

## LOWER YAKIMA VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GWAC)

### MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, June 19, 2014

Radio KDNA  
 121 Sunnyside Ave, Granger, WA 98932

#### I. Call to Order

**Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 5:01pm by Penny Mabie, Facilitator.

Member	Seat	Present	Absent
Stuart Turner	Agronomist, Turner and Co.	✓	
Chelsey Durfey	Agronomist, Turner and Co. (alternate)	✓	
Helen Reddout	Community Association for Restoration of the Environment		✓
Wendell Hannigan	Community Association for Restoration of the Environment (alternate)		✓
Kathleen Rogers	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 1	✓	
Bud Rogers	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 1 (alternate)	✓	
Patricia Newhouse	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 2		✓
Sue Wedam	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 2 (alternate)	✓	
Doug Simpson	Irrigated Crop Producer		✓
Jean Mendoza	Friends of Toppenish Creek	✓	
Eric Anderson	Friends of Toppenish Creek (alternate)		✓
Jan Whitefoot	Concerned Citizens of the Yakama Reservation		✓
Jim Dyjak	Concerned Citizens of the Yakama Reservation (alternate)	✓	
Steve George	Yakima County Farm Bureau	✓	
Justin Waddington	Yakima County Farm Bureau (alternate)		✓
Jason Sheehan	Yakima Dairy Federation		✓
Dan DeGroot	Yakima Dairy Federation (alternate)		P
Jim Trull	Roza-Sunnyside Joint Board of Control	P	
Ron Cowin	Roza-Sunnyside Joint Board of Control (alternate)		✓
Laurie Crowe	South Yakima Conservation District	✓	
Jim Newhouse	South Yakima Conservation District (alternate)		✓
Robert Farrell	Port of Sunnyside	✓	
John Van Wingerden	Port of Sunnyside (alternate)		✓
Rand Elliott	Yakima County Board of Commissioners		✓

Vern Redifer	Yakima County Board of Commissioners (alternate)	✓	
Gordon Kelly	Yakima County Health District	✓	
Dr. Kefy Desta	WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center		P
Dr. Troy Peters	WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center (alternate)		✓
Tom Eaton	U.S. EPA	P	
Marie Jennings	U.S. EPA (alternate)		P
Elizabeth Sanchez	Yakama Nation		✓
Tom Ring	Yakama Nation (alternate)		P
Lonna Frans	U.S. Geological Survey		✓
Matt Bachmann	U.S. Geologic Survey (alternate)	✓	
Kirk Cook	WA Department of Agriculture	✓	
Virginia "Ginny" Prest	WA Department of Agriculture (alternate)	✓	
Andy Cervantes	WA Department of Health	✓	
Ginny Stern	WA Department of Health (alternate)	*	
Charlie McKinney	WA Department of Ecology	P	
Tom Tebb	WA Department of Ecology (alternate)	✓	
Lino Guerra	Hispanic Community Representative		✓
Rick Perez	Hispanic Community Representative (alternate)		✓

\*by phone

## II. Welcome & Meeting Overview

Moment of silence.

Introductions.

## III. Committee Business : Penny Mabie

The April 17, 2014 Meeting Summary was approved by the committee.

Penny reminded the group that there is a section on the Agenda which is titled "Meeting Materials." This is a list of all the documents that have been emailed as well as the dates that they were sent.

Penny stated that the primary topic for discussion would be the GWAC work and development of the GWMA Program and how it all comes together.

Penny went over the ground rules and reminded the committee that they should speak to interests and not positions so that they can get to a deeper dialogue.

Vern introduced Jim Davenport of Buena. He's an attorney with expertise in writing documents and coordinating activities and has worked on water issues across the west. Jim has been contracted by the County to help coordinate the working groups but not direct them.

**IV. Development of a Groundwater Management Area Plan for the Lower Yakima Valley:  
Kirk Cook, WA Department of Agriculture**

Kirk stated that the GWAC has been together for about two years now. He felt that from the questions at the last couple of meetings, it appeared that things were getting lost so he put together a presentation explaining the GWMA development process: what the GWAC is doing, what the timelines are, and how each step builds towards the next in the process. The presentation should give the group a better understanding of how the GWAC want to proceed and hence lead to a better discussion.

