

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, November 2, 2017 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

*Yakima County Roads Maintenance Conference Room
 1216 South 18th Street, Yakima, WA 98901*

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

I. Call to Order: This meeting was called to order at 5:03 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	✓	

Rodney Heit	South Yakima Conservation District (alternate)		✓
John Van Wingerden III	Port of Sunnyside		✓
Rand Elliott	Yakima County Board of Commissioners	✓	
Vern Redifer	Yakima County Board of Commissioners (alternate)	✓	
Ryan Ibach	Yakima Health District)		✓
Dr. Troy Peters	WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center		✓
Lucy Edmondson	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency		✓
Nick Peak	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (alternate)		✓
Elizabeth Sanchey	Yakama Nation		✓
Stuart Crane	Yakama Nation (alternate)	✓	
Gary Bahr	WA Department of Agriculture	✓	
Perry Beale	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 (alternate)	✓	
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 reviewed the agenda – there were no additions. The group paused for a moment of silence.
 15

16 **III. Nitrogen Availability Assessment – Discuss Comments and Responses:** Vern asked the
 17 group how they wanted to proceed through the list of 90 comments and agency responses
 18 – sequentially, or zeroing in on particular comments on which members placed a high
 19 priority. Gary stated he was fine starting at the beginning. The floor was opened for
 20 comments.
 21

22 Comment 3: “Cross check CAFO and irrigated agriculture mass balance results by comparing
 23 manure available for land application to manure applications to cropland; this comparison
 24 was planned in the scope of work.” A member agreed that better numbers were needed in
 25 this area, and mentioned a WSDA report on manure exports currently being worked on. He
 26 suggested that this could be turned into an annual event in order to more reliably quantify

27 the mass balance. Gary stated that he met recently with the Dairy Nutrient Management
28 team as they are already collecting this data. The intent is to have the information circle
29 back to the GWMA at some point.

30

31 Comment 1: “Report does not assess nitrogen loading to groundwater; the term ‘nitrogen
32 loading to groundwater’ used in initial scope of work in description of calculation, document
33 no longer titled ‘Nitrogen Loading Assessment.’” The group discussed the decision to
34 change the title of the report from “Loading Assessment” to “Availability Assessment.”
35 Vern and Gary, informed by technical advice from the Departments of Health and Ecology,
36 felt the revision was necessary as they could not reliably quantify the amount of available
37 nitrogen loading into groundwater. A member was unhappy with the process that led to
38 this change, recalling earlier meetings in which others felt a loading assessment was
39 possible, and money authorized for that purpose, with the title and scope being changed
40 after the fact. She asked when the second draft of the NAA would be made available. Vern
41 hoped it would be ready by the end of the year, but warned that the process for changing
42 the report to incorporate every comment would take a long time, and suggested including
43 the comments as recommendations for further study would be a preferable approach,
44 although the decision would be up to the group.

45

46 Comment 7: “Pie chart inputs from irrigated agriculture are wrong. More specifics with
47 irrigated agriculture comments.” A member pointed out that the WSDA’s response was
48 simply “Comment noted,” and asked if anyone had actually looked at reworking the pie
49 charts. Her specific objection was that the low-level loading numbers for irrigated ag
50 contained negative numbers. Gary stated that the pie charts only utilized the positive
51 numbers, and the process was explained in the report. He would take another look and see
52 if there was a different way to explain it. A discussion ensued on the reliability of the NAA’s
53 high-end nitrogen application estimates for irrigated agriculture. Some members felt these
54 numbers would poison WSDA and WSU’s relations with growers. Members who had
55 worked on drafting the report acknowledged the numbers would never be perfect, but felt
56 they had utilized the best information they had available. The decision to put out low,
57 medium, and high ranges was made with the intent of preventing members of the public
58 from latching on to one average number when the reality was more complex. After
59 debating the propriety of this decision, Gary acceded to take the low and high-end
60 estimates out of the next draft of the NAA.

61

62 Comment 22: “Fertilizer guide application rates should be used instead of survey data.” A
63 member noted that WSDA’s response to this comment was that they would “review
64 fertilizer guide recommendations and compare and contrast these recommendations with
65 the survey data.” The member was displeased that the NAA would still contain the survey
66 data from consultants. Gary felt the survey data and the fertilizer guides were both reliable
67 sources, although neither would paint a perfectly accurate picture of practices on the
68 ground. The newer fertilizer guides reviewed by WSDA were around ten years old, and
69 from extension services in Oregon and Idaho, but they were still useable. He stated that
70 even relying on fertilizer guides, the overall numbers would still show irrigated ag as the
71 largest available source of nitrogen in the GWMA.

72
73 Discussion ensued on the assumed percentage of soil organic matter conversion to nitrates.
74 A member felt that assuming the same percentage for every field was inappropriate. Other
75 members felt the deep soil sampling results did not provide a population sample large
76 enough to draw statistically valid conclusions. Other members questioned how significant
77 an issue this was since the range of percentages were between one and three percent.
78 Gary responded that a one percent difference amounted to 20 pounds N/acre.

79
80 Comment 80: “The report does not include an analysis of Biosolids.” While this comment
81 was not identified by number in the discussion, the substance of it was brought up. Vern
82 stated that an analysis of biosolids would be included in the next draft of the NAA.

83
84 The lack of analysis on compost was also raised. Gary stated that this was being looked into
85 by WSDA.

86
87 Upon returning from a short break, Sage Park pointed out that the NAA is intended to be a
88 living document, and asked what the group would be comfortable with moving forward. A
89 member of the group responded that Vern and Gary had said member comments had been
90 incorporated into the report and asked to see the second draft. Gary said that there is no
91 second draft, but that the first draft had been reexamined since receiving member
92 comments. Vern stated that the GWMA has to write a final report containing findings and
93 recommendations, and it would be helpful in writing this report if the group could at least
94 agree that an NAA incorporating member comments and concerns is the best available
95 information, with a disclaimer that some numbers may change as new data becomes
96 available. A member of the group stated she would not be able to sign off on such a
97 statement of support due to the aforementioned concerns about soil organic matter

98 conversion. The group discussed the possibility of discarding one median number for
99 organic matter and substituting a range, but no decisions were made.

100

101 The group agreed to continue the discussion of the NAA at the next GWAC meeting. An
102 updated list of summarized comments would be distributed to members, with subjects
103 resolved at this meeting crossed out.

104

105 **IV. Feedback on GIS Application:** Vern asked the group if they had any quick feedback on the
106 GIS application since the last meeting. A member asked if the nitrogen estimates used in
107 the application were based on the NAA's data. Vern was pretty sure they were based on
108 the NAA's median assessment, but that he would double-check that with GIS. He also
109 stated that all the information in the application was updateable.

110

111 **V. Committee Business:** The October 19, 2017 meeting summary was approved as presented.

112

113 **VI. Public Comment:** A member commented that the whole point of the GWMA was to help
114 the people of the Lower Valley, and the group was quickly running out of time and money.
115 She urged the group to keep an eye on the bottom line. Another member expressed dismay
116 that the first draft NAA had contained high and low estimates he felt were badly flawed.
117 The meeting adjourned at 6:56 PM.

118

119 **VII. Next Meeting:** November 16, 2017.

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121 **VIII. Next Steps:** 1) An updated summary of NAA comments and responses will be sent out to
122 group members for their review. 2) Vern will double-check with GIS on whether the
123 nitrogen application rates shown in the application are based on the NAA's median data. 3)
124 Vern will send a link to the application to Melanie Redding.

125

126 **IX. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on December 7, 2017.