

[Education and Public Outreach]

Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee

Working Group Members

Andres Cervantes (GWAC-DOH), Jean Mendoza (GWAC-Friends of Toppenish Creek), Elizabeth Torres (Citizen), Gretchen Stewart (EPA), Patricia Newhouse (GWAC-Citizen Rep Position #2), Joye Redfield-Wilder (Ecology), Stuart Turner (GWAC-Turner & Co), Ignacio Marquez (AGR), Jessica Black (GWAC); Lisa Freund (Yakima County-Chair)

Meetings/Calls Dates

Meeting: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 from 1:30 to 3:30 PM.

Participants

*Lisa Freund (Chair-Yakima County), Ignacio Marquez (AGR), Joye Redfield-Wilder (Ecology), Jim Davenport (Yakima County), and *Melanie Redding (Ecology). *Via phone

Key Discussion Points

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 PM by Jim Davenport who explained that Lisa went home unexpectedly and asked him to chair the meeting. Lisa joined the meeting by phone.

Data Collections Working Group Short and Long-Term Messages: Lisa introduced Melanie Redding, chair of the Data Collections Working Group, and explained Melanie had been invited to communicate her committee's needs for short and long-term messages. Melanie stated we have an opportunity to tell the public about the role of the GWMA, the data that has been collected, explain why it has been collected, communicate the results, provide an explanation of what the results mean and where the information could be found. She added that it would be important to determine where the information should be stored and the need for the information to be as accurate as possible. Melanie asked that the EPO determine strategies not only for "how do we communicate with the public" but also how to tie economic benefit back to positive actions (e.g., save money by using less fertilizer) in addition to protecting the groundwater. Lisa suggested the EPO should work with a summary of each of the Data Working Group's accomplishments in order to determine a public relations plan. For example, EPO could say "here is the data we are gathering which will tell you about the health of the water where you are" and that the data will be updated. Lisa asked Melanie to provide EPO with narrative summaries (approximately 75 words, three paragraphs, 25 words each) on all of the monitoring efforts; what each effort covers, what each is intended to do, and where supplemental information could be found.

As an example Lisa asked Melanie to summarize the Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA). Melanie stated the NAA is a living document designed to disclose relative contributions to nitrates in the groundwater from all available sources in the Lower Yakima Valley. She said the NAA was not meant to be precise but will allow the GWAC/GWMA to focus in on the numerous sources that could be impacting people's water quality. She believed it provided a holistic approach to improving numerous sources because the data is in GIS and will allow people to zoom in on potential sources around their homes. A member thought the suggested summaries would provide a tool to give additional direction for outreach as it would allow EPO to determine more accurately who the target audiences would be. Jim did caution that the NAA was in draft form - the working groups had been briefed and the GWAC members were reminded at a recent meeting to submit their written comments. The authors would then consider the comments and ultimately the GWAC will decide whether to accept the assessment but regardless it will likely be published by the authors. Jim anticipated this project would be done in the next few months. Both Lisa and Melanie thought it would be good to get permission to share the NAA once the work was done. A member also mentioned that the EPO Questionnaire may have been an important exercise for the working groups because it required them to identify specific program outcomes and noted that although the outreach may have to wait until September, they really are key messages. Melanie stated that a lot of the spreadsheet ties into ambient monitoring strategies but it was a good exercise with good information noting that the group has to wait for the GWAC to catch up.

The group discussed additional outreach ideas as follows:

A member wondered whose website will permanently house the information produced, who will update it and who will analyze the data? The group thought it would be important to determine and achieve clear web posting of the GWMA Program and data reports; focus sheets and outreach materials – a permanent repository for materials once the GWMA process is complete and the committees disband.

A concern was expressed that the group not reinvent the wheel in its attempt to reach its targeted audience as much of this information is already available through the Department of Ecology, the State Department of Health, the State Department of Agriculture and the Yakima Health District. The member also pointed out that partnering may help to leverage funding. The group also recognized that others were educating a variety of stakeholders, e.g., the South Yakima Conservation District and Washington State University Research and Extension Center. Jim said that many of the working groups had agreed that these agencies were underfunded to accomplish this task and one of the recommendations of the working groups was adequate funding to employ additional personnel for outreach and educational purposes.

