

LOWER YAKIMA VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GWAC)

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, October 18, 2012

Denny Blaine Board Room
810 E. Custer, Sunnyside, WA 98944

I. Call to Order

- A. Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 5:02 pm by Penny Mabie, Facilitator.

Members present: Rand Elliott, Yakima County Commissioner, Vern Redifer (alternate); Charlie McKinney, Dept. of Ecology, Tom Tebb (alternate); Andy Cervantes, Department of Health; Tom Eaton, EPA; Jan Whitefoot, Concerned Citizens for Yakama Reservation, Jim Dyjak (alternate); Robert Farrell, Port of Sunnyside, John Van Wingerden (alternate); Helen Reddout, Community Association for Restoration of the Environment; Jim Trull, SVID; Jean Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek; Mark Nielson, Benton Conservation District, Heather Wendt (alternate); Stuart Turner, Turner & Co.; Don Young (alternate), Kirk Cook, Washington Department of Agriculture; Yakima Farm Bureau; Jason Sheehan, Yakima Dairy Federation, Dan DeGroot, (alternate); Laurie Crowe, South Yakima Conservation District, Jim Newhouse (alternate); Elizabeth Sanchey, Yakama Nation, Tom Ring (alternate); and Lonna Frans, USGS;

Members seats not represented: Benton County Commission; Lower Valley Community Representative; Hispanic Community; Benton-Franklin Health District and Yakima County Health District;

Members absent: Jim Beaver, Benton County Commissioner; Robert Morales, Lower Valley Community Representative; Steve George, Yakima County Farm Bureau; Gordon Kelly, Yakima County Health District; Bruce Perkins, Benton-Franklin Health District; Ramon Tobias, Hispanic Community; and alternates: Eric Anderson; Ginny Stern; Dr. Troy Peters; Matt Bachmann; Ron Cowan; Margarita Tobias and Jaclyn Ford

II. Committee Business :

September 20, 2012 meeting summary approved.

At future meetings, handouts will be made available at the front table for members to pick up upon arrival.

The committee discussed Governor Christine Gregoire's letter dated September 28, 2012. The letter was provided to the members as the Yakima Valley Ground Water Management Area Program was directly mentioned.

III. Work Plan

Framework and Work groups (subcommittees):

Penny noted that at the last GWAC meeting, the committee had asked the County to flesh out the individual work plans within the GWAC work plan framework. The County provided the committee with a 14-page work plan with seven proposed work groups: CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation); Irrigated Agriculture; Residential, Commercial, Industrial and Municipal; Data Collection, Characterization, and Monitoring; Regulatory Framework; Education and Public Outreach; and Funding.

A discussion ensued among several committee members regarding the work group titled "CAFO." It was pointed out that "CAFO" is a regulatory term with specific elements. As such, it may not be the right name to use for the work group. A suggestion was made to change the name to "livestock agriculture", to be in line with the irrigated agriculture work group name, and several members supported this suggestion. Some members expressed a desire to specifically include dairies, suggesting "livestock and dairy agriculture." The committee could not come to an agreement; and agreed that the work group for CAFO can develop its own name as part of its work assignment.

There was a discussion about the Data Collection, Characterization, Monitoring workgroup and what its role would be. Vern explained that as different work groups meet they will identify information needed in order to make some decisions. As there are several work groups and many of those may be requesting the same information, the County's thinking was that the Data Collection work group could support the work of the technical/source work groups and work with the County to identify data needs and to request data. The County is already collecting data reports and other information on the GWMA website.

Penny asked the committee if the proposed seven work group structure was acceptable as is; the committee concurred.

Sign-up sheets for each work group were circulated to the committee. Members were requested to sign up for the workgroups they are interested in serving on, either as a primary interest or secondary interest. As agreed to at the previous GWAC meeting, the County will staff each group. Vern Redifer noted that to schedule the meetings, the County will use doodle poll. He added that he will staff the "Funding" work group.

It was further noted that work groups need to meet at least once before year end to develop their work plan.

It was reiterated that all work groups work for the GWAC and will need to regularly report their progress, issues and recommendations back to the GWAC. The GWAC will monitor the work groups to make sure progress is being made. The County will have at least one representative on each work group.

