

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: November 15, 2016, from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

Call: (509) 574-2353 – Pin # 2353

Participants

Troy Peters (Chair), Vern Redifer, Kathleen Rogers, Jean Mendoza, Jim Davenport, David Bowen, 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 1:31 PM and reminded everyone of the four solutions the group had previously agreed to pass on to the GWAC: 1) education; 2) irrigation management; 3) nutrient management; and, 4) outreach to fertilizer companies. The goal for the meeting was to develop these recommendations and a plan to implement them.

A member raised the issue that none of the suggested solutions dealt with the application of manure to croplands which the GWAC had designated for the Irrigated Ag Working Group to address. It was her belief that solutions for this source couldn't be accomplished on a voluntary basis. Troy said that he thought the group agreed it could be a problem and wondered if the group could suggest guidelines with limitations. However, Jim Davenport didn't believe the group had enough information to address the issue and suggested that the group should recommend developing more information to ascertain the impact of application of manures to croplands in the GWMA as an additional solution.

Troy agreed that the group lacked information about where and how much manure was applied in the GWMA but stated the group did have the science to determine what can happen with manure, what should be applied and reasonable rates of application.

A member was concerned about the Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) ability to oversee the Dairy Nutrient Management Plan (DNMP) as currently there is only one staff member on the eastern side of the mountains to oversee over 50 percent of the dairies in the State. It was suggested that another recommendation for the group to consider was that additional staff be added to the WSDA to help with DNMP oversight in eastern Washington.

The group also discussed that the Dairy Nutrient Management plans were not made public. Jim Davenport noted that WAC 1606.210 Subsection 29 sets out categories of information the WSDA is supposed to make public and pointed out that the WSDA consolidates information from the Dairy Nutrient Management Plans into these reports.

The group continued their discussions about who could help with the proposed educational component. Jim encouraged the group to think about who could do this best over the long term. Two entities were considered – the South Yakima Conservation District and the WSU Extension Services. The group discussed extra funding, current funding sources, the need for additional staffing, and the controlling boards for each. Troy noted that it would require specific direction from State senators or the GWMA to ask WSU to focus their attention on the issues pertinent to the GWMA. This would result in WSU redirecting funding and wouldn't necessarily require additional funding. He added that WSU Extension Services basically has the same objectives as the Conservation District through a different funding source. Troy indicated he would help facilitate this if the GWAC gave its approval. The group suggested that GWAC approval be sought for Troy to approach both the South Yakima Conservation District and the WSU Extension Services and explain the four ideas the group is trying to pursue and pose the following question: If the Irrigated Ag Working Group/GWAC were to recommend these four ideas as solutions, what strategies and techniques would you use and what would be the cost to implement each. In addition, the group understood that the Conservation District may need to expand its fiscal capacity to carry out these endeavors and would need them to explain how much expansion, and what they would need to move these things move forward.

Vern pointed out that the group was not done with its work on the four recommendations they had already agreed upon as the group must define what each recommendation would entail specifically, determine the cost and explain the benefits of each. In addition, he pointed out that the Livestock/CAFO Working Group had reviewed the list of BMP's from NRCS and came up with a list applicable to livestock and CAFO's. Livestock/CAFO is now discussing the benefits of each and will determine if they would be implemented in a regulatory or voluntary manner. David Bowen said that the group had agreed on 34 NRCS BMP's but realized that not all 34 were applicable to every location. They have also not decided on any incentives. He added that the group is considering a performance based program which would mean that as long as a defined requirement was met groups could pick and choose which BMP's they desired to use. Last of all David pointed out that this would require money for an agency to oversee. Jim Davenport said that the group could consider making soil testing with a required number the basis for funding, loans and building permits. Troy added that Jim Trull created a list from the BMP's recommended by HDR and had created a spreadsheet with comments on each.

Troy said that Ginny Prest had previously suggested another recommendation for the group to consider was a nutrient applicator's license (similar to a pesticide applicator license) in order to buy nutrients in any quantity. The license would indicate that the operator knew what they were doing. Troy felt this was the most palatable of additional regulations. Other members were concerned that inappropriate application was being done by those who don't need to buy their fertilizer. They felt that the group needed to go back to the quality of the soil tests being done. From this discussion Troy suggested another possible strategy would be to hire a soil scientist who would perform "spot auditing" soil tests which would be publically funded – one per field every three years. This had been discussed previously as a "mobile lab" and would provide feedback to fertilizer companies as well.

Vern pointed out that the group had learned that most fertilizer companies test for free and that the recommendation can lean towards commercial fertilizers. He was concerned again about how to get the fertilizer companies to the table to educate them and to learn more about how they work. Jim Davenport said that in order to get the commercial fertilizer industry to the table the group could propose a threatening strategy like asking the legislature to require distributors of fertilizer to report gross sales by volume by County. The group asked Kathy to ask Bud if he could recommend a retired field man from the fertilizer industry who could come and talk to the group.

A member suggested that the group propose a strategy for a better mechanism to gather data.

Troy mentioned that he would not be available to attend Thursday's GWAC meeting. It was agreed that Troy would draft a report and Kathleen would give it on behalf of the group. It was also agreed that the group would not meet again until its January 17, 2017, meeting date. The meeting adjourned at 3:01 PM. Jean provided the group with the Yakima Valley Dairies Consent Order Update dated June, 2016, and December, 2014 and Agrimanagement Fertility Reports.

Recommendations for GWAC

GWAC request the Washington State Conservation Commission and WSU Extension to put additional funding to the Yakima Valley for education and outreach, for BMP implementation, irrigation water management, soil nutrient management, and manure management and applications.

Resources Requested

Deliverables/Products Status

Proposed Next Steps

The group asked Kathy to ask Bud if he could recommend a retired field man from the fertilizer industry who could come and talk to the group.

Troy will make the requests to outlined in "Recommendations for GWAC" was they have approved the recommendation.