

Notes - LYV-GWMA Implementation Committee

Thursday, February 13, 2025

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Attendance: Robert Eastman, Holly Myers, David Haws, Rodney Heit, Eli Cruz-Brito, Jocelyn Castillo, Melanie Redding, Anchee Durben, Obadiah Sheriff, Heather Patt, Kyrre Flege, Kait Wolterstorff, Commissioner LaDon Linde, David Taylor, Shawn Magee, Bailey Draper (SYCD), Caitlin McConkey

Via Teams Meeting

1:05 – 1:50: Group Roundtable - Agency Share on Current Activities:

- Washington State Department of Agriculture
 - Obadiah – We had a meeting/workshop recently about the Yakima Nitrate Project and what we want to do and what we want to achieve with the work that needs to be done in the valley. The workshop was great, successful, with lots of ideas and we are currently right now at the stage of having our draft completed. Once that is done, we will reach out to the group. We have also partnered with WSU on the decision support tool that is also in progress. Very exciting, seeing lots and lots of good stuff coming out of that project. Excited to be able to hand over this tool to the producers to see how best we can mitigate and provide technical services to them.
 - Kyrre – We just put together an impact report (annual report) that talks about the activities within our program – focusing on dairy compliance and talks about the Yakima Nitrate Project among other things that we are doing.
- Washington State Department of Ecology
 - Eli – Quite a few events happening in the lower valley that I will be attending, and I will get details to send out to the group. I've been partnering up with Jocelyn as well and excited to get going on these events.
 - Damon – I did hear back from our AG's office regarding how we manage changes to the recommendations. They didn't require that we change how we prioritize the work as long as we back up the reason. Just make sure we have documented why we are changing or adjusting the recommendations.
- South Yakima Conservation District
 - Savannah – We put together our existing deep soil sampling brochure as well as put together a new soil moisture monitoring brochure (Anchee and her team were able to put together a Spanish translated version as well) and we mailed over 600 of these out to the landowners in phases 1 2 & 3. I am not sure how many of the Spanish translated versions were mailed out – somewhere between 100 – 200. We received responses from several landowners who were interested in the sampling and monitoring as well as interest in the probes being installed this spring. We have

potentially over 1200 acres that we may be sampling this spring. So far, we are receiving a very good response and receive more every day.

- Rodney – SYCD purchased a second DSS machine, we will be running two teams this spring and going forward have been in communication with Landau to increase sampling to at least 25 fields per event. We can accomplish a lot more in less time and hit windows that work around landowners' farming practices that previously we couldn't get to in time.

Like other agencies, we are facing somewhat uncertain budget cuts. We do anticipate some cutbacks, especially from our federal partners who assist us and landowners with some of the larger projects and practices in the LYV.

- Savannah – Our data for the last deep soil sampling done in the fall – we almost have that ready to go. We just have one more landowner to get a hold of for that. Hopefully that will be completed within the next week.

- *Savannah will email the updated flyers out to the group*

- Yakima County Public Services

- David - Legislative funding for Safe Drinking Water – At this point all the households in the Lower Yakima Valley have been contacted at least once and offered well testing. We're planning to send out a "last chance" postcards to try to reign in any stragglers. We are keeping updates on our GWMA webpage – RO units installed, things like that.

- Yakima Health District

- Shawn – We are reaching out to households that have been receiving the bottled water that are still in their 90-day window and encouraging them to get their application in for the RO units. We have seen a small jump in the RO applications that have come in, so that is good news. We do have several households whose well tested positive for coliform, so we are working on putting together a workflow to guide these homeowners on how to address this issue.

Looking into the future at the 144 group B's that live within the GWMA and how we can approach them to get some nitrate sampling done. Beyond that, what treatment systems are needed and how we can approach that without putting a huge cost on the systems. We will have to navigate some complications with group B's, but overall get some sampling completed.

For those familiar with the new septic system operations requirements coming out in the next year to year and a half, there is a required operation and maintenance of septic systems and property transferring inspections of septic systems. We see an opportunity to update GWMA data. In leveraging these requirements and keeping data on septic systems in our LYV GWMA as well as being able to track any of the work and maintenance on these systems will be a good thing. It will be good to have actual data.

- Jocelyn – For bottled water delivery, we met with Yakima County and decided to discontinue the Culligan bottled water delivery to households. We are still honoring the 90-day delivery. We are working with the county to ensure households complete their RO unit applications so they can get it installed before the project end date in June. We have been working with Anchee and have set up a bottled water pick up site in Sunnyside as an alternative option for homes that we will continue to sample through the next few months.

Environmental Justice Grant – last month on the 16th we had our first community advisory group kick off meeting. We had a total of 16 attendees, including 2 community members, and reps from 8 different agencies. Overall, the meeting went well, there were a lot of questions and discussions. This first meeting was a general overview of some of the work we are doing. We will be exploring a hybrid option for future meetings. I will send information about the next meeting to the group.

- Washington State Department of Health
 - Robert – Just as a reminder, we have a consulting firm called ERG that is conducting the feasibility study for private well users to connect to community water systems in the LYV as well as potentially looking at creating new water systems.
 - Anchee – Working with Jocelyn on the Sunnyside community drop off location for bottled water. Another update was working with the Office of Public Affairs and Equity, and they recommended that we spell out the acronyms for all of the organizations, so I have been making updates to the notes for those changes. They also recommend creating an executive summary of the IC meeting notes. I will be sending those out to the group and welcome any feedback.
 - Holly – Our next scheduled meeting with EPA is April 15. Also, I did share our progress report with Friends of Toppenish Creek.
- Dairy Federation
 - David – Nothing to report on our end. We are actively monitoring happenings at the legislative and congressional level.
- 1:50 – 2:10: GWMA Website Discussion
 - Robert - I know this was briefly brought up last meeting, but we have been looking at and talking about updating Yakima County's GWMA website to see if we can make it a bit more user friendly and modern. I think that where this discussion got started was from new eyes to the group. We have a communications sub-group meeting that we have with communications people from all the partners, we meet once a month. We have recently met with Yakima County to talk to them about what our thoughts and ideas are for the website. They are very receptive to that. Where we are at now is bringing to them a list of things we would like to see updated or changed.
 - Damon Question: Do we track how many hits each webpage gets on the GWMA site?

- David Answer: I don't have that with me, but our TS team is able to see the traffic on each page, I can pull a report to share with the group.
- Kyrre – Maybe everyone can pull the same information that they have on their GWMA related site pages as well.
- Robert – I will ask the group, is everyone on the call in favor or okay with myself, Jocelyn, Anchee, Eli, and Emily to work on the GWMA site proposed updates/changes. Of course we would run everything by the IC group first.
- Kyrre – I think we should just make sure that the overarching goal of this group is reflected with the updates/changes that are made.
- Jocelyn – With the website updates, I think it will be important to communicate and map out all resources and programs for households regarding the nitrate issue.
- All partners will give a status update on how many views their website pages are getting per major topic/heading.
- WSDA is getting an average of 30 views/month. Website views for the top four topics for YCPS are: Safe Drinking Water Initiative, 180 views/month; Implementation Status (64 recommendations), 17 views/month; Implementing the GWMA Program, 15 views/month and Adopted GWMA Program, 12 views/month.

- 2:10 – 2:30: CDWP Potential Canvassers
 - Robert – I was going to defer to Lisa, but she is not on the call today.
- 2:30 – 3:00: Implementation of 64 Recommendations
 - Robert - I have attached the document that was sent out prior to last month's meeting for the group's reference.

- Next meeting: Thursday, March 13, 1:00-3:00 pm