

Irrigated Ag Working Group (IAWG)

Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee

Working Group Members

Jim Trull (GWAC-Roza-Sunnyside Joint Board of Control), Bob Stevens (interested party) Bud Rogers (GWAC-Citizen), Chelsea Durfey (GWAC), Dan McCarty (interested party), Dave Cowan (interested party), Dave Fraser (Interested Party - Simplot Agronomist), Donald Jameson (interested party), Doug Simpson (GWAC-Farmer), Frank Lyall (GWAC-Farm Bureau), Ginny Prest (GWAC-Dept. of Ag), Jean Mendoza (GWAC-Friends of Toppenish Creek), Jim Newhouse (GWAC), Kevin Lindsey (interested party), Kirk Cook (GWAC-WSDA), Laurie Crowe (GWAC-South Yakima Conservation District), Melanie Redding (Ecology), Mike Shuttleworth (interested party), Ralph Fisher (EPA), Ron Cowin (GWAC-SVID), Scott Stephen (interested party), Stuart Turner (GWAC-Turner & Co.), Tom Tebb (GWAC-Department of Ecology), Rosario Brambila (interested party), Dr. Troy Peters (GWAC-WSU); Vern Redifer, Jim Davenport.

Meetings/Calls Dates

Meeting: Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District Office, 120 S. Eleventh Street, Sunnyside

When: December 15, 2015 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

Call: (509) 574-2353 – Pin # 2353

Participants

Jim Trull (Chair), Jim Davenport, Troy Peters, Scott Stephen, Kathleen Rogers, Doug Simpson, Frank Lyall, Jean Mendoza, Larry Fendell, Jim Dyjak, Ginny Prest*, Laurie Crowe*, Ralph Fisher *, Bobbie Brady, Chris Saunders (Yakima County support staff)

*via telephone

Key Discussion Points

Review the Results of the Third Round of Deep Soil Sampling

Jim Trull opened the meeting and began by providing a chart prepared by Laurie Crowe with information gathered thus far on the third round of deep soil samples. Laurie explained that the results have not yet been tabulated. All of the data and questionnaires have been sent to Yakima County and they are processing it now. Deep soil samples were procured from 60 participating locations. Retakes were taken on three from this go around to verify accuracy. These retakes are not called repeats as they are done in the same field, different spots. Upon inquiry, Laurie affirmed that the retakes were taken in the same soil type and same crop. Two of the retakes resulted in lower numbers and one

was the same. Sandier soils tended to show higher numbers in terms of nitrates, suggesting the need for better nutrient management plans, for example, more effective use of existing water supplies.

Members discussed the information that was received. Trends can already be extracted from the information received and volunteer participants were making note of the results and inquiring as to how to make changes that would bring about improvement.

Jim reminded the group that by the time they meet again the results of the third round of deep soil sampling will have been tabulated.

Finalize the Discussion on Jean's Questions/Comments on the First Two Rounds of Sampling

Concerns were raised about the deep soil sampling as it pertained to cost, the requirements of the plan, data review, work load, and number of fields utilized to procure samples. Jim Trull and Jim Davenport asked the group to give their opinion as to the concerns that were voiced. They were as follows:

1. Every field made available for screening on a volunteer basis was screened. More fields were screened than were required by the plan. We cannot require people to participate and we cannot forcibly enter their land and take soil samples in order to achieve statistical validity. Moreover, we cannot arbitrarily decide what fields to sample as that would not constitute a scientific sampling either. Nevertheless, the information that has been procured is valuable and does provide evidence in many categories because it portrays what the landscape looks like now and gives valuable opportunities to learn.
2. The group was aware of the limitations of the study when it began because they knew permission was required to access the fields in order to obtain samples. While this might limit our sampling range it does not limit how we can handle data analysis. Much information can be gleaned. Projects change mid-way as different variables are encountered. We have reported to the GWAC throughout the process and they are aware of any limitations that might exist.
3. There is a sense that education is occurring during this process and people are changing practices and learning in their use of manure and commercial fertilizer. The activities of GWAC are causing greater awareness of the problem in the Lower Valley and more and more people are caring about what's going on. Farmers are participating, talking, learning, sharing and looking for assistance to change what

they were doing when it is needed. All of these things are indicators of success and are accomplishing our stated goals.

4. News will spread as we continue to work on the plan and we can use what we have learned to influence future practices.
5. Peers in the field have discussed GWMA more in the last two years than in the last 50 years of farming. People want to know if they can do something better and are willing to invest in it.
6. The work of the IAWG group is only a part of the total work being done. The GWAC goals do not rest on this group.

Jim Trull reminded the group again that not all of the soil sampling and analysis is completed. We can't project outcomes until all of the data is in. Conclusions shouldn't be drawn until we are done with the deep soil sampling.

Dr. Troy Peters volunteered to work with the data once all of the testing has been finalized and logged in. He desires to analyze it and write it up for scientific review. He believes it would be useful for a lot of people in broader application and many things can be concluded from the information that is being received.

Discussion on Nutrient Balance

Jim Trull learned at this week's Data Collection group meeting that the Department of Agriculture (WSDA) (who is handling the irrigated agriculture portion of the nitrogen loading spreadsheet) expect to have their work done at the end of January and present their report to the peer committee for review. In anticipation of that report, it was Jim's desire that the group be prepared by looking at their own numbers which could serve as a useful reference point. He distributed a spreadsheet he had prepared with the help of several of the group's members entitled "Estimate of Nitrogen Usage for Agricultural Production in the GWMA." In addition, he asked Scott Stephen from Agrimanagement, Inc., to review the chart. Scott's responses appear in several columns throughout the spreadsheet and are printed in red. Jim further advised that the spreadsheet was not yet complete. Jim Davenport thought it was good to have this information in advance of the report from the Department of Agriculture as the working group would then have a good picture of what is happening. Scott advised that there is lots of range in this information as it varies between crops – field to field – grower to grower – and is a bit broad. Scott said that if we had a program to reduce nitrogen this information would help us focus in on a crop with opportunities for improvement. Discussion ensued among the group members as to the information contained in the spreadsheet in order to better

understand its meaning. Jim Trull again reiterated that the spreadsheet was not complete, but is meant to help the group prepare in advance of the information that will come from the Department of Agriculture (WSDA) early in 2016.

Other Issues

A member pointed out that the deep soil sampling plan required the group to look at best management practices. Jim Trull agreed but advised that there would be further opportunity to look at best management practices after the deep soil sampling was completed and Troy Peters' report was done. At that time the group would address best management practices and recommend those that should be applied. A member further inquired wanting to know if the group was going to use data to evaluate the effectiveness of best management practices. Jim did not believe it was the group's job to see if the best management practices worked, but rather to recommend their application. Another member noted that they were comfortable with best management practices as they were derived from years of experience and written up by the scientific community. Jim affirmed again that it is not the group's job to evaluate best management practices, rather to say here are some best management practices that we think will help. Again he noted the subject will be reviewed after the deep soil sampling has been complete and Troy Peters' report was done.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50pm.

Resources Requested

- N/A

Recommendations for GWAC

- N/A

Deliverables/Products Status

Proposed Next Steps
