

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

3                   **MEETING SUMMARY**

4                   **Thursday, February 15, 2018 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

5                   **Yakima County Roads Maintenance Conference Room**  
 6                   **1216 South 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Yakima, WA 98901**

7  
 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.

<b>Member</b>	<b>Seat</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
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)	✓	
Myers, Holly	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		✓
Nick Peak	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (alternate)		✓
Elizabeth Sanchez	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	✓	
Alexander V. Alexiades	Heritage University (alternate)		✓
Matt Bachmann	USGS	✓	

13      **II. Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions:** After the customary introductions and  
 14      moment of silence, Vern reviewed the agenda. He noted that he would like to add an agenda  
 15      item – an update on the Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA). He asked the group if they  
 16      had any additional agenda items. There were none.

17  
 18      **III. Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA) Update, Gary Bahr, WSDA**  
 19      Gary stated that WSDA is continuing to review the comments made on the draft NAA and to  
 20      make changes based on the comments. He explained that WSDA staff has been working with  
 21      WSU professors on topics including reviewing the nitrogen mineralization for the 15  
 22      identified crops and cover crops. WSU believes there may be some under- and over-  
 23      mineralization for various applications (commercial fertilizer, manure compost applications).  
 24      He said some items change related to nitrogen mineralization related to each crop. Based on

25        WSU's feedback, adjustments have been made to the low/medium/high numbers. This  
26        recalibrating should result in more accurate data.

27

28        A member commented that time and energy was spent arguing over crops that do not require  
29        additional nitrogen and that there seemed to be disagreements in the industry as to the  
30        numbers that make it dubious and call to question the ranking. Vern declared that work has  
31        not stopped and that the Department of Agriculture is taking this very seriously, making  
32        appropriate adjustments. The intent is to have the numbers finalized by April. The numbers  
33        discussed tonight are old numbers.

34

35 **IV. Review and Refine Alternatives**

36        Jim Davenport started the discussion on the refined alternatives spreadsheet. He mentioned  
37        that we have gone out to the agencies and asked for their input. When those come back we  
38        will get together with the funding group and work out those estimates. If you have an idea,  
39        please provide ASAP so we can move on. Taking some 200 alternatives, green alike and make  
40        one yellow column of details, columns to the right are factors called out in the WA Admin  
41        code (WAC). We are now in the 80 range, and 30-40 would be realistic. The information  
42        currently with WAC factors was filled in by Chris, Jim, Lisa, and Bobbie. They looked at the  
43        Yakima County Comprehensive Plan for the last column. The judgments were subjective and  
44        not quantitative. Jim would like more quantitative information. We did get a little feedback.  
45        On line 48-Update Western Fertilizer Handbook-by Western Plan Health Association, their  
46        response was that they are already doing it. He reminded the group to provide more  
47        quantitative information.

48

49        A discussion ensued regarding pursuing funding for alternatives: would requests be made  
50        directly to the Legislature, or through an agency, or by other means? It was determined that  
51        each request would be considered from various funding angles (e.g., Yakima County making  
52        a direct request to the Legislature, or Ecology making the request with Yakima County  
53        supporting and/or providing an in-kind contribution to the project, etc.). The funding "ask"  
54        would be tailored to the specific project.

55

56        Vern observed that requests would need to be reasonable and balanced. A member asked if  
57        Gary Bahr would be providing cost information from related work he had performed in Idaho.  
58        Gary replied that yes, he would provide that information.

59

60

61       **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Funding**

62       Bonda Habets, State Resource Conservationist with the NRCS, was introduced. She explained  
63       the NRCS' three-year funding cycle and the available capital facilities funding through her  
64       agency. She explained how and when to make proposals: For example, NRCS may not have  
65       funding this year, however, unspent funds allocated for this year will be returned in August,  
66       and need to be expended by September 15. If an agency is prepared to make an immediate  
67       proposal in August, they might receive some of these unspent funds. She also explained the  
68       required Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans that must be in place for certain types  
69       of funding. She added that producers typically pay 25 percent of the entire cost. In reply to a  
70       question regarding NRCS' funding source, she replied that it was allocated by Congress and  
71       administered through the US Department of Agriculture. She then described a current project  
72       – the Yakama Nation's request for funding to assist all producers within the Yakama Nation  
73       prepare Nutrient Management Plans. Vern believed this was a good example of supporting  
74       an agency and not going straight to the legislature.

75  
76       Vern asked if there were any other comments on the alternatives. A member replied that he  
77       believed that the group agreed not to propose regulations (#13). Jim Davenport explained  
78       that the term "regulation" is much broader than a "just do it," and offered revised wording  
79       for the alternative. Another member added that the alternatives need measurable language  
80       to make sure people don't pollute water. Gary described a new, national Priority Watershed  
81       program (Whatcom County was identified as an example) that offers areas the opportunity  
82       to become a priority watershed. He added that Dee Carlson, the National Water Quality  
83       Initiative (NWQI) Coordinator for NRCS, was interested in talking to this group.

84  
85       Another member requested that personal opinions be kept out of the alternatives  
86       spreadsheet "comments" column. In response, another member suggested that the  
87       comments field is exactly for that purpose: like the opinions expressed around this table,  
88       members should have a forum to express themselves. Beyond that opinions should be backed  
89       up by facts and data.

