

# Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Standing Advisory Committee Meeting

October 28, 2021

## Meetings Minutes

### PRESENT:

Kelly, Brenton – Chair  
DeBranch, Brad – Vice Chair  
Draucker, Louise  
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  
Regmi, Anita – DWR Representative

### ABSENT:

None

#### 1. Call to Order

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) Chair Brenton Kelly called the meeting to order at 5 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.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the determination just for this meeting, and Mr. Dominguez said it was good for 30 days and would be included as a standing item to consider at the next meeting.

### MOTION

Committee Member Furstenfeld 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, Draucker, Furstenfeld, Gaillard, Haslett, Jaffe, Kelly  
 NOES: None  
 ABSTAIN: None  
 ABSENT: None

## 5. 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.

## 6. Approval of Minutes

Chair Kelly opened the floor for comments on the August 11, 2021, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes.

Committee Member Jaffe thanked the CBGSA for the level of detail provided in the minutes and commented that it is very helpful, particularly in light of the CBGSA's every other month meeting cadence.

Chair Kelly provided an edit on page 6 where his inquiry was related to a "maximum" well density.

### MOTION

Committee Member Furstenfeld made a motion to adopt the August 11, 2021, CBGSA SAC meeting minutes with minor edits. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Haslett, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

## 7. Groundwater Sustainability Plan

### a. Review of Memorandum in Response to DWR's Consultation Letter Dated June 3, 2021

CBGSA Executive Director Jim Beck provided an overview of the draft comment letter received from the California Department of Water Resources on the CBGSA's submitted Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). Mr. Beck discussed the CBGSA's response letter to DWR, and the process to develop a technical memorandum to address DWR's comments.

CBGSA technical consultant Brian Van Lienden provided an overview of DWR's four primary comment areas and the CBGSA's response to each comment.

#### Corrective Action No. 1 – Justification for Sustainable Management Criteria

Mr. Van Lienden described the analysis that was performed to add additional details on the rationale for undesirable results statements and the basis for the criteria of 30% of wells below minimum thresholds for over two consecutive years. Additionally, he reported that they performed an assessment of production well levels compared to minimum thresholds and a Cuyama Basin numerical model assessment of Northwestern region thresholds.

He reported that a total of eight (8) wells (which represents 3 percent of the wells in the basin) are at risk of going dry if groundwater levels reach their minimum thresholds. These eight wells include four domestic wells.

He discussed that several wells were removed from the analysis as they were already dry in 2015, destroyed or noncompliant, or topographically or hydrologically removed from the monitoring network.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the analysis was done using the model. Mr. Van Lienden said a raster of minimum thresholds was created in a graphical information service (GIS) program and compared what wells would potentially go dry.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if the analysis takes into account water flows in the basin. Mr. Beck said the analysis was done in response to DWR's question of how protective minimum thresholds are and that was the main question we were attempting to address.

Chair Kelly mentioned that several Central Basin well levels would have been brought up for this exercise and Mr. Van Lienden confirmed this. He also noted that one of the domestic wells in danger of going dry in the eastern region if groundwater levels reach minimum thresholds serves domestic users. Committee Gaillard commented that the well is not being properly maintained, and Mr. Van Lienden commented that the GSP acknowledges that there are issues with several Ventucopa wells. He asked how many wells were considered before a subset was removed for the analysis. Mr. Van Lienden replied they started with roughly 289 wells and the final analysis considered 250 of those wells.

Mr. Van Lienden discussed the other analysis in the northwestern region to evaluate minimum thresholds set. He reported that they modeled groundwater levels dropping to minimum thresholds for a 10-year period to stabilize levels. He noted that the result did not impact nearby domestic wells. He also commented that there is one Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE) that is minimally impacted, but levels are only modeled to decline by less than five feet which is not anticipated to impact the GDE significantly.

Committee Member Jaffe commented that she is concerned with the results of the modeling and does not think it will result in corrective actions.

Committee Gaillard commented that there are more wells being drilled in that area and asked why there are not more representative wells. Mr. Van Lienden replied staff evaluated the spatial density of the monitoring network in January 2021 that was reviewed with DWR and approved by the CBGSA Board.

