

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, May 3, 2018 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

*Denny Blaine Boardroom, Sunnyside School District
 810 E Custer Ave, Sunnyside WA 98944*

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 5:06 PM by Jim Davenport, facilitating in Vern’s absence.

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	✓	
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)		✓
Holly Myers	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 Sanchey	Yakama Nation		✓
Stuart Crane	Yakama Nation (alternate)	✓	
Bahr, Gary	WA Department of Agriculture		✓
Beale, Perry	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		✓
Alex Alexiades	Heritage University		✓
Matt Bachmann	USGS	✓	

14 **Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions:** Jim informed the group that Commissioner
 15 Elliott had been delayed by car problems. The group and members of the audience gave the
 16 customary introductions.

17
 18 **II. Committee Business:** The March 1 and April 5 GWAC Meeting Summaries were approved as
 19 presented.

20
 21 **III. Comments on Program Draft 2:** Jim informed the group that he had received their comments
 22 on the 2nd Draft of the GWMA Program, and had incorporated many of their suggestions into
 23 the 3rd Draft. He invited members to continue sending in comments.

24
 25 **IV. Status of Well Monitoring Project:** Jim updated the group as to the status of the ambient
 26 monitoring network. The bid documents to find drillers to perform the work were almost

27 complete, and would probably be ready in a couple more weeks. Survey crews were checking
28 each location to make sure they really were within county right-of-way as stipulated. Of the
29 30 sites, 28 were in country right-of-way, one was in state, and one was in the city of
30 Grandview. Crews were also doing utility locates to make sure the well drilling didn't
31 accidentally damage any underground lines. They were proceeding at a pace of two sites-per-
32 day, so it would be roughly 15 working days to complete the work.

33

34 **V. Analysis of Alternatives/Recommendations:** Jim reviewed the new list of recommended
35 alternatives. He reminded the group that the initial list had been comprised of roughly 300
36 items suggested by GWAC members. Each item on the list had been discussed by the group
37 in meetings running through the latter half of 2017, and narrowed down to those items that
38 did not receive strong objections. Jim had consolidated the list further down to 66 items,
39 broken up into seven broad categories: Education, Administrative, Data Collection and
40 Monitoring, Water, Public Works, Research and Development, and Agriculture.

41

42 Jim told the group he had spent the past month meeting with GWAC members – including
43 David Bowen, Jason Sheehan, Ryan Ibach, Ginny Stern, Laurie Crowe, Perry Beale, and Gary
44 Bahr – gathering cost estimates for each potential recommendation. Those estimates had
45 been included in the spreadsheet of recommendations. Jim asked the group to read the
46 spreadsheet and send him questions. He also asked members to rank each item on the list,
47 which would be emailed to members the next day, on a scale from 3 to minus-3, and have
48 the results in to him in a week's time.

49

50 Some members had questions about the how these recommendations might be
51 implemented, what funding sources might be involved, and whether there was enough
52 information available to make informed decisions. Other GWMA's had passed on the
53 implementation duties to a new lead entity. While some short-term funding came from
54 federal and state sources, over the long-term, funding came from local sources. Some of the
55 projects had long-term funding costs that were difficult to project, but Jim felt rough
56 estimates were necessary to set priorities among the different alternatives.

57

58 **VI. Lead Entity: Whether? Who? What?:** With the GWAC's mandate nearing an end, Jim shared
59 his thoughts on what types of qualities a successor lead entity in charge of implementing the
60 GWMA program would need. Initial dollars would need to come through legislative
61 appropriation or a large capital budget, then contracted to other parties. A lead entity would
62 need to have a competent management team and credibility with the local population. In

63 Jim's view, there clearly needed to be a lead entity in charge of carrying out these tasks,
64 securing and directing funding, and instilling the public and existing agencies with a sense of
65 the importance of the issue. He asked for the group's input as to who they thought should
66 carry those responsibilities.

