

9/20/2012

LOWER YAKIMA
VALLEY
GROUNDWATER
MANAGEMENT
AREA ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE OPERATING GUIDELINES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROCESS GUIDELINES

Foundational Information

Convener: Yakima County as Lead Agency. Washington Department of Ecology provided start-up funding to the County through an Interagency Contract.

Project name: Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) Advisory Committee (GWAC)

Purpose: The GWAC will chart the direction and actions of the groundwater program. The GWAC will work collaboratively with Yakima County and other key agencies to implement strategies to reduce nitrate contamination concentrations in groundwater below state drinking water standards.

Scope: The GWMA area encompasses the Lower Yakima Valley from Union Gap to Benton City, minus the Yakama Reservation. The primary long-term goal of the GWMA is to reduce concentrations of nitrate in groundwater to below Washington State drinking water standards.

Participation

Participation: Participating organizations and agencies were invited to nominate members and alternates for the GWAC. These were then appointed by Washington Department of Ecology Director Ted Sturdevant. Other persons or groups that are able to provide important technical or other information useful to the committee will be invited to participate as appropriate.

Alternates: Members are encouraged to attend all meetings. In the event that is not possible, members can designate their alternate to share their “seat.” Members and alternates will share a binder (unless other arrangements are made), and are encouraged to keep each other up-to-date on pertinent information throughout the process. In the event both participant and alternate are present at a committee meeting, only the participant or the alternate will sit at the table, not both.

Participant interests: GWAC members represent a broad diversity of interests and perspectives. Members are viewed as formal representatives of individual organizations or constituencies; however, they are not expected to officially sign off on any recommendations or other products as a representative for their organization or constituency. Members are strongly encouraged to provide ongoing communication and exchanges throughout the process with people/groups sharing similar interests outside the GWAC and bring those communications.

Quorum requirement: There is a quorum requirement. 17 of the 23 committee members (or their alternates) must be present for the committee to make decisions and/or recommendations on behalf of the group.

Roles and Responsibilities

Advisory Committee Members: GWAC members bring their unique perspectives to the table, and are encouraged to work collaboratively with other interests in developing recommendations for the Groundwater Management Program. It is hoped that members will become informed about the issues, contribute useful information to the deliberations, and serve as an accurate and objective information conduit with others outside the GWAC who have similar interests. Specifically, GWAC members will:

- Review technical information and analyses to understand the scope of the problem, and potential approaches to the problem and their impact on the community.
- Serve as a liaison to the public and/or their agencies (as appropriate) by networking effectively outside the GWAC with people or groups with similar interests to provide broad input to the discussions.
- Bring a valuable and informed perspective, and contribute useful information to the process.
- Work collaboratively, constructively and creatively to help develop the groundwater management program.
- Attend meetings consistently. If an organization seat (member or alternate) is not represented at two consecutive meetings, the member will receive a reminder notification and a warning about absences. If an organization seat (member or alternate) is not represented for three consecutive meetings, the GWAC will consider whether to ask the Department of Ecology to vacate the seat and seek to refill it with a new representative from the same constituency group who will participate consistently.
- Come to meetings prepared (do the homework).
- Be willing and able to commit time and energy to the development of the groundwater management program.
- Abide by the ground rules.

Yakima County: Yakima County will provide material support to the GWAC. In addition, the county is responsible for providing background and educational materials, identifying project constraints at the beginning of the planning process, and providing technical input and support throughout the process. Specifically, the county will:

- Provide available and newly developed information on data and monitoring, problem identification, measures to reduce groundwater contamination and education.
- Provide draft and/or final technical analyses to inform GWAC discussions.
- Support the GWAC in their decision-making.
- Prepare a work plan, schedule and budget for the development of the program.
- Support the GWAC's responsibilities as liaison to the public and/or their agencies by providing information in a timely fashion to allow for GWAC and constituent consultation.

