

## Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Municipal (RCIM) Work Group

### Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee

#### Working Group Members

Dan DeGroot, Chair (Yakima Dairy Federation), Dave Cole (Yakima Health District), Elizabeth Sanchez (Yakama Nation), Jan Whitefoot (Concerned Citizens of Yakama Reservation), John Van Wingerden (Port of Sunnyside), Stuart Turner (Turner & Co.), Tom Ring (Yakama Nation), Kathleen Rogers (Citizen Rep), Sanjay Barik (Ecology)

#### Meetings/Calls Dates

Meeting: October 10, 2016  
Sunnyside School District Administration Building, 1110 S. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Conference Room 20,  
Sunnyside, WA 98944  
Call in: 509-574-2353 (pin 2353#)

#### Participants

Present: Dan DeGroot (Chair), Dave Cole, Vern Redifer, Jean Mendoza and Bobbie Brady (Yakima County Support Staff). No one was available by phone.

#### Key Discussion Points

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dan DeGroot at 2:07 PM. Everyone introduced themselves. Dan introduced Jean Mendoza Chair of the Regulatory Framework Working Group. She made a presentation on her group's analysis of regulatory statutes, voluntary incentives and regulatory assistance programs. Jean provided the group with a handout that had been recently updated and reviewed each item. Her review included how each is monitored, enforced, measured, its effectiveness and potential future changes.

Dan then summarized what the group had reviewed thus far: hobby farms, on-site sewage systems (which would be discussed in more detail later in the meeting) and lawns which were all part of the residential component of the group's mandate. Dan explained that the group had not been overly concerned about the nitrate contamination contribution by hobby farms – he believed that the education component would be important but that there wasn't a strong need for monitoring or regulation. Dan asked Jean if the Regulatory group had learned of any laws that governed private residences. Jean said there were none.

Dan went on to explain that the group had been told that commercial, industrial and municipal entities were governed by permits through the Department of Ecology (Ecology) which to-date the group had been unable to confirm. Dan believed the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting under Ecology which governed point source pollution to be the applicable permit for these entities. Since Jean had covered the NPDES permitting in her

presentation Dan asked if she could confirm with Ecology what the requirements were for a NPDES permit for various companies. In addition, he was interested in finding out if Ecology did testing, what they test for, how to make an application, how the permit is tracked and what Ecology does with the information. Dan reminded Jean that they were only interested in permitting for nitrogen – no other chemicals. Dan wanted to make sure the group had done its due diligence and verified Ecology was actually providing oversight of these industries. Vern added that Jim Davenport may have begun this investigation as well and may have some information he could provide the group.

Dan explained that the group is now primarily focused on an in-depth investigation into on-site sewage systems. He went on to say that Ginny Stern and Leslie Turner from the Department of Health (DOH) had met with the group last month. From their discussion Dan concluded that there were three important components for healthy systems:

1. They are engineered properly especially as it relates to the number of people in the house. Yakima County Health District has been overseeing this since the mid to late 70's.
2. They are installed properly. The Health District inspects the systems during installation.
3. They are properly maintained which includes pumping. This is not currently monitored.

The group had also learned that if the output is 3,500 gallons per day or more systems are then permitted by the State. Currently two large on-site systems exist in the GWMA at a cherry orchard and a packing house. Dan added that Ginny said these permits require annual reports which list how often the system is used and how many people are using it.

Dan believed that quite a few on-site sewage systems existed that had been installed at residences prior to the 1980's and was especially concerned that these systems did not meet the criteria outlined above as on-site sewage systems are designed to return water to the aquifer but do little to filter nitrogen. He added a good system will only remove about 10 to 12 percent. Vern said while doing research he had learned there were 6,764 on-site sewage systems in the County and 80 to 85 percent of the locations leaned themselves to denitrification.

Dan outlined his concerns he believed the group needed to address as follows:

1. Old improperly engineered systems (built prior to the current rules).
2. Systems that weren't properly installed.
3. Systems that are not being properly maintained.

He went on to say he would like to see the following:

1. Systems engineered and installed correctly and properly maintained.
2. A plan to convert older systems.
3. A list of enhancements for new systems and a determination of their initial capital cost.

Dan listed the carrot and stick approaches previously discussed by the group:

1. Some sort of incentive for pumping a septic system in a timely manner. Dave estimated that it costs \$200 to \$300 to pump every three years. Jim Davenport had suggested an aquifer protection district which would result in a property tax that would be a source of funding. A receipt for pumping would give homeowners a break in this tax.

2. Education. Help people understand what they can do to take care of their system, why it's important and that proper care will save money over time.
3. Pay attention to building density within the Urban Growth Boundary before permitting. Where small clusters exist already determine whether a community association/system be created. Vern added that the County would consider taking on ownership and operation of these systems as it allows the County to ensure the systems are properly maintained and managed and if one entity already owns and operates these smaller systems it is easier to connect everything to a sewer operation down the road.

Dave offered to talk with several counties in Western Washington about their Operation and Maintenance (O & M) programs which he thought might give the group more ideas. Dave will also take a look at engineering upgrades to see what they entail and if they could work with existing tanks. Dave added that if the group considered an O & M plan it could include inspections to assess impact and the ability to get new systems in place. He also added that if the Health District had a table that indicated water levels they could come up with some special protections when systems were installed where tables were higher. Dan added that he would also like to see something in place that would monitor new systems that might be designed in the future.

Dave added that he had spoken with one of his busiest on-site sewage system installers and the upgrades the group had been discussed at the last meeting would cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000. He said that currently a brand new conventional system for a three bedroom home was about \$3,000. One member was concerned that this was a significant increase to pass on to homeowners and might preclude some from purchasing a home. Another member was not inclined to double or triple those costs.

Vern thought it was important that the group provide information to the GWAC on the costs to upgrade older systems especially when they consider what to do in higher density areas. Vern went on to say that he thought the group should include all of the alternatives in its proposal even if they have a higher price tag and were not currently being considered.

Dan indicated that there would be a presentation at the next RCIM meeting by Natural Selection Farms. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

### **Resources Requested**

### **Recommendations for GWAC**

### **Deliverables/Products Status**

### **Proposed Next Steps**

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- Jean will check with Ecology to find out more about the NPDES permit as outlined above.
- Dave Cole will check with Western Washington DOH offices to learn more about their O & M programs and look further into engineering upgrades as outlined above.