committee is ok with receiving the data. Mr. Beck said he appreciates that the landowners are willing to provide their data and the CBGSA's goal is to maintain data integrity. He suggested that we develop an acceptable quality assurance/quality control system for the transducer data.

Committee Member Jaffe said accepting the data is a good way to go and noted that the Santa

Barbara County Water Agency was using transducer data provided by landowners in their monitoring program.

MOTION

Committee Member Jaffe made a motion to accept private transducer level data with appropriate quality controls. The motion was seconded by Committee Member DeBranch, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

c. Update on Model Refinement Plan

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the model refinement plan which is summarized in the SAC packet.

Committee Member Jaffe asked for a list of Technical Forum members and staff confirmed they would distribute this.

d. Update on Monitoring Network Implementation

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on monitoring network implementation activities including the following:

DWR TSS Wells

Progress is being made on the three California Department of California Water Resources (DWR) Technical Support Services (TSS) dedicated monitoring wells to be drilled in the basin. He let the SAC know that the third location was moved south of the Santa Barbara Canyon Fault due to a landowner permission issue with the previous Foothill Rd. and Hwy 33 location.

Transducer Installation (10 Wells)

Mr. Van Lienden updated the SAC that the transducer installation in ten wells is making progress and staff is performing field validation to determine suitability of proposed wells. He also let the Committee know the transducers they purchased will have the capability of measuring electroconductivity.

Stream Gauge Installation

Lastly, staff provided an update on the stream gauge installation process and noted that efforts to register with the federal government as required by the USGS is still underway.

e. Update on Monthly Groundwater Conditions Report

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the groundwater level monitoring network and levels for November and December 2020 which are included in the Board packet.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the threshold regions should be used for determining management areas by region. Mr. Beck said the Board discussed this when the threshold regions were set and said they were only used to develop similar criteria for well thresholds but were not intended for broader water management purposes.

f. Update on Prop 68 Implementation Grant Application

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview on the Prop 68 implementation grant opportunity which is provided in the SAC packet. Mr. Blakslee did cautiously advise the SAC that DWR indicated that funding for meters will likely not be supported and staff will work with the ad hoc to determine what components to move the money to.

UC Santa Barbara Professor Casey Walsh provided the following comment using the meeting presentation chat option regarding the Prop 68 application: "Before I go I want to make a public comment about the Prop 68 funding discussion in this presentation (pp 88-90): there was discussion and agreement in the GSA that a priority was to secure supply for the townsites through improved wells: Ventucopa especially. The slides that consider Prop 68 projects don't consider this. Townsite water supply should be a priority for Prop 68 funding if possible. It seems to me that it would fit in the description of "eligible project types"."

Mr. Van Lienden reported that the townsites could be considered for this prop funding if directed and Committee Member Draucker requested water supply improvement funding be considered for all the different cities/communities in Cuyama if possible.

7. Groundwater Sustainability Agency

a. Report of the Executive Director

Mr. Beck reminded the SAC that there will be an election of officers at the first meeting in January 2021. He also reported that staff is coordinating with DWR on fall groundwater level measurements to upload in the Monitoring Network Module.

b. Coordination between the GSA and Counties

Committee Member Jaffe asked the SAC to develop guidelines for the how the CBGSA and counties will approach new cannabis plantings in Cuyama and read the following statement:

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Item 7b. Coordination Between the GSA and Counties

A year ago the Cuyama Basin GSP was approved and submitted to the DWR. This became our roadmap for monitoring and bringing our critically overdrafted basin into sustainability over the next 20 years. It is designed to change how much water extraction takes place and gives the GSA authority over implementing the Plan.

Water extraction is related to land use and well and reservoir construction which are under the jurisdiction of the counties. Thus it seems necessary for the 4 counties representing the Basin to find ways to support SGMA and the Cuyama GSP.

I acknowledge this is not simple. However, I think the GSA has an opportunity and a necessity to work this out. Cuyama is about to experience a significant planting of cannabis. While I personally have lots of concerns and questions about the impact of a wave of Cannabis being grown in the Cuyama Basin, I want to acknowledge that some of the investors and their attorney have come to the past two CVCA meetings and have met with GSA administration to attempt to build bridges.