90  
91       **V. PGG Contract**

92       Vern discussed site maps he printed, but they did not have road names so he did not bring  
93       hand-outs for everyone. The proposed purpose built wells are staked out. Vern offered to  
94       create the maps with road names that will be downloadable from the website. A member  
95       asked if land owners had been notified of the reason stakes were put out. Vern replied that  
96       they were not since they are all on publicly owned property.

97  
98     A member observed that the GWAC was missing an opportunity for outreach as the proposed  
99     purpose built well locations are staked for surveying. Landowners will wonder what is going  
100    on when they see the stakes; communicating with them will build understanding and help  
101    allay concerns. Vern acknowledged the need for outreach but advised the group to wait until  
102    it's appropriate. At this point we are only at the planning stage. Once a definitive decision is  
103    made regarding the well locations, outreach can be launched. Discussion ensued regarding  
104    the definition of public right-of-way (i.e., the location of all the purpose-built wells) and  
105    courtesy to the public.

106

107 **VI. GIS Mapping Results**

108     Yakima County GIS Manager Mike Martian displayed various map layers (i.e., RCIM  
109    availability, Irrigated Ag Contributions, CAFOs (Pens and Corrals) and Lagoons).  
110     Vern explained that each layer can be used as a tool for overarching analysis of nitrogen  
111    loading.

112

113     David Bowen clarified that the "red" squares indicated a collection of high nitrate that may  
114    or may not be reaching the [ground]water. Vern added that the study group was seeking  
115    correlations from the GIS data. The brown dots in the RCIM layer are septic systems. We are  
116    not saying septic is the problem, but we have a high density that may be adding to the  
117    problem. Theories would be considered, then they would return to the data to test the  
118    theories. He advised that there were 20 or more GIS data layers to be considered. We  
119    originally correlated high nitrogen availability to high nitrate in wells, but that theory was  
120    blown. He noted that the USGS' 2017 well sampling had not been added yet, but would be.  
121     USGS data would include well logs, and that data could be compared against Ecology's well  
122    log data. A lot of different analysis can be applied.

123

124     A member asked about the source and time span of the GIS data. Vern replied that it contains  
125    the VIRE Data (2001-02), Department of Health, USGS, and WSDA sampling. It also includes  
126    Yakima County's 2011 Nitrate Treatment Program sampling results and the GWAC's high risk  
127    well assessment survey data. The EPA data has not been added yet; although it's available on  
128    the EPA website, it is in PDF format. Vern noted he will ask Eric Winiecki for a different data  
129    format.

130

131     Matt Bachmann noted that there are complications in comparing old to new data. He  
132    observed that the USGS is gathering multiple samples (from the same wells) and in different

133 seasons. He noted that seasonal changes in groundwater add complexity to the analysis, as  
134 does location, depth, nitrogen level, and time of year.

135  
136 A member of the public voice concerns about the water table dropping, which he believes  
137 will affect nitrate concentrations. Regarding the RCIM septic system layer, was it known how  
138 many people/houses are contributing to the nitrogen load? Vern replied that he/GIS staff  
139 were using census tract data to calculate population. Approximately 26,000 people were  
140 estimated to be on septic systems in that area.

141  
142 Matt Bachmann noted that the Sunnyside and Roza canals have been added to GIS. It  
143 appeared the red dots (hot spots) generally follow an East-West trending band that roughly  
144 followed the Sunnyside Canal. If so, were leaking canals contributing to nitrate  
145 concentrations? He added that groundwater contours may also influence nitrogen (or  
146 influence well depths). These are at least worth investigation.

147  
148 It was asked if the group could correlate individual land use to levels of nitrogen in  
149 groundwater. Matt replied yes, but it would be very expensive and time-consuming to track.  
150 Another member asked if the group would be evaluating proposed Best Management  
151 Practices (BMPs) to this mapping. Vern replied not individually, but it is set up to measure  
152 changes over time.

153  
154 **VII. Committee Business:** No action.

155  
156 **VIII. Public Comment:** There was no public comment. Two GWAC members requested a more  
157 detailed Yakima County GWMA expenditure report than the document provided at the  
158 meeting. They also requested expenditure records from agencies who had provided GWMA-  
159 related work (e.g., SYCD, USGS). Vern noted he could provide all the County's information;  
160 however, requests for other agencies' expenditures would have to be made to those  
161 agencies. After discussion, another member suggested that the budget be reviewed at  
162 another meeting.

163  
164 David Bowen and Gary Bahr commended the County for its work, noting that the quality of  
165 its leadership and GIS analysis are superior.

166

167 **IX.** The meeting adjourned at 7:19 PM.

168

169 **X. Next Meeting:** Thursday, March 1, 2018.

170

171 **XI. Next Steps:** 1) Alternatives Spreadsheet - member input is requested, particularly in the cost  
172 and funding source columns. Please provide input to Jim Davenport as soon as possible. 2)  
173 Purpose built well maps - Vern will reprint the 30 site maps with road names and distribute  
174 to the group via the web.

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176 **XII. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on March 1, 2018.