Chair Kelly asked if there was a degree of uncertainty applied to this analysis and Mr. Van Lienden replied that the model documentation indicated roughly an uncertainty of +/-10 percent basin-wide.

Local resident Kathleen Marsh commented that she is concerned with levels potentially dropping in the northwestern region and said people need to stop pumping so much water.

Chair Kelly recommended removing the word "New" from the third bullet on page 3 of the technical memorandum.

Local stakeholder Lynn Carlisle asked for clarity on what actions will occur if 30 percent of wells over a 24-month consecutive period would trigger and recommended adding what those actions would be. Mr. Van Lienden replied that DWR was focused on the rationale of why 30 percent was chosen

as a threshold and that was addressed in the technical memo.

Chair Kelly commented that he believes it makes more sense to have triggers that are tailored for each threshold region. Mr. Van Lienden replied that the Board decided to manage the basin at a basin-wide scale and that is why the 30 percent was used over the entire basin.

#### Corrective Action No. 2 – Interconnected Surface Water

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the proposed Interconnected Surface Water (ISW) network which includes three deeper non-representative wells in the central basin to monitor ISW in that currently disconnected area. He discussed a data gap in the proposed ISW, but mentioned staff is planning on addressing these data gaps with piezometers.

Committee Member Jaffe asked how the ISW will be protective of the northwestern region. Mr. Van Lienden said there are several shallow wells near GDE locations so the CBGSA can closely monitor potential impacts. He said while the model simulation predicted a change in stream depletion, there is uncertainty about the extent to which drawdown in the northwestern region could potentially impact stream depletions.

Chair Kelly said Table 3-1 in the technical memo shows most of the proposed ISW network wells are showing unknown screen intervals and represents a frustrating component when making decisions.

#### Corrective Action No. 3 – Degraded Water Quality

Mr. Van Lienden reported that staff confirmed with the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board that all available water quality data is found in the GeoTracker website which is where the available data on nitrates and arsenic is summarized in the meeting materials and technical memo. Mr. Van Lienden commented that the arsenic problem was an existing condition prior to 2015 and the CBGSA does not have a regulatory obligation to make improve quality. He also noted that the CBGSA supported a new well or improvements to the townsite well.

Local stakeholder Steve Gliessman commented that he believes it is important to form partnerships with the regulators of water quality constituents, he noted the additional water quality monitoring is not a high cost and that it addresses key data gaps. Lastly, he noted that the CBGSA should be concerned with long-term accumulation of nitrates.

Chair Kelly agreed with performing regular water quality monitoring.

#### Corrective Action No. 4 – Explanation of Overdraft will be Mitigated

Mr. Van Lienden reported on several reasons management actions were deferred in the Ventucopa area and are summarized in the technical memorandum.

Committee Member Jaffe asked if it could be noted that Cleath-Harris is employed by pumpers in the region and Mr. Beck said they would make this change in the memo. Ms. Marsh agreed with noting Cleath-Harris' engagement with a pumper in the region.

She noted that technical studies by Santa Barbara County indicate that recharge is not occurring in the northwestern region. Mr. Van Lienden replied that recharge occurs during precipitation events throughout the basin, including the northwestern region.

Committee Member Draucker noted that recharge is dependent on precipitation and climate

change is exacerbating water conditions in the basin. Mr. Van Lienden noted that climate change was considered in the model but noted that an increase in temperature was clear, but the data did not suggest a significant decrease in precipitation.

Ms. Carlisle said it is very concerning that a non-peer reviewed study was used to support management decisions in the northwestern region.

Local stakeholder Ann Myhre commented that the recent DWR aerial electromagnetic survey will show areas where recharge is occurring.

**b. Adopt Resolution No. 21-113 Enacting Corrective Actions in Response to DWR's Consultation Letter Dated June 3, 2021**

Committee Member Jaffe recommended the Committee vote on the resolution for the record. Committee Member Gaillard commented that the CBGSA has time and thinks it is important to attempt to address changes in the technical memorandum.

