

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

3 **MEETING SUMMARY**

4 **Thursday, April 20, 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		✓

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	✓	
Sheryl Howe	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 and
 14 paused for a moment of silence to prepare for the meeting. Vern reviewed the agenda and
 15 asked to add a discussion about the Funding Working Group after the Working Group
 16 reports. He also noted that the members had received a handout entitled "Tentative
 17 Schedule for Completion of Groundwater Management Program" for discussion under the
 18 agenda item "Where do We go from Here." There were no other items for the agenda.
 19

20 **III. Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA – previously called the Nitrogen Loading
 21 Assessment):** Vern indicated that the assessment had been renamed since the study only
 22 included nitrogen availability and not loading to groundwater. He reminded everyone that
 23 there had been an open Joint Working Group meeting Thursday, April 13 where the
 24 Washington State Department of Agriculture and Yakima County (authors) reported their

25 methodology of analysis on potential sources of nitrogen and the results. Everyone now
26 has the opportunity to comment by April 28. All comments should be sent to Bobbie who
27 will compile them and forward them on to WSDA and Yakima County for their response.
28 Vern encouraged the working groups to discuss the assessment. It will then be presented
29 to the GWAC in May (and June, if necessary) in accordance with the process outlined in the
30 Data Working Group. Vern affirmed that he would post the PowerPoint presentations from
31 the meeting on the website. He also stated that when he referred to the GWAC "accepting"
32 the assessment it means that the GWAC agreed the study was complete. A member felt
33 that there would be a great deal of discussion and named several notable topics. Vern
34 didn't feel he could say how long the discussion would last until he better understood the
35 depth of the members' concerns and received their comments. Vern reminded everyone
36 that the assessment was still in draft form until the comment and answer period was
37 completed and the working groups had reviewed the assessment as it may change based on
38 the comments received.

39

40 **IV. Working Group Reports:**

41 **Livestock/CAFO:** David Bowen reported that the group had met once and were one-third of
42 the way through the draft report to the GWAC. He had received a set of minor edits from
43 Jim Davenport. David expected the group to be done in May, maybe June and would
44 forward the report to the County. A member asked David about the comments she had
45 sent and he reminded her that they were already a part of the ongoing discussion.

46 **Irrigated Ag:** Troy Peters believed that his group had finalized their findings and
47 suggestions as the deep soil sampling had revealed that irrigated agriculture contributed in
48 part to the nitrates in the soil. They can be found in the EPO Summary which was attached
49 to the GWAC agenda packet. Troy added that fertilizer companies potentially had a conflict
50 of interest which is why the group had recommended reaching out to them. Troy said that
51 there were no recommendations for additional regulations because of the makeup of the
52 committee. The GWAC then discussed whether or not regulatory action was the objective
53 of the GWMA. A member indicated he didn't believe it was. Vern stated that neither he
54 nor Commissioner Elliott remembered such an agreement, nor did they have any
55 preconceived notions in this regard. He added that he had had personal discussions with
56 Tom Eaton who had said that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would not
57 participate in the GWMA if regulations were taken off the table. Vern did believe, however,
58 that many members thought non-regulatory strategies were more effective, but there was
59 no advance decision.

60

61 He also recalled that EPA, Yakima County and Washington State Departments of Health,
62 Ecology and Agriculture addressed regulatory actions in a document entitled “Vital
63 Elements of a Groundwater Protection Body.” A member asked Troy what incentives the
64 group had suggested; Troy said cost shares for irrigation water management and soil
65 sampling data analysis and said that he felt the group had made good decisions that can
66 effect change and come up with good results. Troy added, however, that the group would
67 meet again to talk about the NAA and stated that the preliminary results of the NAA did not
68 come as a surprise to most of the group.