Another member felt it was important to inventory and track what the group had already done specifically, i.e., "this information was shared with these people at these events." Jim added that the Livestock/CAFO working group had recommended an evaluation in five years mostly to assess how well behavior modifications are being implemented.

Joye explained Ecology puts together focus groups and asks them "what would it take to make you change _____ behavior?" Based on the responses of the focus group, grant funding is sought

and plans made to proceed to change community-based behaviors. Lisa thought focus groups or surveys may be a route the group would want to explore to identify what it would take to change behavior in the GWMA. Lisa added that it would be irresponsible to recommend strategies that EPO had already found ineffective. Focus groups or surveys could help EPO focus GWMA program messaging. A member suggested that the group could elicit feedback from GWAC members, particularly commodity and agricultural stakeholders and conservation districts to determine best approaches to achieving educational goals. This could be done in tandem with other community-based outreach efforts. Jim noted that “incentives” was a subject that had been tangentially discussed in the working groups over several meetings, but there had been no previous suggestions about how to approach behavioral modification. The suggestion could be implemented by EPO within the remaining months of the GWAC, or could be added to the EPO’s list of alternatives list, or both.

EPO Proposed Alternatives: Jim presented the group with a list of EPO Proposed Alternatives to consider and explained that the list had been derived from a review of all the working groups’ written summaries from the middle of 2015 to present, and contained everything on the subject of education. Jim also provided a handout to help the group winnow down potential solutions at the working group level.

A member suggested that the group add a recommendation for a webpage, website accessibilities, and content and it be housed somewhere as she had outlined previously. Jim thought this was on the Yakima County list. Jim said that there is also a recommendation that someone become the lead agency, and noted that one suggestion was that it be Yakima County. He added that other entities had been suggested: Yakima Health District, South Yakima Conservation District, Department of Ecology, Department of Health and Washington State University, but he thought the lead agency would be Yakima County. The group also discussed the working association between the Yakima Health District and Yakima County.

A member thought the list was great but needs action verbs. Another member thought it was important to build an outreach plan as actual implementation had not been included. She also thought the group should remove education in public schools from the list because she wasn’t sure this was feasible but Jim noted that the group’s job was just to get the list edited and changed – the other columns, which represented the criteria for the alternatives from the WAC, could be sorted through once the list was complete. The group also discussed various ways to analyze the criteria, e.g., costs could be rated by high, medium and low. Jim added that there was no direction in this regard from the WAC. Lisa said that when the EPO developed its budget four years ago they employed a range system and thought it worked well. Jim said that some things on the master list will require cost numbers like the ambient monitoring network.

A member noted that she saw duplication and thought the list could be winnowed down. Another member thought it was a good starting point and suggested that the list be sent out to the working group for consideration prior to its presentation to the GWAC. Joye agreed to review and edit the list first then return it to Bobbie who would send it out for the entire group’s review. It was agreed to give the group until Friday, June 23 to suggest additions or make any other changes.

Joye mentioned Access Washington which hosts web information for free (there is a fee for the set-up). This could be a neutral location and a link to the site could be on the County website. It is cloud based so there lots of storage. EPO could look into it to make sure they wanted to recommend it.

Next Meeting and Next Steps: The group agreed to reschedule the next EPO meeting to Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at 1:30 PM, Yakima County Courthouse Room 418. The group agreed to finish its work on recommended alternatives and what messages can be communicated in the short-term at this meeting and discuss the format of the "Fire Adapted Communities" brochure (located in the kiosk in the foyer of Yakima County Public Services) for use as a model for an EPO publication. Jim liked the how-to's found in this brochure. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.

Resources Requested

Recommendations for GWAC

Deliverables/Products Status

Proposed Next Steps (Summary of ACTION STEPS)

Melanie: Provide EPO with narrative summaries (approximately 75 words, three paragraphs, 25 words each) on all of the monitoring efforts; what each effort covers, what each is intended to do, and where supplemental information could be found.

Joye: Review and update the Proposed EPO Alternatives and talk to the "community change" person at Ecology to gather information on focus groups.

Everyone: Review and approve Proposed EPO Alternatives; make additional suggestions if appropriate. Return to Bobbie by Friday, June 23. Review the "Fire Adapted Communities" booklet available at the kiosk in the foyer of Yakima County Public Services. Jim thought this was a good model for an EPO publication.