

1 **YAKIMA VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
 2 **(GWAC)**

3 **MEETING SUMMARY**

4 **Thursday, February 16, 2017 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

5 *Denny Blaine Board Room*
 6 *810 East Custer Avenue, Sunnyside, WA*

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 8 *Note: This document is only a summary of issues and actions of this meeting. It is not intended to be*
 9 *a transcription of the meeting, but an overview of points raised and responses from Yakima County*
 10 *and Groundwater Advisory Committee members. It may not fully represent the ideas discussed or*
 11 *opinions given. Examination of this document cannot equal or replace attendance.*

12 **I. Call to Order:** This meeting was called to order at 5:04 PM by Vern Redifer, Facilitator.

Member	Seat	Present	Absent
Stuart Turner	Agronomist, Turner and Co.,	✓	
Chelsea Durfey			✓
Bud Rogers	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 1	✓	
Kathleen 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		✓
Frank Lyall	Yakima County Farm Bureau (alternate)	✓	
Jason Sheehan	Yakima Dairy Federation	✓	
Dan DeGroot	Yakima Dairy Federation (alternate)	✓	
Ron Cowin	Roza-Sunnyside Joint Board of Control	✓	
	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)	✓	
Dave Cole	Yakima Health District	✓	
Ryan Ibach	Yakima Health District (alternate)		✓
Dr. Troy Peters	WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center		✓
Lucy Edmondson	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency		✓
Peter Contreras	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (alternate)		✓
Elizabeth Sanchez	Yakama Nation		✓
Stuart Crane	Yakama Nation (alternate)	✓	
Virginia "Ginny" Prest	WA Department of Agriculture		✓
Jaclyn Hancock	WA Department of Agriculture (alternate)		✓
Andy Cervantes	WA Department of Health		✓
Ginny Stern	WA Department of Health (alternate)	✓	
David Bowen	WA Department of Ecology		✓
Sage Park	WA Department of Ecology	✓	
Lino Guerra	Hispanic Community Representative		✓
Rick Perez	Hispanic Community Representative (alternate)		✓
Jessica Black	Heritage University		✓
Matt Bachmann	USGS	✓	

13 **II. Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions:** Everyone introduced themselves. Vern
 14 noted that Commissioner Elliott was absent because of a prior commitment in Olympia.
 15 Vern asked everyone to pause for a moment of silence to prepare for the meeting. He then
 16 reviewed the agenda. A member asked that the group discuss the last quarter of deep soil
 17 sampling and the group agreed to add this item to the agenda.

18
 19 **III. Don Stuart Presentation:** Melanie reminded the group that she had heard Don Stuart speak
 20 at a seminar and believed his presentation would be beneficial to the group as they were
 21 deciding how to move forward and thinking about how to work together. She again
 22 summarized his background and how she believed the GWAC could benefit. A member
 23 asked if the presentation would be made during the GWAC meeting or prior to it as others
 24 had done in the past. Vern indicated that would depend on Don's schedule and the group's
 25 interest. After a great deal of discussion the group agreed to invite him to speak before or

26 after a meeting which would give everyone a choice to attend and not distract from the
27 business the group needed to accomplish in the next year. Another member suggested that
28 it would be good to ask other experts to speak in order to help the members better
29 understand some of the more technical sides of the decisions they would be making. Vern
30 passed around a sign-up sheet so members could suggest topics and speakers. Suggestions
31 were made as follows: farming systems common to the Valley; soil science –
32 agronomy/horticulture – the tech side of farming; hydrogeology (Matt Bachman USGS);
33 regulatory agency function/water quality (Melanie Redding/Ecology); irrigation
34 technology/management, manure management plans and implementation; basic statistics;
35 the nitrogen cycle; dairy nutrient management plans; irrigation water management/soil
36 moisture sensors (Troy Peters); how to develop a nutrient management plan soil nitrate
37 fate long term – what kind of studies are needed; and, according to current studies what is
38 the cause of methemoglobinemia? What health effects does excess nitrate cause people?
39 Who is the most susceptible? At what levels? These informational meetings would also be
40 held outside of the GWAC time. It was suggested that Vern be given the authority to decide
41 which topics and what speakers were a priority and the group agreed.