69 **RCIM:** Dan DeGroot stated that the group had completed their investigation and had
70 reviewed the second draft of their report at their April meeting. The report had not been
71 approved because the group was awaiting the results of the NAA. The group’s May meeting
72 will be cancelled and Dan hoped to review the NAA in June and have the report to the
73 GWAC ready for its June meeting. Dan noted that there was concern that the NAA doesn’t
74 emphasize the fact that onsite sewage systems are designed to leach into the aquifer as
75 discussed at the last GWAC meeting but noted this is of greater concern where there are
76 areas of high density. Dan said the group also discussed the two Large Onsite Sewage
77 Systems (LOSS) systems in the GWMA and learned that even though reports are not being
78 submitted in a timely fashion, permits are still being issued. There was also a question as to
79 whether the operation and maintenance plans for each LOSS were being followed correctly.
80 Vern added that Peter Severtsen of the Department of Ecology is preparing a separate
81 analysis of bio-solids for the NAA because none had been included earlier but pointed out
82 that the Port of Sunnyside was moving away from land applying waste to a drain discharge
83 in 2019.

84 **Regulatory Framework:** Jean reported that Ecology made a presentation on Total
85 Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL’s) since TMDL’s had been brought up before the GWMA was
86 formed as a potential format to address nitrates in the groundwater. Several members said
87 that while TMDL’s address surface water it would be difficult to follow surface water from
88 its source into the aquifer. Another member added that the ground acts as a filter so this
89 may not be an issue. Jean noted that the group had also reviewed composting operations
90 from a WSDA perspective. Jean said there was lots of support for minimizing regulation of
91 this activity but there was a minority who disagreed. The group had also looked at their
92 remaining assignments and hoped to have a written report ready next month. Jean offered
93 a variety of regulatory assistance to other working groups and said that the group also
94 needed to develop narratives to go with the key messages and recommendations it had
95 submitted to the EPO Working Group.

96 **EPO:** Lisa shared that EPO formulated a “What You Can do to Protect Well Water”
97 campaign in response to the recent flooding in the Yakima Valley. Flyers in English and
98 Spanish and test strips were distributed door-to-door in Outlook, 20,000 flyers were
99 inserted into the *Sunnyside Daily News* and *El Sol* at the end of March, two members of the
100 EPO committee participated in a KDNA news show, and Commissioner Rand Elliott was
101 interviewed on KIT. Lisa added that the flyer will also be handed out at the Sunnyside
102 Walmart store on April 29. A member asked if there was an uptake in well testing as a
103 result of these efforts. Dave Cole from the Yakima Health District said yes. Lisa then
104 addressed the EPO Questionnaire Summary in the agenda packet. The working groups had
105 completed questionnaires over a period of several months and answered a series of
106 questions posed to them by EPO. The goal was to create a unified messaging for the GWAC,
107 both short-term (through 2017) and post-plan adoption. Lisa continued that EPO was
108 asking the GWAC for assistance to identify specific messages and outreach the group would
109 like conducted. Lisa stated that to-date all outreach had centered on the health risks, “test
110 your well” and letting people know about the GWMA. EPO now wanted the group’s short-
111 term recommendations of specific messages for “before plan adoption” and “beyond plan
112 adoption and review” to ensure the public is aware of the plan and their opportunity to
113 review. David Bowen noted that it would be important for EPO to provide information to
114 the public on public hearings. Lisa acknowledged that this was on the committee’s radar.
115 Troy asked that EPO develop brochures on water management, nutrient management and
116 soil sampling and indicated that he would be willing to help. Vern asked that all working
117 groups include this in their next month’s agenda. He suggested that they specifically review
118 their responses to Question No. 6 and develop ideas for potential messages. Vern
119 reminded everyone that the GWAC has an obligation to inform the public about what the
120 group is doing.

121 **Data Collection:** Vern reported for Melanie who had been ill. Regarding the Ambient
122 Monitoring Network, PGG has updated their Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and the
123 Board of Yakima County Commissioners will be considering a contract PGG just submitted
124 to install purpose built wells. USGS has submitted a QAPP for common water supply
125 aquifers, which will be reviewed by the Data Collection Working Group. Matt Bachmann
126 noted that 89 samples of the first round had already been completed (USGS will conduct six
127 rounds of sampling). The remaining first-round sampling will be done in the next week.
128 Sampling reports will be available at the next GWAC meeting. Matt also brought a map of
129 the first 60 sites for people to look at. A member asked if it could be put into a GIS layer –
130 Matt said yes. Matt said that 24 of the 25 surface water wells had been approved and the
131 Granger drain site was moved 40 feet. Another member mentioned that when the purpose

132 built wells had been located he wanted to be advised so he could look at their sites. Vern
133 said the process had been delayed due to bad weather, but that the County survey crew
134 would head out shortly. Vern continued that the Data group planned to delineate how data
135 from all the GWMA efforts will be analyzed. Melanie reported that she was trying to set up
136 the Don Stuart presentation and that Andrew Bary of WSU had already presented
137 information on the nitrogen cycle and compost as part of the Data group's education
138 efforts. Vern said that they would try to get other speakers scheduled which would include
139 experts from this group like Troy Peters on water management.