**MOTION**

Committee Member DeBranch made a motion to support the technical memorandum with the inclusion of the following two edits: (1) remove the word "new" from the third bullet on page 3 in the technical memorandum, and (2) reference that Cleath-Harris is employed by a pumper in the northwestern region. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Jaffe, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

**c. Direction on Aquifer Test Program**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an overview of the aquifer test program, the schedule, purpose and general locations which is included in the SAC packet.

Mr. Marsh commented that not reducing pumping for two full years will make the overdraft significantly worse and does not believe the GSP will be approved by DWR. Committee Member Gaillard said he has noticed that irrigation has decreased in the central valley from the last 10 years and said not all news is bad in the basin.

**d. Update on Groundwater Sustainability Plan Activities**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on GSP activities and an overview of the project schedule and is provided in the SAC packet.

**e. Update on Monitoring Network Implementation**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on implementation activities which is summarized in the SAC packet.

**f. Update on Monthly Groundwater Conditions Report**

Mr. Van Lienden provided an update on the July 2021 groundwater conditions report.

Committee Member asked if it is appropriate to continue showing five wells as non-measurable. Mr.

Van Lienden reported that there is only one well that the consultant has had regular difficulty in measuring groundwater levels.

Chair Kelly mentioned we need to update the website with current groundwater condition reports, and staff confirmed this would be done.

Committee Member Gaillard said we need to research Opti well# 98 and determine if it is part of the cannabis grower network.

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*Committee Member Furstenfeld left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.*  
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**8. Groundwater Sustainability Agency**

**a. Report of the Executive Director**

Mr. Beck reported that due to COVID, the landowner workshop has been postponed, but we will consider timing of scheduling in January 2022. He announced the release of Open ET which is a free resource for evapotranspiration data for the State.

**b. Report of the General Counsel**

Committee Member Jaffe asked for an update on adjudication impacts to the GSP and Mr. Dominquez reported that the adjudication and GSP implementation are currently occurring on parallel tracks. He reported that the CBGSA is moving forward with the GSP and reported that the adjudication will be moved out of Kern County to a neutral county.

**c. Update on Coordination with Counties and Well Permitting Process**

Mr. Blakslee provided an update on discussion with the counties and well permitting departments to increase communication of potential water management restrictions in the Cuyama Basin.

**d. Approval of 2022 Meeting Calendar**

Mr. Blakslee presented draft 2022 meeting dates for CBGSA SAC and Board meetings which is provided in the SAC packet.

Committee Member DeBranch asked if the SAC was willing to meeting earlier in the day. Chair Kelly said we can address the starting time at a later date.

**MOTION**

Committee Member DeBranch made a motion to adopt the 2022 meeting schedule for CBGSA Board and SAC meeting dates. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Draucker, a roll call vote was made, and the motion passed.

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

**e. Board of Directors Agenda Review**

Mr. Beck provided an overview of the November 3, 2021, CBGSA Board of Directors meeting agenda

which is provided in the SAC packet.

**9. Items for Upcoming Sessions**

Chair Kelly commented that he is concerned with the timeline of implementing pumping reductions in the Central Basin management area and recommends discussing this in the near future.

**10. Committee Forum**

Nothing to report.

**11. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**

Committee Member Gaillard asked if there are grant opportunities to optimize representative wells that are sanding up. He said the cost may be \$10,000 per well to remove the pump and use a compressor to remove the sand. Mr. Beck replied that there are grants available for these activities, but we will need to address the broader grant administration policy at the upcoming Board meeting.

**12. Correspondence**

Nothing to report.

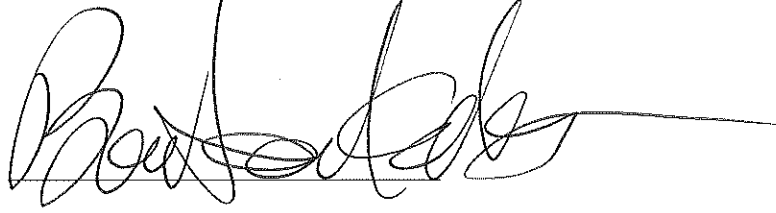
**13. Adjourn**

Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:23 p.m.

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Minutes approved by the Standing Advisory Committee of the Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency the 4th day of January 2022.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair Kelly: 

ATTEST:

Vice Chair DeBranch: 