42

43 **IV. Working Group Reports:**

44 **Data Collection:** Melanie thanked the group for budgeting funding for groundwater
45 projects. She reported that PGG is putting together documentation and working on a
46 contract with Yakima County for installation of the purpose built wells. There will be an “x”
47 on the ground before any drilling. PGG is also working on the Quality Assurance Project
48 Plan for the drain samples. Matt Bachmann (USGS) is working on a contract for the drinking
49 water program to begin testing private domestic wells. Melanie asked Matt to elaborate on
50 his progress. Matt said that his group had identified a number of possible wells for testing.
51 He brought a map so that the group could see the potential locations and marked it with
52 red and green dots. The red dots on the map indicated the wells that had been tested by
53 Yakima County – of those 35 well logs had been found. The green dots are 289 sites
54 previously used by USGS - ID and well logs for these sites have already been acquired. Matt
55 believed given the number of these sites the group wouldn’t have a problem finding 160
56 wells to pick from. In summary, Melanie said she asked PGG and USGS to compile one
57 report so that anyone looking at the program in the future would know exactly what had
58 been done. A member asked who would have oversight of this program after 2017. Vern
59 said he had spoken with the Yakima Health District (YHD) and they had indicated a
60 willingness to take the testing program on after 2017. It was Vern’s desire to integrate YHD
61 into the testing this year so that there would be a seamless transition but there were still a

62 number of details to be worked out. Vern said that the plan had been to test intensively for
63 two years and then less frequently and that the group could determine how often YHD
64 would report back to the County. Vern added that he was waiting for a contract proposal
65 and a technical requirement list for drilling the purpose built wells from PGG so that Yakima
66 County could put this into a bid package. Vern thought at the earliest holes would be in the
67 ground by April. The wells would be established in numerical priority and based on the
68 money allocated by the GWAC in its budget for this purpose. Melanie added that the
69 Nitrogen Loading Assessment (NLA) would most likely be delivered to a joint working group
70 meeting by Vern and Gary Bahr (Department of Ag) in March. There would be a time for
71 questions and revisions by the working groups. The goal was to present the NLA at the
72 GWAC's April meeting. ***(NOTE: As this summary was being drafted Melanie received a
73 revision regarding the timeframe for review of the Nitrogen Loading Assessment. It will
74 be presented at a Joint Working Group meeting on April 13 – it will not be presented at
75 the April 20 GWAC meeting).***

76 **Livestock/CAFO:** In David Bowen's absence, alternate Sage Park reported that the group is
77 finalizing the collection of information and is in the first stage of reviewing draft language
78 for their portion of the Groundwater Management Plan with a goal of delivering the
79 product to Yakima County in April or May. A member said the group completed an
80 extensive look at BMP's and NRCS standards and practices in November and December.

81 **Irrigated Ag:** Jim Davenport reported in Troy Peters' absence. He said that the group had
82 two central ideas: irrigation and soil/fertilization management and education. A member
83 mentioned that he had been at a recent water resource conference and was impressed by
84 the changes and progress in irrigation management. Others agreed.

85 **RCIM:** Chair Dan DeGroot reported that David Bowen met with the group and provided a
86 detailed report on the Department of Ecology's NPDES permits. The group reviewed
87 outreach materials from EPO on their "What You Can Do" campaign. The group also
88 discussed onsite sewage systems with the Department of Health and compiled a list of
89 suggested solutions. The group hoped to review its draft report at its next two meetings
90 and have it to the GWAC at its April meeting. A member asked Dan to explain what he
91 meant when he said "high density areas of OSS are particularly problematic because there is
92 not enough land mass to properly filter the effluent before the next well is encountered."
93 Dan explained and the group discussed solutions for high density areas and the possibility of
94 installing community wells in these locations. Ginny Stern noted that when there is a
95 density of systems less dilution will occur before it reaches the aquifer and the effluent can
96 stay distinctive for 200 feet making this area a poor location for a well. A member claimed
97 it was not worth the effort to pursue two to four percent of the cause of contamination in

98 OSS. Dan asked her if she was getting this information from the EPA pie chart that actually
99 claimed that OSS was responsible for four percent of the nitrogen produced in the GWMA.

100 **Regulatory Framework:** Jean Mendoza reported that the group had not met since
101 November when it primarily summarized costs related to elevated nitrates in groundwater.
102 She noted the discussion would continue at next week's meeting. The group will also
103 discuss composting regulations and abandoned wells and this had not been done
104 previously. Jean had visited every working group and added that if the working groups had
105 additional regulatory questions she would be happy to meet with them.