Kirk noted that the major goal the GWAC has been focused on is land use management activities and not remediation. The committee wants to get a handle on the amount of nitrate that is supplied, how much is utilized and how much is left over. Matt Bachman asked if the committee will be measuring loading to groundwater and accounting for consumption. Kirk answered yes.

Vern added that he believes the deep soil sampling serves multiple purposes: It can identify how/what is being applied and identify what is happening in the groundwater. The hope is that it will provide a quantitative way to evaluate the BMPs.

Lisa explained the Education and Outreach working group's role in program development. She said it spans the whole process and that there is a fluid give and take between each GWAC step, the EPO and the public. The public needs to be informed about what the committee is doing, why it's important and why the committee needs the community's participation. Then, when the public participates (in the deep soil sampling (DSS), for example), their data will come back to inform and educate the GWAC. In this way each step builds on the previous step and is influenced by previous outreach and data results. Until now the public has been the committee's silent partner. That will change when the public begins to participate in the DSS and other outreach and become active participants.

Kirk said that the first step is area characterization and there are several elements included. That helps identify what the potential sources are. One of the goals is to provide a basic framework to satisfy the area characterization. Kirk noted the committee knew from the beginning that the existing information was not enough to make any decisions. He noted the committee is currently about 70 percent of the way to completing the characterization. Vern added that the committee has to develop the entire program; noting that it is like writing a book and as the committee begins to understand, they need to start writing. He explained the GWAC are the first drafters of the book.

Kirk explained that defining the extent of the problem from each source will be informed by the Deep Soil Sampling survey, the agricultural nitrogen loading assessment, the Residential, Commercial, Industrial and Municipal loading assessment, and the Health District well assessments. This will set the stage for the alternatives. Then the committee is allowed a more surgical evaluation of the groundwater management area.

Discussion followed regarding whether there would be enough DSS participation to get a good statistical sample. A member stated that she felt that 50 survey site samples would not be big enough; Laurie explained that it would be 50 per season for a total of 200 samples. Kirk added that the survey will be offered to farmers within the groundwater

management area who do not participate in deep soil sampling, in the hope that two or three times the initial 50 will also take the survey so that the committee can acquire a typical use pattern regarding crops, rotation and irrigation. The member repeated it does not include enough samples for useful analysis. When asked, "How many samples are enough?" the member cited WSDA crop data, noting that "50 samples might be enough for the County's 600 cornfields," later adding that the survey should be sent to all of the producers.

Kirk responded that the concern about an adequate population is a shared concern. The member replied that by expecting people to volunteer and not targeting areas where the problems are, the program may not get the parties that are actually contributing to the problem. Kirk pointed out that the committee doesn't know how many will participate and the committee may arrive at a number that will reach a statistically valid level. If that doesn't happen, however, the committee will have to go to Plan B, using book values, which would be less useful.

Kirk explained that the committee is gauging improvement of the entire groundwater management area. He urged members to get away from focusing on specific hotspots and make an assessment of how the aquifer is doing.

Kirk reviewed alternative evaluations. He stated that HDR created a good database of BMPs and that provides the skeleton to accomplish some of the requirements. He pointed out that the Department of Agriculture is considering looking at the economics for digesters so they can remove some of the animal manure or move the manure to other parts of the state that need it. Kirk said there could be alternatives out there for beyond just BMPs; the results from the problem identification and goals sections will help guide the alternatives. Alternatives need to address feasibility, effectiveness, cost, difficulty to implement and consistency with local comprehensive plans.

A member stated that he didn't think the group with its diversity would ever reach consensus on regulatory recommendations, as the analysis is subjective and there are a lot of strong opinions in the group. A member countered that the group can reach consensus. Industry understands the scope, scale and seriousness of the problem, adding that it's important to keep the program voluntary.

A member noted that if a regulatory gap is identified it would be a state or federal-level responsibility, not the responsibility of the GWAC to attempt to close the gap through legislation or regulation. Kirk agreed. Vern added that if the County believed there was a necessary change, the County would go to the legislature to discuss and support it.

A member stated that the group was jumping to conclusions. Data hasn't even been gathered yet so this is a premature discussion. Vern added that he hopes the committee gets statistically relevant data and starts education but as Kirk said, the committee can't start effectiveness evaluation until data is available.

