



Basin Boundary Modification Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin

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Recognizing the importance of groundwater and the adverse impacts of its overuse, California passed bills addressing the management of groundwater in the state. Collectively, these bills make up the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which took effect on January 1, 2015. The SGMA provides a process to modify groundwater basin boundaries from those originally established by the state. The location of groundwater basin boundaries is important to the SGMA process because it allows for accurate assessment of water use and supplies and determines which water users will be included in the Groundwater Sustainability Plans required by the SGMA. Boundary modifications must be applied for by local agencies and approved by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

On November 17, 2015, the Board of Directors of the Santa Barbara County Water Agency (SBCWA) passed a resolution authorizing the SBCWA to act as the requesting agency for the basin boundary modification process for both the Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin and the San Antonio Creek Groundwater Basin.

Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin Background

Groundwater is the sole source of water in the Cuyama Valley, and agriculture accounts for over 95% of the total water use. The Cuyama Community Services District supplies water for much of the domestic and commercial use. The DWR set the current basin boundary and has designated the basin to be in “critical overdraft” since 1980. Critical overdraft, as defined by the DWR, means that current water extractions exceed groundwater replenishment by an amount that could lead to significant undesirable effects to the environment or economy in the area. It is likely that the DWR developed the existing basin boundary for the Cuyama Valley using the best information available at the time, including topographic and geologic maps.

The Water Availability Study

In 2008, the SBCWA cooperated with the United States Geologic Survey to conduct a comprehensive study of the water resources in the Cuyama Valley. The study, which concluded in 2014, confirmed past findings of a significant imbalance between the groundwater used and replenished over the long term. Groundwater used was found to be approximately twice as much as groundwater replenished, with detrimental effects, including land subsidence and worsening water quality.¹ (See the footnote for the complete study and results.)

The study also determined the water balance in the basin’s three sub-basins and the boundary of the basin as a whole by analyzing the basin geology, geohydrology, and water quality. The following map shows the basin boundary as it was designated by the DWR and as determined by the recent study. Of significance is the removal of a portion of the west end from the former basin boundary. The United States Geologic Survey made this adjustment based on the presence of the Russell fault plane, which impedes transmission of water to the west.

The SBCWA will request that the DWR adopt the adjusted basin boundary for inclusion in state bulletins and for the implementation of the SGMA.

The Process for Basin Boundary Adjustment

The DWR developed a specific process for basin boundary adjustment requests, requiring that an agency overlying the basin act as the requesting agency, conduct outreach to interested parties, and prepare an application. Basin boundary adjustments may be made on a scientific or jurisdictional basis. For a scientific basis, there must be geologic or hydrologic evidence to support the proposed change in the existing basin boundary. Examples of such evidence include the discovery of an impermeable fault zone or the absence of groundwater where it was previously thought to exist. Jurisdictional adjustments may not coincide with a physical feature but



¹ <http://ca.water.usgs.gov/projects/cuyama/>

commonly aid in the overall management of groundwater by recognizing the jurisdiction of overlying entities. Only a scientific modification is proposed for the Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin.

In addition to conducting outreach to affected parties, the requesting agency must prepare an application to submit to the DWR between January 1, 2016, and March 31, 2016. The application for a scientific modification must include both historical and technical components, as well as information on how the proposed modification may impact sustainable management.²

How to Comment

Submitting Comments to the SBCWA

Comments will be received at the workshop to be held at the Cuyama Recreation Hall, 4885 Primero Street, New Cuyama, on January 13, 2016, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Verbal comments received at the workshop will be summarized and submitted in writing to the DWR. Comments for inclusion in the application can also be submitted through the SBCWA website.³

Submitting Comments to the DWR

The DWR guidelines allow the public to submit information in favor of or opposition to a specific basin boundary modification request. Comments must be submitted within 30 days of the DWR providing notice that an application is complete. Information submitted must include the commenter's name, address, and email address and a clear statement of the basis for supporting or opposing the boundary modification. Such comments should be based on "similar scientific and technical information as the particular boundary modification to which it is addressed."⁴

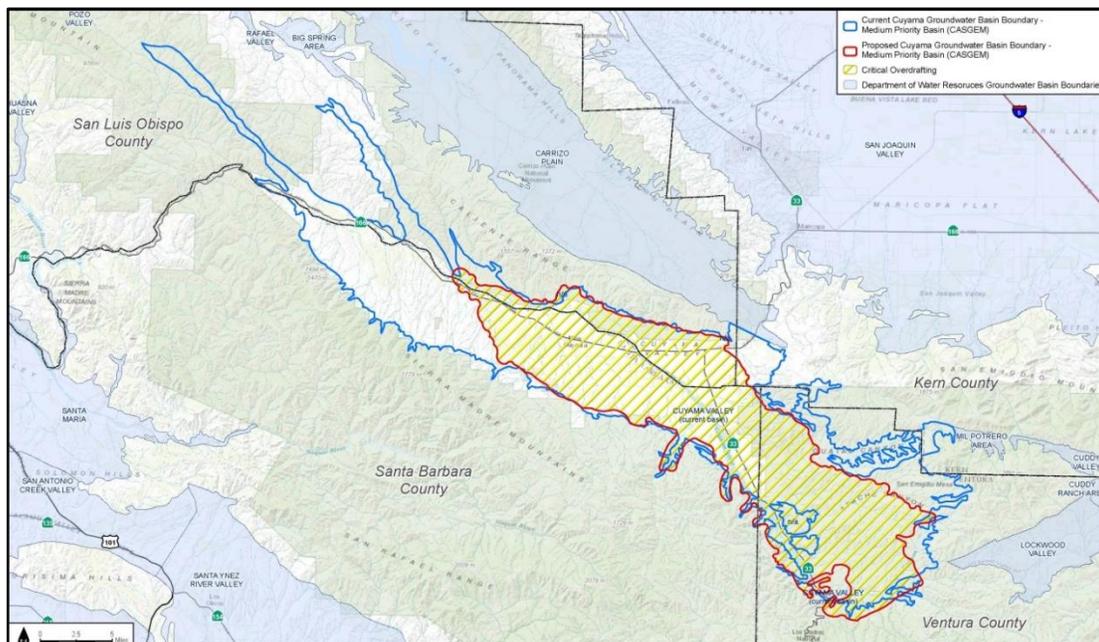
Local Agency Input

Each agency with planning or water management responsibilities in the basin will be contacted by the requesting agency. Affected agencies have additional requirements for commenting in support or opposition of a basin boundary modification, including a formal resolution adopted by the decision-making body of the agency or a letter signed by an executive officer or official representing the agency.⁵

Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basin Boundary Modification Workshop

A workshop to explain and receive input on the proposed basin boundary modification will be held on Wednesday, January 13, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Cuyama Recreation Hall.

If you have questions, see the SBCWA's SGMA basin boundary modification guidance⁶ or call 805.308.8529.



² http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/basin_boundaries.cfm

³ <http://cosb.countyofsb.org/pwd/pwwater.aspx?id=51349>

⁴ http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/pdfs/SGMA_Basin_Boundary_Regulations.pdf

⁵ http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/pdfs/SGMA_Basin_Boundary_Regulations.pdf

⁶ <http://cosb.countyofsb.org/pwd/pwwater.aspx?id=51329>