106 **EPO:** Lisa Freund reported the "Test Your Well" billboards were up in the Lower Valley as of
107 January 1. The work group had also created four well protection flyers in English and
108 Spanish as a result of requests from the RCIM and Abandoned Well groups. The flyers were
109 in member meeting packets. In addition, EPO is working with each of the working groups to
110 create a unified message for the GWAC. Questionnaires had been sent out for each group
111 to complete which was delayed because of working group meeting cancellations due to
112 weather. The questionnaires asked each working group's mission, its accomplishments,
113 discoveries, future products/recommendations and audiences. A member thought that the
114 billboards were hard to read and difficult to find. Another member liked the simplicity and
115 thought they were clear and concise. Lisa reminded everyone that it was difficult to get
116 space on billboards in the Lower Valley as most are under contract and it was the group's
117 pilot project which made the member feedback valuable.

118 **V. Fourth Quarter Deep Soil Sampling:** A member indicated that in the last quarter of the
119 deep soil sampling (spring 2016) only 28 fields had been sampled and of that 28, 12 fields
120 didn't return the informational questionnaire making it impossible to know what crops were
121 grown and how much fertilizer was applied. The member felt these tests were now
122 worthless and was disappointed that \$250,000 had been spent on this project at tax payer's
123 expense. Laurie Crowe from the South Yakima Conservation District responded that she
124 thought more than 28 fields had been tested in the last round and she believed the soil data
125 was still good even though 12 questionnaires had not been returned as the levels and crops
126 grown are pretty much the same in this area. She continued that it would be very difficult
127 to obtain this data now as no one knows what fields were tested since anonymity had been
128 part of the project plan because of the litigious climate. A member pointed out that the
129 group had to have known this would happen because testing was done on a strictly
130 voluntary basis and another member said that it would be unrealistic to expect anything
131 else. Laurie indicated that the goal was a good background data base. Another member
132 felt that the group still had a good representative set. Matt Bachmann added that the
133 information would be useful, not useless. Another member asked how much sampling was

134 done – Laurie said four rounds - the first spring and the last fall were low, the others went
135 well. 160 tests had been done; the goal had been 200. 90 percent of the information had
136 been turned back in from the testing sites. Matt indicated that often field programs go
137 awry. Another member indicated that the group had been dealing with volunteers where
138 the level of commitment can be variable. The first member remained disappointed as she
139 felt people were paid to be here and saw it as an example of stone-walling. Later the group
140 agreed to have Troy Peters analyze the data which was already in spreadsheet format.

141 **VI. Committee Business:** The December 15, 2016 summary was approved as presented. The
142 group agreed to schedule monthly meetings beginning in April. The 2017 scheduled dates
143 are: April 20, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 16
144 and December 21. The meetings will be cancelled if they aren't needed.

145 **VII. Public Comment:** A member of the public had attended the recent RCIM meeting and
146 voiced concern that in order to inspect and pump onsite sewage systems the Yakima Health
147 District would be required to get an easement to access homeowners' land. She wondered
148 if the USGS could inspect septic systems when they were inspecting private wells. Matt
149 Bachmann indicated that it would be problematic to the endeavor to test private wells and
150 estimated he may lose approximately 90 percent of his prospective volunteers. As an aside
151 to this discussion Ginny Stern believed she knew someone who would help analyze the
152 approximately 450 well assessments. Ginny also introduced her replacement at the
153 Department of Health – Sheryl Howe - as she would retire the 1st of April. Another member
154 was also concerned about the money spent on the deep soil sample test results. After
155 some discussion Jim Davenport informed the group that Troy Peters had volunteered to
156 have some of his graduate students analyze the data. The group desired to pursue this
157 solution. Another member reminded the group that in addition to the data and its analysis,
158 the deep soil sampling had educated a lot of producers that had never soil sampled or
159 sampled at this depth. He felt there were many teaching moments for those who had
160 volunteered. Ginny Stern reminded the group that groundwater sampling, not deep soil
161 sampling, will tell the group where to look for problems.

162 **VIII. Next Meeting:** The group decided to meet again on April 20, 2017.

163 **IX. Next Steps:** 1) Schedule the Don Stuart presentation and arrange for other suggested
164 topics and speakers; 2) Present the draft Nitrogen Loading Assessment to a joint meeting of
165 the Irrigated Ag, RCIM, Data and Livestock/CAFO Working Groups; and, 3) Pursue analysis
166 by the Department of Health of the County's 450 well assessments; and, 4) Pursue analysis
167 by Troy Peters of the Deep Soil Sampling.

168 **X. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on April 20, 2017.