I'd like the SAC to recommend to the GSA that guidelines be developed for alignment to be

developed between the counties and the GSA specifically focused on the growing of cannabis. Points to be considered:

- *Communication and acknowledgement to any Cannabis applicants that the CB is a critically overdrafted basin and that over the next 20 years will be reducing extraction of groundwater.*
- *That any wells on property receiving a cannabis permit and any new wells have a meter installed in compliance with the GSA.*
- *That the meter data be used to develop irrigation data for growing cannabis in the CV.*
- *That an offset plan be developed for the GSA that works toward the decrease in pumping in the GSA.*
- *That to meet the goals of the GSP, planting of cannabis be limited to already irrigated fields and avoid converting non-irrigated fields to irrigated crop growth.*

Committee Member DeBranch commented that land use and water use are challenging topics. Committee Member Draucker agreed with Committee Member Jaffe's points and said she thought the CBGSA needs to be prepared to deal with these potential issues.

Committee Member Haslett said he appreciated Committee Member Jaffe's thoughts, but believes that attempting to regulate one crop sets a precedent and can impact other crops. He said he believes this is worthy of discussion but doesn't believe the CBGSA is in the land use regulating business. He commented that he thinks it is smart to coordinate with the counties to make folks aware of conditions in the basin.

Stakeholder Lee Pearson mentioned that he thinks a lot of the cannabis growers would agree to most of her points and said that cannabis water use will likely be much lower than most crops grown in the Cuyama Valley.

Cannabis industry representative and legal counsel Amy Steinfeld said the maximum amount of non-irrigated land planned for conversion to irrigated land is roughly 300 acres. Ms. Steinfeld said her clients are willing to offer offsets and participate in a water market-based approach.

Ms. Carlisle said she hopes the Board becomes aware of the impacts of cannabis development and said there is an unknown on the actual water use of cannabis and is hopeful the CBGSA becomes more proactive on working on this issue.

Mr. Beck said that he is a water manager, not a land manager, and is charged with managing the basin under the directives set forth in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and the CBGSA Groundwater Sustainability Plan. He said staff will coordinate with legal to determine the CBGSA's options regarding the issues raised and acknowledged that these issues are challenging and often contentious.

c. Board of Directors Agenda Review

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the November 4, 2020 CBGSA Board of Directors meeting agenda which is provided in the SAC packet.

d. Report of the General Counsel

Nothing to report.

8. Items for Upcoming Sessions

Nothing to report.

9. Committee Forum

Nothing to report.

10. Public comment for items not on the Agenda

Nothing to report.

11. Correspondence

Mr. Blakslee let the Committee know they received two letters:

a. Resignation Letter from Committee Member Furstenfeld

Committee Member Furstenfeld submitted a letter letting the SAC know he would need to resign given attendance conflict. However, since the SAC recommended changing the SAC meeting time to 5 p.m., Chair Kelly let staff know Committee Member Furstenfeld would be able to remain on the SAC provided the Board approves the time change.

b. GSP Comment Letter from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)

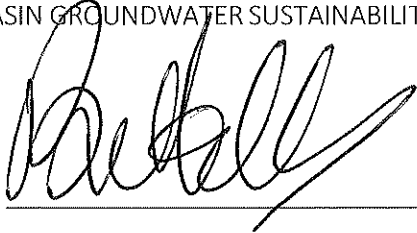
Mr. Blakslee announced that the SWRCB submitted a comment letter on the CBGSA GSP comment portal that shared similar comments that the Central Coast Water Quality Control Board submitted during the official comment period. The letter did not require feedback from the CBGSA but informed the CBGSA on several points it may be consulting with DWR during the DWR review period of the CBGSA Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

12. Adjourn

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Minutes approved by the Standing Advisory Committee of the Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency the 25th day of February 2021.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: 

ATTEST:

Vice Chair DeBranch: 

