



Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Newsletter

Edition 8, August 2021

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan Progress Implementation, Monitoring & Feedback

Background

The Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) was established in 2017 to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which required basins to become sustainable by 2040. The CBGSA developed a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), with extensive input from the Cuyama community, that was submitted to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in January 2020.

DWR is currently reviewing GSPs throughout the State and will provide their final assessment by January 31, 2022. However, an informal consultation letter with recommended corrective actions was provided to the CBGSA on June 3, 2021, and the CBGSA is meeting with DWR to discuss these issues ahead of the final determination in January 2022. In parallel with DWR's review process, the CBGSA has been implementing the GSP since January 2020. GSP implementation activities are described in more detail below.

COVID-19 restrictions have continued in the spring and early summer of 2021 and Board of Directors and Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings have been held virtually. As these restrictions are eased, CBGSA meetings and workshops will be held in-person.

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Annual Report

The CBGSA submitted the Water Year 2019-2020 Annual Report to DWR as required annually. It is available on the CBGSA's website on the "Resources" page (cuyamabasin.org).

Fiscal Year 2021-22 Activities

On May 5th, the CBGSA Board adopted the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget and, following a public rate hearing, established a groundwater extraction fee of \$39 per acre-foot for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 (July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022). This fee is based the CBGSA Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget and the 2020 water use in the Cuyama basin.

The CBGSA continues to pursue grant opportunities and expects that there will be an opportunity to submit a new round of grant applications in the fall of 2021.

Groundwater Levels Monitoring Network

Groundwater levels are being tracked via a monitoring network of representative wells. The goal of this network is to measure groundwater levels to:

1. Track progress towards the GSP sustainability goals and avoid undesirable results.
2. Monitor changes in groundwater levels.

Based on data gathered and DWR guidelines, the CBGSA has begun making its network more efficient and economical. One result of this effort is the monitoring frequency will be reduced from monthly to quarterly starting in August 2021.

However, there is also a need to install more monitoring wells in several locations to address data gaps. The CBGSA received funding and technical support from the DWR's Technical Support Services (TSS) program to add three new multi-completion wells to the network bringing the total groundwater level representative wells to 62. The resulting monitoring well density will exceed the recommendations laid out in the GSP. Work on the first of three new multi-completion wells began in May 2021 and installation of all three wells is scheduled to be completed by August 2021.

Additionally, ten datalogging pressure transducers (instruments used to automatically record water level measurements over long periods) have been installed in ten representative wells as part of previous Prop 1 grant funding from DWR. Transducer and TSS well locations are shown in Figure 1 below.

The CBGSA plans to continue working with the TSS program and will seek funding for adding additional dedicated monitoring wells.

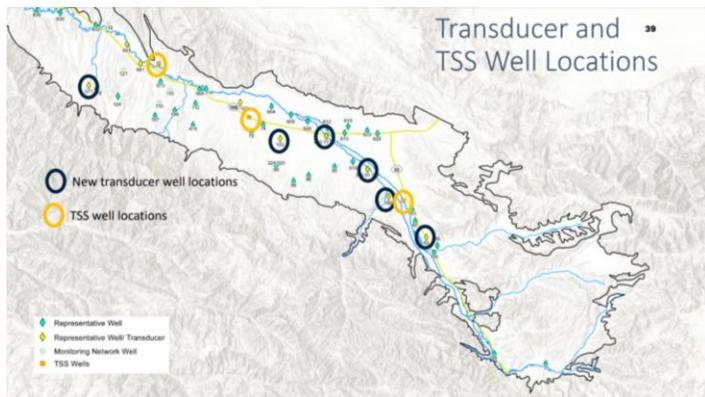


Figure 1: Transducer and TSS Well Locations

Water Quality Monitoring Network

The groundwater quality network is now set to monitor salinity levels as total dissolved solids (TDS). The network was initially composed of 64 representative wells, but initial efforts in February and March 2021 to establish landowner agreements and take samples for the network resulted in measurements being taken in 23 of these wells. The field consultant continues to attempt to increase participation in the water quality network. The TDS levels that were collected in February and March 2021 were presented at the May 2021 Board meeting. Staff is updating the report with existing USGS data and then the report will be uploaded to the CBGSA's website (cuyamabasin.org).

