

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency  
Board of Directors Meeting

May 7, 2025

**Meeting Minutes**

**PRESENT:**

Directors

Bantilan, Cory – Chair  
Yurosek, Derek – Vice Chair  
Albano, Byron – Treasurer  
DeBranch, Brad – Alternate  
Jackson, Steve  
Reely, Blaine – Alternate  
Williams, Debbie  
Wooster, Jane  
Young, Matthew  
Zenger, Katelyn

Staff

Beck, Jim – Executive Director  
Bianchi, Grace – Project Coordinator  
Blakslee, Taylor – Assistant Executive Director  
Dominguez, Alex – Legal Counsel  
Van Lienden, Brian – Woodard & Curran

**1. Call to Order**

Cuyama Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CBGSA) Chair Cory Bantilan called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Ms. Bianchi called roll (shown above) and informed Chair Bantilan that there was a quorum of the Board.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The pledge of allegiance was led by Chair Bantilan.

**4. Meeting Protocols**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the meeting protocols.

Mr. Blakslee briefly introduced the new Cuyama Basin Water District Director.

**5. Standing Advisory Committee Meeting Report**

SAC Chair Brenton provided the report for the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting on

May 1, 2025:

*Last Thursday, May 1st at 5:00 p.m., the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) met at the Family Resource Center in a hybrid format, with all members present—four in-person and three attending remotely from locations posted on the agenda. GSA staff Taylor Blakeslee and Grace Bianchi were present in person; Brian Van Lienden and Alex Dominguez joined the meeting remotely. One stakeholder was present in the room and approximately two dozen stakeholders participated online. The meeting lasted just under two and a half hours.*

*A public comment was made by Committee Member Robbie Jaffe regarding a written inquiry she submitted at the February GSA meeting. She asked whether the GSP and its Sustainable Yield had been submitted to the court and whether the GSA was actively advocating for the GSP in adjudication proceedings. She also requested that the GSA begin updating the adjudication court postings on its designated webpage, which has not been updated in several years. Committee Member Jaffe expressed disappointment that her written request had not been acknowledged and emphasized the need for transparency with stakeholders who have supported the GSP's development over the past five years. She urged the GSA to be straightforward and informative with the community.*

*The SAC requested that the GSA provide a simple status update on the adjudication at a future SAC meeting, presented by legal counsel and based on publicly available information. Legal Counsel Alex Dominguez confirmed that Jaffe's letter was included in the March board packet and noted that the board does not respond to all correspondence it receives.*

*The February SAC meeting minutes were unanimously approved. The remainder of the meeting included discussions generally in support of staff recommendations.*

**9.c) Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Potential Non-Reporting Pumpers**

*Staff explained that this was an initial report in an ongoing process to identify and address potential groundwater pumpers who have not reported usage. No landowners had yet been contacted, and no consumptive use calculations had been completed. This report was intended to promote transparency by presenting findings triggered by comparing land use datasets to identify possibly irrigated lands not currently reporting pumping.*

*The SAC helped staff interpret whether certain parcels were irrigated with groundwater or spring-fed surface water. Several landowners participated online and helped eliminate concern over a substantial portion of the approximately 900 acres initially flagged. Landowners expressed concern about being prematurely classified as "non-reporters" based on incomplete data. Taylor Blakeslee clarified that the results were preliminary and regretted any confusion or negative implications.*

*A significant portion of the discussion focused on the accuracy of the Land IQ dataset. Staff explained that some ground-truthing had been conducted from public roadways, especially along Highway 33 and in the central basin. Some of the parcels under review were located along those public roads. The SAC recommended that staff follow up directly with landowners using information provided during the meeting.*

**10. Report on Basin-Wide Pumping**

*Committee Member Jaffe asked for a comparison of groundwater pumping volumes inside the CMA versus the rest of the basin. Committee Member Lewis asked how the updated model had been recalibrated to more accurately reflect actual pumping. Brian Van Lienden responded that the model incorporated revised evapotranspiration (ET) rates by crop type and included*

updates to land use data that reflect dry farming practices. He stated the revised model now aligns more closely with reported pumping data.

