

## **[Education and Public Outreach]**

### **Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee**

#### **Working Group Members**

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Andres Cervantes (GWAC-DOH), Jean Mendoza (GWAC-Friends of Toppenish Creek), Elizabeth Torres (Citizen), Gretchen Stewart (EPA), Nieves Negrete (Citizen), Patricia Newhouse (GWAC-Citizen Rep Position #2), Joye Redfield-Wilder (Ecology), Stuart Turner (GWAC-Turner & Co), Ignacio Marquez (AGR), Jessica Black (GWAC); Lisa Freund (Yakima County-Chair)

#### **Meetings/Calls Dates**

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Meeting: Monday, April 25, 2016 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

#### **Participants**

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Lisa Freund (Chair-Yakima County), Patricia Newhouse (GWAC-Citizen Rep Position #2), Jim Davenport (Yakima County) Gretchen Stewart (EPA), Jessica Black (GWAC), \*Andres Cervantes (GWAC-DOH), Ignacio Marquez (AGR), Joye Redfield-Wilder (Ecology), Lee Murdock, Chris Saunders (Yakima County)

\*Via phone

#### **Key Discussion Points**

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The meeting was called to order at 12:38 p.m. Lisa reviewed the agenda, noting that an additional agenda item – a request by Wapato High School students for water quality info – had been added. There were no objections to proceeding with the agenda.

#### **Phase II High-Risk Well Assessment Survey**

Lisa presented the summary of EPO's activities which was delivered at the April 21<sup>st</sup> GWAC meeting. The well testing concluded on March 31<sup>st</sup>, an extension from their previous deadline of February 29. The group exceeded their original target of 200 wells and tested 290. The contract was amended twice to meet the unexpected demand, increasing the payment from \$50,000 to \$72,500 out of the \$100,000 budget approved by the GWAC.

The first 115 results letters were issued in January to the 2015 participants. The mailing contained information on the proper maintenance of septic systems, private well-testing, coliform, etc. Mailings continue to be sent out monthly as test results are received from the health district. To date, 175 results letters have been sent out. The letters are tailored to the individuals' results. There are three basic Nitrate results letters, one for 5 mg/L of contamination or less, one for between 5-10 mg/L, one for 10 mg/L and three additional variations based on coliform results. The letters recommend a testing schedule best suited to their needs.

Households with high contamination levels receive a phone call from the Yakima Health District (YHD) informing them.

Lee Murdock is conducting quality control over the data. There are 5,732 known well locations within the GWMA. Since well registration only began in 1972, there are an unknown number of older, unregistered wells out there.

Discussion ensued on what the group wanted to get out of mapping these results. County staff felt that people's confidentiality could be maintained, since one dot on a map of the GWAC would cover a large enough area that onlookers would not be able to identify exactly which property the dot was associated with.

Other members were interested in whether the dots on the map would be clustered together, potentially indicating that they had heard about well-testing via word-of-mouth. A variety of sources may have contributed to increased public awareness of water quality issues, including EPO's outreach fliers and direct mail, plus local news coverage of the program, and national media attention paid to the Flint, Michigan water crisis.

A member of the group inquired whether anyone knew the percentage of households with water filters. The short answer is no. Both the Phase I and Phase II surveys asked household residents about filtration systems, the second one in more detail, but there is a gap in knowledge about how often they're maintained, in addition to turnover within the household, with people moving out and new ones moving in, making tracking difficult. In addition, there's the cost factor. Many low-income families may not have the disposable income to purchase and maintain a filtration system.

### **Prevention Campaign, Recommendations and Next Steps**

Gretchen Stewart's ad hoc group had a phone conversation Friday morning about possible directions of volunteer outreach in the Lower Valley. Prior volunteers had been ill-prepared to deliver presentations on nitrate contamination of groundwater without visual aids, so it would be desirable to produce some kind of "traveling visual aid" for use at community events, etc. Volunteers could also carry hand-outs with web addresses to pertinent sites such as the GWMA.

So far, only one GWAC member has volunteered to do public outreach and education, Pat Newhouse at the Sunnyside Health Fair on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Discussion ensued on the merits of horizontal vs. vertical banners advertising who we are, what graphics such banners should contain, cost, etc. Gretchen suggested that if Lisa would visit the website she had referenced,

they would send back design options within 5 to 10 days. As to the substance of the information contained in any hand-outs and banners, it was generally agreed that what was on the GWMA website was the "party line", so to speak, and that anything beyond that would require approval of the GWAC.

A member of the group commented that it was unclear what kind of outreach group EPO is supposed to be, passive or aggressive. In his view, the kind of outreach that has been done to date falls into the "passive" category, of making information available at community events, while an "aggressive" role would entail making presentations at conferences, etc. Jim Davenport stated that given the diversity of stakeholders on the GWAC, members would be very leery about allowing any one person to speak on behalf of the entire group. Until some kind of consensus is reached on a common approach, someone on the committee will object. The member agreed that any information presented ought to be neutral and factual, and not veer into advocacy for any particular position or interest.

### **Wapato High School Outreach**

Dr. Jessica Black offered to contact the student who had written the Department of Ecology (DOE) about nitrate contamination. She mentioned that whatever hand-outs the GWMA produced would need to contain information connecting people on the Yakama Nation to the proper public health authorities. There has been confusion on this point in the past. Lisa noted that the GWMA materials list the Indian Health Services contact information and phone number for Nation residents.

### **Review and Update 2016 Strategy**

| <b>Present to 12/2017</b>                                                  | <b>Post-GWMA Approved Plan</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| School education – Heritage/Jessica                                        | GWAC Recommendations           |
| Prevention – Well testing<br>Current materials exist<br>New Moms<br>Babies | IAWG (Irrigators)              |

The next EPO meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15pm.

### **Resources Requested**

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- None

**Recommendations for GWAC**

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None

**Deliverables/Products Status**

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Lee Murdock will supply EPO members with the web traffic statistics regarding how many people are using the GWMA website as a source of information.

Lisa will work with Gretchen to design and price the cost of a banner.

County will supply Pat Newhouse with a horizontal and/or vertical banner and document holders for the Health Fair display table.

**Proposed Next Steps**

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June meeting:

- Review the target audiences identified in the EPO's 2012 Outreach Plan and identify the top three to target in 2016.
- Develop 2016 outreach based on the top three audiences identified.

Attend Data Collection, Regulatory Framework and IAWG workgroup meetings to identify their post-GWMA adoption educational needs.

Prepare a summary of well assessment survey project (Lisa); map the survey results (Lee)