Work Plan Framework:

Yakima County provided the committee members with a populated work plan framework to review. Each work group will need to use the work plan as the base for their group's work plan and bring that back to the full committee for review and inclusion in the GWMA work plan. Vern also noted that the County has found a report on another GWMA in

California that has many similarities to the Lower Yakima Valley GWMA. He noted the report is posted on the GWMA website at <http://www.yakimacounty.us/gwma/library.php> and suggested committee members might find it useful to review.

Education and Public Outreach Plan (EPO):

Jean Mendoza provided the committee with a progress report on the Education and Public Outreach work group outcomes, and provided a handout for the committee to review. The work group has completed the following for the committee's consideration: 1. a proposed goal statement; 2. target audience list and key groups within that list to target and 3. objectives to carry out the goal statement. The work group requests the committee review its work and provide feedback on their goal statement, target audiences and objectives. Committee members need to provide their comments to Penny by Thursday, October 25th.

Mark Nielson of the Benton Conservation District requested his name be deleted from the work group as Rachel Little has agreed to be the agency representative. Charlie McKinney has agreed to be the information conduit for the Department of Ecology and pass along any information the Department needs to be aware of.

The committee discussed the need for the EPO to focus on nitrates. The importance of this work group is to communicate with the public, keep the public apprised of what this committee is doing and to provide education as the program progresses. They remanded the goal statement back to the work group, asking that "educating the public" and "informing the public of the GWAC process" be incorporated into the statement.

EPA Report Discussion:

Tom Eaton noted EPA's Nitrate Study has been published. EPA's goal is still to come up with a comprehensive plan to address nitrates in groundwater; that is why they are participating in the GWAC. Tom noted that EPA is not aware of all potential sources of nitrates or the causes. There are no future plans at this time for additional EPA studies. The EPA is accepting comments until the end of November for any of those committee members who would like to comment. As an outcome of the report, EPA is working with five dairies; however, that work is confidential at this time.

A member suggested the committee dismiss the findings of the EPA Nitrate Study. When another committee member noted that it was fully anticipated that robust discussions about data sources and other information will occur at the working group level, the suggestion was withdrawn.

IV. Public Comment:

Kevin Lindsey addressed the committee and asked that they take the EPA's report with a "grain of salt". He noted the report does not seem to meet regulatory guidance for data analysis and developing a report under normal groundwater regulations.

Sarah Stout - Questioned a lack of data in the EPA's report. She noted the EPA is working with dairies, but the dairies have limited resources.

Pony Ellison - Commented that it wasn't correct that EPA was not working on any other reports. He noted EPA is working with the U.S. Geologic Survey on modeling work.

Lonna Frans, USGS, noted that they were working with a different group in EPA to do the groundwater modeling in the Lower Yakima Valley.

V. GWAC business :

A request was made for a discussion about whether there is a conflict of interest for any committee member(s) who engage in lawsuits over the issue of groundwater contamination in the Lower Valley. Penny advised that this issue will be put on the agenda and addressed at the next scheduled meeting.

Penny reminded the committee about their ground rules and their agreement to speak from interests, not from positions. The committee has a very important issue in front of them and needs to collaborate on a solution. She suggested committee members consider where their energy is best spent, in order to help move the GWMA program forward. She noted the committee has spent a lot of time on debating organizational issues; she expressed concern for making progress on substantive issues if committee members can't find a way to find compromises and come to agreement.

VI. Next Steps:

- The next scheduled meeting is on Thursday, November 15, 2012 at 5:00 p.m. at the Denny Blaine Board Room.
- Members need to review the work plans provided by Yakima County and provide Penny with any comments.
- Members need to review the Education and Public Outreach information provided and comment on the goal statement, objectives and target audiences. Comments should be forwarded to Penny no later than Thursday, October 25th.
- Penny will circulate the sign-up lists again, organize the information for work groups, and provide the list of each work group to committee members. Committee members who have agreed to join work groups will receive doodle polls to organize meeting times.

VII. 2012 Meeting Calendar:

- November 15
- December - TBD

Meeting calendar will be reassessed at the end of the year.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Meeting summary approved by the Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee on 12-20-12.