67
68 A member observed that an entity trying to implement a multi-faceted program would need
69 to have a large staff to carry out the work, and suggested the Department of Ecology. Another
70 member observed that in other GWMA's, the lead entity had always been local in nature,
71 oftentimes the county, or a collection of counties. The representative for Ecology stated that
72 in a perfect world, they would prefer Yakima County to take on the role. Another member
73 suggested that the South Yakima Conservation District or WSU Extension Service would be
74 ideal choices, since they already have existing relationships with growers and producers, and
75 don't spend a lot of money. Another member stated that the county already had all the
76 GWMA information in their possession, and experience with approaching legislators for
77 money. Jim asked Commissioner Elliott if the County Board had the authority to create a lead
78 entity. As far as he knew, the answer was yes, although further discussions about what such
79 a lead entity would do would need to be taken with the other commissioners first. A member
80 asked what the appropriate WACs said about forming a lead entity, stating they hadn't found
81 anything. Jim stated that he hadn't either, although he would look again.

82
83 Jim asked the group if there was consensus that Yakima County should be the lead entity. A
84 member objected, citing concerns with how the County had operated the GWAC. The group
85 discussed by what process a lead entity would be named. It was the group's goal to operate
86 by consensus, although if necessary, actions could be approved by a vote of 75 percent or
87 more. Since the group was one vote short of a quorum, no action was taken.

88
89 **VII. Correlation of Mapped Information:** Jim presented the group with nine maps of the GWMA
90 prepared by Yakima County GIS. The first map portrayed WSDA's calculations of Total
91 Nitrogen Availability in tons-per-year. Since not all of the nitrogen sources depicted were
92 necessarily seeping into the groundwater, members felt this map was not useful in informing
93 the public.

94
95 The second map contained the same nitrogen availability grid, with the 156 USGS wells from
96 2017 overlaid on top of them. The third map depicted the USGS wells in relation to canals
97 and drains. A member cautioned that the orange arrows on the third map had been hand-

98 drawn by John Vaccaro, were applicable only to the shallow water table, and didn't account
99 for three-dimensional movement.

100

101 The fourth map depicted the WSDA's 2015 crop data with the USGS 2017 wells overlaid. A
102 member observed that corn silage emerged as a potentially high source of nitrates, given the
103 correlation of high-nitrate wells over that crop, although there were complicating factors like
104 groundwater movement which made it hard to argue causation.

105

106 The next two maps depicted soil infiltration rates and soil types within the GWMA, with USGS
107 wells overlaid. The infiltration map was essentially a simplified version of the soil type map.
108 The source for this data came from the NRCS website.

109

110 The seventh map depicted the locations of Residential Onsite Septic Systems in relation to
111 USGS wells, and the eighth map depicted the locations of dairies, CAFOs and settling ponds
112 in relation to the wells. Jim stated that the purpose of bringing these maps to the group was
113 as a starting point. There was a lot going on underground that group members didn't know,
114 so it was important to begin with what we did. It was Jim's intention to include the maps in
115 the final GWMA program, without drawing conclusions from them. A member cautioned that
116 people could nonetheless use these maps to make simple causative judgments that were not
117 warranted by the facts.

118

119 The ninth and final map was a grid depicting the mean annual recharge of water within the
120 GWMA. The data was based on a USGS Scientific Investigations Report on irrigation methods
121 from 1959-2001 combined with rain levels, minus crop uptake. According to the data, most
122 of the low-elevation land was recharging two to four square feet of water.

123

124 **VIII. Public Comment:** There was none. The meeting adjourned at 7:01 PM.

125

126 **IX. Next Meeting:** May 17, 2018.

127

128 **X. Next Steps:** 1) Members will send in any comments on the 2nd Draft GWMA Program to Jim
129 Davenport. 2) Members will send in their votes on recommended alternatives by the end of
130 day Thursday, May 10.

131

132 **XI. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on May 17, 2018.