

VITAL ELEMENTS OF A
GROUNDWATER PROTECTION BODY

June 3, 2010

The following agencies are currently involved in finding solutions to the problem of contaminated groundwater and wells in the Yakima Valley: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Yakima County, Washington State Departments of Health, Ecology and Agriculture.

These agencies have agreed that, in order to put their support and commitment behind the formation of the local groundwater protection body, they would need to be in common agreement about its vital elements. The agencies have reached agreement; they would support a local groundwater management body with the following description, goals and methods:

Description

This local groundwater protection body will be a multi-agency and citizen-based, coordinated effort to address groundwater contamination in the Yakima basin.

Pollution prevention will be a guiding principle for all work done by the coordinating body.

The body will address all the significant sources of nitrate and bacterial pollution in a comprehensive manner. Multiple approaches including education, technical assistance and enforcement strategies will be used to prevent further contamination.

The body will receive input from people affected or interested in the problems and solutions and will coordinate their energies toward action. It will seek credibility with the general public and the farming community.

Participation by the Yakama Nation will be requested and encouraged in a way that is consistent with their sovereignty and that can contribute to solving the problem.

The Washington State Legislature has allocated \$100,000 to help Yakima County form a local groundwater protection body.

Goals

The contamination threat will be reduced or stabilized within 5 years.

Reductions of contaminants in groundwater wells and soils will be measured, progress evaluated by 2013 and shared with the public.

The body will be organized and focused on the problem and implementation of solutions. It will have an initial plan in place by December, 2011.

Households where sampling results indicate drinking water is contaminated will be provided with options and assistance on how to prevent exposure to the contaminants.

The body will have a sustainable funding source to carry out its mission.

Methods

A fundamental task will be to identify and describe the contributing activities to groundwater contamination based on scientific data. Scientific and other data will be shared among the partners to facilitate development of effective programs and strategies.

There will be ongoing, culturally-appropriate education and outreach on the public health risks of drinking water contaminants and how to prevent exposure.

The participating agencies will maintain and exercise their regulatory authority using their own discretion as appropriate.

The participating agencies will also seek opportunities to coordinate regulatory actions and address regulatory gaps.