Stakeholder Jane Wooster suggested that the spreadsheet column be renamed from "landowner" to "reporting entity" to reduce confusion between property owners and farm management groups. Staff agreed and confirmed the change had already been made for the GSA board packet.

**11. Report on 2024 Central Management Area Allocations**

Committee Member Jaffe raised the issue that the volume of water allocated appeared far greater than what was actually being pumped. Committee Member Haslett questioned the validity of the allocation methodology if only 57% of the allocated water was being used. Brian Van Lienden clarified that the 2024 allocations were based on the previous version of the model and that future allocations would reflect updates. He noted that the basin is still on a glide path to achieve sustainability by 2038.

Committee Member DeBranch commented that this disparity supports using historical use averages to balance out year-to-year variability. Committee Member Lewis noted that many small growers have perennial crops, which makes it more difficult to adjust or rotate fields between irrigated and fallowed use.

**12. Report on Historic (1998–2017) Modeled Pumping for All Parcels in the Basin**

The SAC viewed this report as a preliminary step toward basin-wide pumping allocations, which have been requested by some GSA board members. Committee Member Jaffe asked how historic pumping estimates were generated. Brian Van Lienden explained that the model uses Land IQ land use data and soil characteristics to estimate applied water by year. Committee Member Lewis stated that historic pumping figures reveal inequities in the basin and requested clarification on the sources and accuracy of historic land use data.

Brian clarified that all data was provided by Land IQ and derived from multiple satellite imagery sources—not solely Google Earth. He could not speak in detail about Land IQ's proprietary methodology.

Chair Kelly asked whether there was data on which parcels had active wells and whether modeled totals aligned with reported data. The SAC reiterated concerns about quality assurance and the need to validate modeled data with input from landowners and local knowledge. Members discussed the importance of creating a process to allow stakeholders to request variances or corrections.

For stakeholder accessibility, Chair Kelly requested that the historic use report be made publicly available in a searchable digital format.

**Respectfully submitted,**

Brenton Kelly  
SAC Chairperson

## CONSENT AGENDA

**6-8. Consent Agenda**

Chair Bantilan asked if any Directors wanted to move any of the consent items out to discuss in more detail.

Director Wooster commented on a correction to the minutes.

**MOTION**

Director Williams made a motion to approve the consent agenda item nos. 6-9. The motion was seconded by Director Young. A roll call vote was made and the motion passed with 88%.

AYES: Albano, Bantilan, DeBranch, Higbee, Jackson, Reely, Williams, Wooster, Young, Zenger  
 NOES: None  
 ABSTAIN: None  
 ABSENT: None

**ACTION ITEMS**

**9. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Implementation**

**a. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget and Cash Flow**

Mr. Blakslee provided background on the budget, historical budget for fiscal years since 2020, and budget considerations. He provided a brief overview of the line items in the fiscal year budget.

Director Young asked about the portion of Hallmark’s budget allocated for addressing unreported pumpers.

Adam Lovgren noted that Sunridge is still working on refining their installation estimates. Mr. Blakslee recommended increasing the budget to \$60,000 for Item C5. CIMIS Station Installation to account for uncertainty in installation costs.

Director Young asked about the estimated cost for telemetry (\$73,000) and asked for clarity on cost savings.

Director Wooster asked about the purpose of transducers in place. Mr. Blakslee clarified that currently technical staff must go to monitoring wells to collect data and telemetry would allow the data to be collected remotely and potentially save money to collect data.

Mr. Blakslee commented that telemetry is required by Department of Water Resources (DWR) and he recommended waiting to do telemetry next year. Director Young requested that when telemetry is reviewed again that cost savings from not checking transducers.

Director Jackson supports looking at carryover and allocation exchanges during this fiscal year and shelve tiered allocations.

Director Yurosek commented that if tiered allocations are included in the budget, then he will not be voting for the budget.

Director Wooster on the challenges of advancing tiered allocation proposals due to the broad range of undefined approaches, including crop type, irrigation method, and property size.