Facilitation Team: Yakima County has contracted the services of a third-party neutral and impartial facilitation team from EnviroIssues (www.enviroissues.com) to support the GWAC process. The facilitation team will support Yakima County and the GWAC members and maintain the integrity of the GWAC process. Specifically, the facilitator will:

- Remain neutral
- Not contribute substantive ideas.
- Help the GWAC accomplish their tasks.
- Suggest and implement process ideas.
- Help the GWAC abide by its adopted ground rules.

GWAC Function

Decision-Making: "Areas of agreement" on groundwater management plan elements will be developed by seeking consensus. Consensus has been reached when everyone agrees they can accept moving forward with the recommendation and will support the recommendation, and after every effort has been made to meet the interests of all members. If consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be made by a majority vote, with a majority requiring a minimum of 75% of those members or alternates present (assuming a quorum is present.) In those instances where agreement cannot be reached, the reasons for the disagreement will be noted in the project record and the dissenting voters may include a minority report. When a minority report is filed, a primary author will be identified for the purpose of representing the minority's viewpoint in discussions with the media.

Committee Leadership: County Commissioner Rand Elliott will serve as the chair of the GWAC. The Chair will represent the committee by participating in setting the agenda for GWAC meetings and representing the committee's perspectives in discussions with the media.

Confidentiality: The facilitation team will not share confidential communications with others nor include confidential information in GWAC documentation.

External Communications: Members are encouraged to share accurate and objective information about the process with other people. Specifically:

- Members will avoid characterizing the views or opinions of other GWAC members outside of GWAC meetings.
- The GWAC chair will represent the committee's perspectives in discussions with the media. In the case of a minority report being filed, the minority report author will represent the minority's perspective on that issue. The chair and the minority report author will coordinate their response to media requests (i.e., notify each other of requests by the media, coordinate before contacting media, etc.)
- GWAC meetings will be announced on the County's GWMA website, and public notice shall be given for each meeting.
- GWAC meeting products, such as agendas, reports, recommendations, minority reports and summaries, will be posted on the County's GWMA website.
- Yakima County will endeavor to size e-files so as to facilitate easy downloading and review by GWAC and community members.
- Meeting summaries and other interim products will be available to members as communication aids. Members are also encouraged to share the GWMA website address to enable people to locate information related to the GWMA GWAC process.
- Translations and or interpreters will, upon request, be provided by Yakima County to ensure equal access to GWAC meetings and documentation.

Communications:

- **Email:** Email will serve as the primary communication mechanism with the GWAC between meetings.
- **Requests for information:** Alternate members will work through their member to request information from Yakima County staff or other technical experts.
- **Website:** Yakima County will host and maintain a GWMA website accessible through their county website. The project website will provide links to important documents, resource materials, and contact information, and will serve other appropriate uses identified throughout the GWAC process.
- **Contact list:** A current contact list, including email, USPS mail, and phone numbers of GWAC members will be maintained by the facilitation team. Contact information will not be released to other members without the consent of members.

Documentation

Meeting Summaries: Yakima County will prepare meeting summaries capturing key discussion points, action items, and areas of agreement on recommendations. Meeting summaries will not

be transcripts of the meeting. Draft summaries will be circulated to the GWAC for review and comment. The county will incorporate comments as appropriate into the final summary.

Project Record: The County and the facilitation team will maintain an electronic record and hardcopy file throughout the process. All project records (except for records of confidential discussions) will be provided to Yakima County.

Groundwater Management Plan: Yakima County will prepare the draft and final groundwater management plan based on the decisions and recommendations of the GWAC. The GWAC will have the opportunity to provide review and comment on the draft plan.

Ground Rules

- Come to committee meetings prepared
- Treat one another with civility
- Respect each other's perspectives
- Listen actively
- Limit side conversations
- Participate actively
- Honor time frames
- Silence electronic devices during meetings.
- Speak from interests not positions

Schedule

GWAC meetings will be scheduled at monthly intervals. Meetings will typically be two hours in length. Meetings will typically be held on the third Thursday of each month, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Meetings will be held in the Denny Blaine Board Room, 810 E. Custer, Sunnyside, WA. Meeting frequency, start time and length will be reassessed periodically to ensure members' ability to participate and committee goals are being achieved.