Kirk described adaptive management. It offers the option to "tweak" the plan, if, for example, an adopted BMP is not effective. Finally, Kirk defined prescriptive versus adaptive approach noting the adaptive is voluntary where prescriptive is mandatory.

## V. Working Groups Actions

**Funding:** A member asked if more people sign up for Deep Soil Sampling than what is currently funded, could additional sampling be funded. Vern said yes, the GWAC's budget is \$2.3m, of which \$880k is encumbered. There have been no discussions on where to spend the rest of the \$1.6m. He pointed out that he'd asked the working group chairs to identify projects the GWAC should take on so that the need can be assessed. Vern said only EPO responded. A member stated that the GWAC can't start talking about how to spend the money until there is a budget provided. Vern agreed, stating that the budget discussion will be on the August agenda. A member asked if the GWMA expenditures could be posted quarterly on the website. Vern said yes. Matt Bachmann added that USGS had offered the GWAC \$300k six months ago and that funding is no longer available. While that money is gone, there might be future opportunities for the GWAC to pursue funding from USGS.

**Education & Public Outreach:** The Nitrate Education Slides were approved; pending two edits to slide #3 (change "Livestock Waste" to "Animal Manure" and delete "Pesticides"). The New Mom flier was approved as presented. Tom Eaton discussed the University of Washington's Northwest Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) initiative in the GWMA. PEHSU will be providing nitrate education to clinicians in the Lower Yakima Valley beginning this summer. Training will be supported by EPO's New Mom flier and outreach.

**Data Collection, Characterization, and Monitoring:** Kirk stated that his group has submitted a preliminary scope of work and hopefully the consultant will bring it back by August.

**Irrigated Agriculture:** Jim advised that there is a questionnaire for the producers' practices included in the newsletter. The questionnaire responses will tell GWAC what crops are grown, irrigation practices, etc. The soil sampling down to 6 feet will provide information about root zone and uptake in nitrates. Then the group will learn about the nitrates and concentration. GWAC will get a lot of information and he believes that they will get a lot of participation. The working group plans to work with EPO for publicity. They've put a notice in the Daily Sunnyside News and plan to get one in the Yakima-Herald Republic, Farm Bureau and out as far as possible. They've also sent a letter to all the landowners in the Roza/Sunnyside Irrigation Districts inviting landowner participation. Jim said that the bid documents for the lab and sample collector are just about done and should be completed in a couple of days. They will advertise for Deep Soil Sampling on June 29<sup>th</sup> and July 6<sup>th</sup>. Bids will open on July 18<sup>th</sup> and be awarded on July 25<sup>th</sup>. Jim noted they plan to start the DSS program in September.

### Committee Comments/Questions :

A member reported that in a phone conference of an advisory committee she is participating in, she learned that nitrates were eliminated as a potential source of anencephaly. The majority of women affected by anencephaly were Hispanic, obese and ate a lot of corn tortillas (could be a mold in the corn). None of the babies born with this were from the nitrate hotspot areas in the County.

Vern noted that funding from a Yakima County program, Supporting Investments In Economic Development (SIED,) has been awarded for a digester transmission pipe on Dekker Road. The County will own the pipeline and lease it to the gas carriers. He added that the digesters don't eliminate the nitrate but remove and concentrate it which makes it a marketable, exportable product. The company is looking to add four more.

**VI. Public Comments :**

A member of the public suggested that it might be a self-selected group that would be undergoing the DSS survey but that was all right. He recommended that the GWAC move forward with their work.

A member of the public noted that research from the Pew Foundations shows that trust in government is at an all-time low.

**VII. Next Steps**

Action items (August meeting):

- Working Groups will develop their budget requests and submit them to Vern at least one week before the August meeting. Working groups should be prepared to identify how their proposed projects move the GWMA process forward.
- Vern will compile the numbers into a report for the August meeting.
- The GWAC will review its attendance policy and determine what action should be taken regarding inactive members.
- Penny will check with Ecology regarding letters that were to be sent to inactive members.
- Jean will bring a hand out to the next meeting re: What will happen to the aquifer if we do nothing.

**VIII. 2014 Meeting Calendar:**

- August 21, 2014
- October 16, 2014
- December 18, 2014 (as needed)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04pm.

Meeting summary was approved by the GWAC on August 21, 2014.