

## Irrigated Ag Working Group (IAWG)

### Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee

#### Working Group Members

Dr. Troy Peters (GWAC-WSU); 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), Vern Redifer, Jim Davenport.

#### Meetings/Calls Dates

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

When: October 18, 2016, from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

Call: (509) 574-2353 – Pin # 2353

#### Participants

Troy Peters (Chair), Vern Redifer, Doug Simpson, Ron Cowin, Jean Mendoza, Scott Stephen, Stuart Crane, Bobbie Brady (Yakima County Support Staff). No one was present via telephone.

#### Key Discussion Points

Troy Peters called the meeting to order at 1:40 PM. Kathleen Rogers had sent an email indicating that she was unable to attend but included her suggestions for the group's discussion. Troy listed three items that he felt the group had already agreed upon which he intended to pass on to the GWAC at the November 17 meeting:

1. Education;
2. Soil moisture sensors/irrigation management; and,
3. Soil samples/nutrient management assistance to growers.

Troy believed these recommendations could be encouraged through cost share. In addition, Troy stated that his take-away from the group's previous discussions was that while regulatory measures can be effective, they generally hurt growers. Troy had also received an email from Laurie Crowe who encouraged educational measures but did not feel any additional regulations were necessary. Vern pointed out that he believed the WAC said the group was to look at all the

alternatives; evaluate them and then select those that the group thought best to recommend. He added that it was important for the group to include its reasons for recommending or discarding each potential solution so everyone could understand the rationale that went into the group's decision-making process. He likened it to a "show your work" mentality that illustrated why it was important to move forward with the solutions that had been recommended.

A member voiced concern that the group wasn't addressing the non-dairy irrigated agriculture component. Another member pointed out that while the Irrigation District is a non-regulatory group it could help with compliance. A discussion ensued. Troy concluded the discussion and pointed out that all three recommendations would save growers money, help the environment and provide better yields.

Troy then asked if the members had any new solutions they wanted to discuss. A member suggested that the GWAC consider making presentations at the various grower meetings which are hosted by the commercial fertilizer companies. He believed this would give the GWAC the opportunity to help both the growers and the commercial fertilizer industry understand the ramifications of continuing with their current practices and thus effect change. Another member suggested that the GWAC could also make a presentation at the ag show at the Sun Dome which is held at the beginning of each year. Members went on to point out that Bleyhl's, Wilbur-Ellis, Simplot, CBS, Husch and Husch in Harrah and others hold grower meetings from November or December through March. Hundreds of growers attend each of these meetings to obtain credits to get their pesticide applicator license. Crop advisors and agronomists also attend as they can also get some certification at these meetings. Troy was concerned about the fertilizer industry's receptivity to the message of the GWMA, but a member responded and said they need to get on board. Another member agreed and said that he often comes across instances where no analysis was done or soil samples were taken but they weren't done correctly because the samples didn't adequately represent the field.

The group agreed that the objective at these grower meetings would be to bring an awareness of the nitrate problems to the growers and fertilizer companies and instruction on how to manage the fields/crops including how to take a soil sample. Vern was concerned that the commercial fertilizer groups were not participating in the GWAC or Irrigated Ag Working Group discussions and it would be good to invite them to share what the group had been learning. He felt it was important to meet with the industry to advise them of the challenges before the group would make any presentations to the growers. Vern believed that when the nitrogen loading assessment is finished irrigated ag will fall within the top three sources and this knowledge needs to be shared with the industry as a great deal of acreage in the GWMA is impacted by irrigated agriculture. Another member added that a lot of fertilizer companies also work on the dairies' behalf but are uneducated on the use of manure. He did not believe the fertilizer industry should help dairies make those decisions.

Vern pointed out that the group could make a recommendation to put a hefty tax on fertilizer to implement beneficial programs like education and soil moisture testing. He was concerned however that people would be forced out of business if a tax was implemented and was not suggesting that this was a good idea unless education and voluntary measures didn't work at some point. Troy agreed that while it might have a good effect it would hurt some people. Vern

did not believe that the County had the ability to implement such a tax and that it would have to be an action taken by the State legislature.

Ron volunteered to make contact with Simplot and ask them to attend a meeting to listen and discuss the nitrate issues and what the group had learned i.e., deep soil sampling, etc. Troy would get the contact information for each company. Members also mentioned GS Long and D & M Chemical but noted that these companies worked mostly with fruit growers and not a lot with row crops. They added that there were other fertilizer/chemical groups targeting a larger region including the Tri-Cities and northern Idaho, but the companies listed above specifically targeted agriculture in the GWMA and this information would be more applicable to them. The group agreed to add this solution to the list found above:

4. Engage the fertilizer industry as a whole and get them on board as a conduit to growers.

The group also discussed the contribution of organic matter in the soil. Vern informed the group that the Livestock/CAFO Work Group was going through the NRCS BMP's for solutions and thought that perhaps Irrigated Ag could follow suit as there could be BMP's that the group might utilize. Another member was concerned that without regulations there would be no way to monitor the solutions and the group should perhaps consider a performance standard. Another member responded and said he didn't think there was a magic bullet as the process was complex. He felt it was more important to have a goal in mind that would take time to accomplish. Vern added that the next tasks for the group would be to develop who would oversee each recommendation, what the cost would be and how it might be funded.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 PM.

#### **Recommendations for GWAC**

#### **Resources Requested**

#### **Deliverables/Products Status**

#### **Proposed Next Steps**

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- Ron will make contact with Simplot and ask them to attend a meeting to listen and discuss the nitrate issues and what the group had learned, i.e., deep soil sampling, etc.
- Troy will get contact information for the fertilizer companies mentioned.
- Jean will send any additional thoughts to Troy.