140 **Funding:** Vern indicated that it was time for the funding working group to meet and
141 proposed a June 14 initial meeting date to list generic funding alternatives and determine
142 the scope of funding needs. The group would continue to meet through September to
143 consider funding alternatives for recommendations chosen by GWAC and funding for the
144 ongoing water monitoring program. Vern will send out a blanket invitation to everyone.

145
146 **V. Where We're Going From Here:** Vern referred everyone to the Tentative Schedule for
147 Completion of Groundwater Management Program passed out earlier. He reviewed the
148 timeline for the GWAC and working group meetings and agreed that some of the agenda
149 items may take longer than currently scheduled. Jim Davenport pointed out that most
150 working groups wouldn't meet after June or July so that if the GWAC needs to meet more
151 frequently it could. A member stated that she found the tentative schedule very helpful
152 and asked for some clarification about the final product. Vern noted that the SEPA process
153 will lead to clarifications. Once that is done the plan will be presented to the Department of
154 Ecology. They will then hold public hearings which are typically done jointly with the
155 County Commissioners although this is not a requirement. As lead agency Yakima County
156 must then compile comments where clarification is required and the GWAC may need to
157 come back together in 2018 to respond. When the Department of Ecology finally approves
158 the plan it will go to the affected jurisdictions who have a role in enacting the plan. The
159 member asked if there was a timeline for this. David Bowen indicated it will move forward
160 at a good rate. Vern also added that it will come out just before the legislative session
161 which will be timely to get financial requests in.

162
163 Another member asked when the group would talk about alternative management
164 strategies. Vern asked the member for her definition of what this meant. The member
165 stated that she asked for an opportunity to present to the GWAC but had been put off
166 continuously. Several members indicated that the member had many opportunities over
167 the past five years. A great deal of discussion ensued including a discussion on the

168 effectiveness of BMP's. The member asked for 30 minutes in a GWAC meeting to present
169 alternative strategies. The group agreed and the member was asked to prepare a short
170 synopsis of her presentation to go out with the agenda one week prior to the May meeting.
171 A member wanted to see the presentation be solution oriented—her version of the best
172 course of action. The member agreed.

173

174 **VI. Committee Business:** The February 16, 2017 meeting summary was approved as
175 presented.

176

177 **VII. Public Comment:** Several people spoke up. One who was disappointed with the attitude in
178 the meeting as she had come wanting something positive after being at a Yakima Regional
179 Clean Air Agency (YRCAA) meeting that turned down air sensors for ammonia. She was
180 excited, however, that her neighbor was cleaning up his dairy. Another person commented
181 on the Irrigated Ag portion of the WSDA presentation. He felt the data, methodology,
182 assumptions and conclusions were flawed. He felt that nitrogen was overstated and
183 thought it was a problem that in the three years he had participated in the GWAC there
184 hadn't been participation by an agriculture economist. A discussion ensued on the
185 economic incentive to apply commercial fertilizer as opposed to animal waste product.
186 Another person asked if Melanie Redding had scheduled the Don Stuart presentation yet
187 and suggested that it may be good to do this at the next meeting prior to the presentation
188 on alternative management strategies. The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 PM.

189

190 **VIII. Next Meeting:** May 18, 2017.

191

192 **IX. Next Steps:** 1) Vern to schedule Funding Working Group Meeting in June. A blanket
193 invitation will be sent to everyone. 2) Member Jean Mendoza to present her suggested
194 alternative management strategies at the next GWAC meeting. Jean will provide a short
195 synopsis of her presentation to go out with the agenda one week prior to the May 18
196 meeting.

197 **X. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on May 18, 2017.