Director Albano expressed concerns about carryover when historical pumping and allocations have not been ground-truthed.

Director Young commented on the implementation of expanded allocations in Ventucopa. He requested recommendations be presented to the board for feedback and approval in March before being included in the report submitted to DWR.

Mr. Blakslee commented that the Expanding Allocations outside MA (Project 4) and in Ventucopa (Project 5) could be performed sequentially or in parallel, but if Ventucopa was handled separately, the work would begin earlier than Item 4.

Director Young expressed concern with use of the word “region” for developing allocations as it could lead to additional costs.

Mr. Blakslee commented that there is some uncertainty about when the Interconnected Surface Waters (ISW) guidance document will be provided by DWR.

Director Albano supported the removal of the ISW project from the budget due to uncertainty around DWR guidance.

Mr. Van Lienden recommended postponing work on Item 8c until Sustainable Management Criteria (SMCs) and the monitoring network are better defined.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren suggested that when reviewing the draft budget, staff provide budget outlook for the following year. Mr. Beck responded that it would be cost-prohibitive, and it would require staff to provide a greater level of detail that would increase costs to the GSA.

Director Albano asked about reallocating budget to other areas, and whether such reallocation requires board approval. Mr. Beck responded that the board has historically managed budgets at the contractor level rather than siloing funds within individual contracts, with flexibility to shift funds as needed and updates provided through monthly budget reports.

Legal Counsel Joe Hughes commented that the budget serves as the board’s formal approval for how public funds will be spent over the year. If something arises that wasn’t included in the approved budget, it must come back to the board for separate review and appropriation.

Director Zenger is in support of Director Jackson’s earlier comment, to move forward with the first two projects (carryover and expanding allocations) for this fiscal year and delay tiered allocations.

Director Albano commented that in the past when the GSA has tried to look into expanded allocations, there is push back from stakeholders when staff defines different regions.

Director Yurosek commented that if the GSA is going to put a moratorium on new wells, then there should be coordination with the counties.

Mr. Blakslee commented on current policies and regulations that may impact the development of new wells.

Legal Counsel Joe Hughes noted that a prior executive order (from the Newsom administration) temporarily required such demonstrations for new wells, and some counties are still working to incorporate similar requirements locally. He added that there can be communication between the county and GSA so that when new well developments are posted then the landowner can reach out to the GSA.

Chair Bantilan and Director Albano raised concerns about enforcement and how the GSA would actually verify or restrict future use.

Mr. Beck recommended removing the approval of item 6 and if needed staff can come back to the board with a task order to be approved.

Director Albano asked about the status of the adjudication. Legal Counsel Joe Hughes responded that it is almost complete through phase 2 and phase 3 will not have as much involvement with the GSA. He added that \$100,000 for legal costs should be sufficient.

Chair Bantilan asked why Santa Barbara Canyon Fault (SBCF) investigation was included. Mr. Beck responded that the fault investigation is included to help inform the understanding in the basin and impact project 4 and 5.

Director Young asked whether the cost could be reduced if the work was done on private land instead of Caltrans right-of-way.

Jim Strandberg from Woodard & Curran commented on the cost of SBCF. He noted that the estimated cost is half of the previous study. He noted that the Caltrans encroachment permit, and flaggers can attribute to the high costs. He noted that doing this on private properties can reduce costs significantly, however, previously landowners were not willing to allow technical staff on their property. He estimated it would be around \$40,000-\$50,000 and approximately 6 months.

Director Yurosek commented that extraction fee shouldn't be used to have large reserves and suggested setting a lower fee.

Summary of board discussion for budgeted projects:

- **Tiered Allocations (Project 3)** was removed at the board's direction.
- **Expanding Allocations outside the MA (Project 4) and in Ventucopa (Project 5)**
  - Move forward with both 4 and 5.
  - Begin with discussion on regions for expanding allocations outside the MA
  - The board agreed that staff could begin analysis of Ventucopa sooner, using prior water year data while waiting for newer monitoring results.
- **Telemetry Installations** were deferred to a future year due to overlapping efforts by DWR.
- **Developing a Policy to Prevent Increased Groundwater Use (Project 7)** was removed with

the option to bring it back later in the fiscal year for separate approval.

