

Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area Program Findings

Introduction

The Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) and Groundwater Advisory Committee (GWAC) formed in 2012 to address the goal of reducing nitrate concentrations in groundwater.

One objective of the Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Advisory Committee (GWAC) was to develop a program that would achieve the goal of reducing nitrate levels in groundwater.

That draft program, developed as the “Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Program” (Program), was approved by the GWAC to move forward for public review in December 2018.

Yakima County performed SEPA with a Final Threshold Determination of Non-Significance (Final DNS) of the non-project action, determining that adoption of the Program will not have probable significant adverse impact on the environment and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. The Final DNS was not appealed.

Ecology provided a public comment period, accepted comments from February 25, 2019 to March 27, 2019. Yakima County and Ecology held a joint public hearing on March 12, 2019 at the Sunnyside Community Center, 1521 South 1st Street, Sunnyside, WA 98944. Twenty six (26) comment letters were received electronically, by mail, in person, or at the public hearing.

Findings

The Program describes the committee’s completed work, including the committee’s decisions, recommendations, and accomplishments. The content describes the issue of elevated nitrate in groundwater, how the GWMA was established in the Lower Yakima Valley, and defines the goals and objectives developed for the GWMA.

This Program explains the environmental and health effects of nitrate in the environment, describes sources of nitrate, and the different regulatory authorities that effect nitrate in groundwater. Additionally, the report characterizes the Lower Yakima Valley, it discusses the accomplishments and the recommended actions of the GWAC.

Comments received generally provided implementation suggestions, concerns of bias, or reflected opinions of additional information that could/should be included to provide clarity and context for future audiences. Yakima County and Ecology staff reviewed comments received and created a response to comments. (Attached)

Following the public comment process WAC 173-100-120 requires findings preparation that evaluate the Program's technical soundness, economic feasibility, and consistency with the intent of the chapter and other federal, state and local laws. The findings shall identify any revisions necessary before the program can be certified and shall contain a statement of the agency's concurrence, indicating its intent to adopt implementing policies, ordinances and programs if required.

The 64 recommendations approved by the GWAC provide a technically sound set of best management practices, education and outreach efforts, technology based actions, and inter-agency coordination

initiatives to begin addressing the reduction of nitrate in groundwater within the Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA).

Long-term success of this Program will require reliable funding and human resources to implement the recommendations approved by the GWAC and a coordinated cooperative effort by the agency partners and stakeholders within the GWMA boundary. Although more detailed estimates of project costs may need to be developed to support funding requests, the implementation recommendations approved by the GWAC are economically feasible.

The content of the Program and recommendations meant to address elevated nitrates in groundwater are consistent with the intent of RCW 90.44.400 and WAC 173-100, other federal, state and local laws.

Letters of concurrence from local governments were requested of the South Yakima Conservation District, Yakima Health District, Yakima County, Port of Sunnyside, and the Roza Sunnyside Board of Joint Control. Affected local governments agreed to one document representing Program Findings for all entities with concurrence letters addressing any concerns they may have individually.

Ecology reviewed the Program recommendations finding none that would require adoption of implementation policies, ordinances or programs beyond our existing authority.

Ecology concurrence with the Program is subject to the following technical and spelling corrections, and edits in response to comments (page numbers based on redline versions):

Volume I

Cover	Change date
(i)	Address authorship request
(ii)	Insert Robert Bland, USGS representative
(iii)	Insert Matt Bachmann, past USGS representative
(iv)	Reconcile pages in Table of Contents
P.1	Remove reference to contentious discussions
P.2	Correct spelling, deleted Point of use water systems, updated monitoring well system status
P.3	Appendix H corrected to Appendix I, deleted reference to Lead Agency
P.4	Date correction, removed problem identification reference
P.6	Correct reference from Volume "4" to Volume "III"
P.8	Correct reference from Volume "4" to Volume "III"
P.9	Clarification of Yakama Nation involvement
P.16	Date correction, reference clarification
P.17	Reference clarification
P.21	Mathematical corrections
P.22	Add soil benefit language
P.25	Delete "waste", add "by-products", correct formula
P.26	Correct formula
P.29	Correct acreage, insert "(figure 5)"
P.32	Insert legacy nitrate language
P.39	Insert "(static level)"
P.42	Insert "Appendix D"

P.50 Clarify reference

P.54 Clarify reference

P.55 Clarify reference

P.56 Clarify reference

P.58 Correct figure numbering, delete reference to Appendix D

P.59 Edit reference

P.60 Edit reference

P.61 Insert “historically”, edit reference

P.62 Edit reference, table clarification

P.63 Edit reference, relocate table 11

P.65 Insert “top”

P.66 Edit reference

P.67 Delete references to lined and unlined canals

P.70 Edit reference

P.78 Insert sentence in reference to Figure 23, update monitoring well system status

P.80 Insert reference to figure 22, update monitoring well system status, reference edit

P.84 Insert DSS Quality Assurance Project Plan QAPP language

P.96 Insert description of recommendation 6, substitute “manure” for “waste and wastewater”

P.98 Spell out acronym EQIP

P.100 Insert “manure”, delete “waste”

P.105 Insert “manure”, delete “waste”

P.107-8 Insert location of alternative management strategies and recommendations list from public comment, add two implementation parties, provide structure clarification of transition period from final Program development to funding implementation

P.109 Insert periodic review language, update monitoring well system status

P.111 Insert reference Drennon, M (2013)

P.114 Delete EPA 2010 reference

P.116 Delete link

P.117 Insert references

P.118 Edit references

P.120 Delete references

P.122 Delete references

P.123 Delete references, add reference

P.126 Delete references

P.127 Delete reference

P.131 Delete reference

P.133 Add reference

P.134 Add reference

P.135 Delete reference

Volume II

Cover Change date

P.63 Insert DSS analysis language

P.221-23 Appendix K – Recommendations Received From Public Comment (for Management Committee and eventual Lead Agency future consideration)

Volume III

Cover Change date
P.3 Insert link Operating Guidelines

Volume IV

Cover Change date
P.4 Insert member contributions disclaimer