DWR Review

DWR will provide one of the following three determinations on the CBGSA GSP by January 31, 2022: Approved, Incomplete, or Inadequate. If an official determination of "Incomplete" has been made, the GBGSA will have 180 days to respond to DWR. On June 3, 2021, DWR provided a consultation initiation letter to the CBGSA ahead of its official determination that included the following recommended corrective actions:

- ✓ Provide justification for, and effects associated with, the Sustainable Management Criteria.
- ✓ Justify the use of groundwater levels as a proxy for depletion of interconnected surface water.
- ✓ Further address degraded water quality.
- ✓ Provide explanation for how overdraft will be mitigated in the basin.

The CBGSA will work with the Board, Standing Advisory Committee and stakeholders to address DWR's proposed corrective actions with the goal of receiving an "approved" determination by DWR in January 2022 on the CBGSA GSP.

Metering Requirement

In November 2020, the CBGSA Board voted to require flow meters on all non-de minimis wells in the Cuyama Basin by December 31, 2021. The data provided by these meters will be important to manage water usage in the basin and provide the basis for annual assessments. On May 5, 2021, the CBGSA Board voted to exempt small pumpers (water users using less than 25 acre-feet per year) from this meter requirement; however, small pumpers will still have to

report water use and pay groundwater extraction fees and the forms to administer this are being developed.

For water users using more than 25 acre-feet per year, landowners will be responsible for the cost of purchasing, installing, and maintaining a flow meter on each production well. Guidance documents to assist in selecting a meter and annual reporting requirements have been developed and can be found on the CBGSA website under the Resources page (cuyamabasin.org).

Numerical Model Update

In January 2021, the CBGSA Board adopted the modeling update technical memorandum developed by staff, with input from stakeholders. On May 5, 2021, and as part of the FY 2021-2022 budget approval, an update (recalibration) of the numerical model was approved. Updating the model is critical for understanding the current and projected groundwater conditions of the basin and will better inform decisions on management areas and help with the overall management of the basin, including a better understanding of the sustainable yield. The model update is expected to be complete by July 2022 and the results will inform the first pumping reductions of 5 percent required in the central basin management area starting in 2023.

Management Areas

Pumping reductions of 5 percent are set to begin in 2023 in the central basin management area. To begin implementing this management action the Board passed resolution No. 2021-051 delegating implementation measures to the Cuyama Basin Water District (CBWD). The CBWD will develop and submit a specific reduction plan for the central basin management area, to be approved by the CBGSA. The model update is critical to implementing the reduction and will provide more accurate sustainable yield information and a potential refinement to the central basin management area boundary.

While a portion of the Ventucopa area met the management area criteria, the Board has opted not to require pumping reductions at this time, as there is a need to collect more data and develop a better understanding of this area before taking action.

Upcoming 2021 Landowner/Grower Workshop

To ensure growers, landowners and residents are informed of important issues, the CBGSA plans on hosting a public workshop between September and October 2021. The workshop will cover updates on SGMA activities, plan implementation, monitoring networks, fees, pumping reductions, and the potential for new groundwater management areas in the basin, among other topics. Staff will send a postcard to all parcel owners and email stakeholders with notice of the workshop once the date has been finalized.

If you are not on the CBGSA email list, sign up on the Contact Us page on the CBGSA website (cuyamabasin.org).

Tentative GSP Implementation Timeline (subject to change)

| | 2020 | | | | 2025 | | | | | 2030 | | | | | 2035 | | | | 2040 |
|--|------|--|--|--|------|--|--|--|--|------|--|--|--|--|------|--|--|--|------|
| Monitoring | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Initiate | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| New wells | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Monitoring & reporting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Refine water budget & thresholds | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pumping Allocation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop monitoring | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Initiate allocation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement and refine | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Projects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluate feasibility | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Construct small/medium projects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Construct larger projects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public outreach & reporting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Five-year evaluation & update | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

How to Stay Involved in GSP Implementation

The Cuyama Basin community has been instrumental in the development of the GSP. During implementation, community members are encouraged to follow and comment on GSP implementation activities via CBGSA Board meetings and Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings. To learn about meeting times and agendas, visit www.cuyamabasin.org and sign up for the email list under the “Get Involved” or “Contact Us” pages.

Please feel free to contact Taylor Blakslee with any questions or concerns at (661) 477-3385, or via email at tblakslee@hgcpm.com.