- Board requested a refined scope and cost when presented for approval.
- **ISW Update (Project 8)** was removed due to lack of finalized DWR guidance.
- **Santa Barbara Canyon Fault Study** (previously priced at \$167,000) was retained in the budget, with board discussion confirming its value despite cost concerns. Staff and board members agreed to continue seeking access across private lands to potentially reduce costs.
  - Staff to contact nearby landowner regarding access for the study.

Stakeholder Adam Lovgren expressed concern that the line items are not shown in detail and when rates increase landowners will want to understand cost accounting. He commented in favor of a \$5 fee.

**MOTION**

Director Yurosek made a motion to the Fiscal year 2025-2026 budget and cash flow as presented. Director Williams seconded, a roll call vote was made and passed with 89%.

- AYES: Albano, Bantilan, Higbee, Klinchuch, Reely, Young, Yurosek, Williams, Wooster, Zenger
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: None

**b. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Consultant Task Orders for Fiscal Year 2025-2026**

Mr. Blakslee reviewed the consultant task orders from Hallmark Group and Woodard & Curran for fiscal year 2025-2026. He noted that staff can update task orders to reflect the approved budget.

**MOTION**

Director Williams made a motion to approve the consultant task orders as provided in the approved budget. Director Young seconded, a roll call vote was made and passed with 89%.

- AYES: Albano, Bantilan, Higbee, Klinchuch, Reely, Young, Yurosek, Williams, Wooster, Zenger
- NOES: None
- ABSTAIN: None
- ABSENT: None

**c. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Potential Non-reporting Pumpers**

Mr. Blakslee provided background information on the nonreporting pumping. Adriana Joosep from Land IQ provided background information on the Land IQ irrigation status methods.

Mr. Blakslee reviewed each of the twenty parcels and the SAC recommendation for each parcel. He clarified that in some cases, the staff was still working with Land IQ to confirm

whether parcels were irrigated using groundwater or alternative sources.

## REPORT ITEMS

**10. Report on Basin-Wide Pumping**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the 2024 basin-wide pumping data that was requested by the board at the March 5, 2025, Board Meeting.

There were no comments on this item.

**11. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on 2024 Central Management Area Allocation Use**

Mr. Blakslee provided the final the 2024 Central Management Area (CMA) Allocations and reported that 57% of total allocations were used.

There were no comments on this item.

**12. Report on Historic (1998-2017) Modeled Pumping for All Parcels in the Basin**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the modeled pumping for all parcels, which was requested by the board at the March 5, 2025, Board Meeting.

There were no comments on this item.

**13. Administrative Updates**

**a. Report of the Executive Director**

Mr. Blakslee provided an overview of the budget to actuals for the GSA and for consultants for 2024 and 2025.

**b. Report of the General Counsel**

Nothing to report.

**14. Technical Updates**

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

Mr. Van Lienden noted that updates on GSP Activities, which are provided in the Board packet.

**b. Update on Grant-Funded Projects**

Mr. Van Lienden briefly provided an overview on grant-funded projects, which is provided in the board packet.

**15. Report of Ad Hoc Committees**

Nothing to report.

**16. Directors' Forum**

Nothing to report.

**17. Public comment for Items Not on the Agenda**

There were no public comments.

**18. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence received.

**CLOSED SESSION**

**19. Closed Session**

At 6:03 PM, the Board adjourned to closed session. At 6:49 PM, the Board returned from closed session at which time Legal Counsel reported to the public that there was no reportable action.

**20. Adjourn**

Chair Bantilan adjourned the meeting at 6:49 PM.

-----  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
CUYAMA BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

Chair: *Cory Bantilan*  
Cory Bantilan (Sep 16, 2025 12:45:21 PDT)

ATTEST:

Secretary: *Matt Young*  
Matt Young (Sep 8, 2025 16:20:02 PDT)