

LYV-GWMA Implementation Committee Meeting Notes

Thursday, June 12, 2025

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Attendees: Savannah Crnick (SYCD), Bailey Draper (SYCD), Caitlin McConkey (ECY), David Haws (YCPS), Robert Eastman (DOH), Lisa Freund (YCPS), Holly Myers (DOH), Melanie Redding (ECY), Damon Roberts (ECY), Eli Brito-Cruz (ECY), Obadiah Sherriff (AGR), Anchee Durben (DOH), Nick Peak (EPA), Heather Patt (ECY)

1:00-1:05: Introductions

- 1:05 – 1:50: Group Roundtable Discussion - Agencies Share on Current Activities
- Washington State Department of Agriculture

- Obadiah – We are continuing with our routine dairy inspections in the valley. Most of you have heard of our draft document regarding irrigated agriculture in the Lower Yakima Valley, and that document is almost at the final stage where we can send it out to this group.

We contacted WSU to develop a tool for nitrate and irrigation management in the valley. Hopefully, that will be extended statewide. We are currently testing it.

Yakima Nitrate Project Group – A subgroup under WSDA and SYCD. We are currently planning on outreach materials to use in the LYV regarding dairy, manure, and irrigated agriculture management.

- Washington State Department of Ecology
 - Melanie – Research on Farms – hoping to get this launched in the near future.
 - Eli – I don't have a lot of updates. At the last event, I did notice a bit of an increase in participation from the community. It's more on the political side. It's regarding what is being said on social media. There were rumors that there was going to be an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid. Community members seem worried, and it seems like it's going to be slower.
 - Steven – Abandoned Wells – Some of the more obvious abandoned wells are easy to identify. There are several within the city limits in Grandview and Sunnyside. It's hard to tell where the city water lines are. Hard to locate some of the city water lines.

➤ Can Yakima County receive a list of the abandoned wells?

- Steven – It's up to Damon, but there shouldn't be a problem with sharing the list.
- Heather Patt – Still working on CAFO warning letters.

Working on defining permit requirements. Trying to prioritize expanding the program to recruit and enlist more of these larger feed lots and dairies into being permitted. Expecting it will end up in court, we are organizing all of our data, including using the nitrate project data layers.

Obadiah – Is that nitrate dairy in the lower valley or past Sunnyside?

Heather - It's in Pasco.

Damon – We are working with the DOH and Yakima County's GIS system to help identify abandoned wells. Yes, there is money available as part of that grant that we are looking at to include decommissioning. We will have enough to decommission the ones we feel comfortable with moving forward, but what that will mean is the next phase of work will have to be subcontracted out. Within the next month or so, we should have something with DOH. Eli and Steven will continue to identify wells down in the Lower Yakima Valley.
- South Yakima Conservation District
 - Savannah – Finishing off our fiscal year. Most of our grants are through the Washington State Conservation Commission and are biannual. Finishing up some irrigation projects that we have. We've been pretty busy dealing with a lot of this and spending less time working on our Lower Yakima Valley Nutrient Assessment and Planning Program (LYVNAPP) activities .

The funding for LYVNAPP will be renewed in July. SYCD will work with Kyrre and WSDA to formulate a budget and contract.
 - Plan to have next soil sampling campaign this fall or late summer. We will update our Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for deep soil sampling. We will work with WSDA's NMTS and NRAS programs, but we plan to change our sampling scheme to be more comprehensive and better reflect whole field conditions instead of conditions for one area of the field.

- Bailey – So far, we have 17 soil moisture probes set up for 12 landowners. We've been having issues with the online interface monitoring these probes, but are working on troubleshooting.
- Yakima County Public Services
 - Lisa – The Safe Drinking Water Initiative is a 2 2-year grant to initiate an immediate response to EPA enforcement directives. Part of it is that this group immediately implements a safe drinking water program. Enforcement asked that we reach out to everyone in the lower valley with a private or shared well and offer those households free well testing and alternative drinking water. This program kicked off in July 2023, and Yakima County offered to be the lead on it. We provided free well tests to everyone who requested one, as well as installed RO systems for households that tested above the MCL for nitrates if they applied for a RO unit. We also provided a large number of households with free bottled water. What we are doing now is transitioning the program to the expertise of state agencies.

This group will be reaching out and sending postcards for maintenance reminders to everyone who received an RO system.

Eli had requested that we keep the hotline number that the community uses to call when they have questions. I sent some instructions to Rob, so he will be looking into that. DOH will be taking over that same hotline number.

Question: Rob – Dean Effler and the Clean Drinking Water Project, is he going to be ready to go if he gets calls for RO maintenance?

Lisa – He said he was ready and has asked to do the maintenance on these systems.

- Yakima Health District – *No one available for the meeting today**
- Washington State Department of Health
 - Rob – Everyone is aware that DOH will be leading the Safe Drinking Water initiative moving forward. We will also be moving into western Benton County. We are plugging along to get contracts in place so we can start doing this work. Our original goal was to be ready by July 1st, but that is unlikely, and we are hoping for the second half of July.

What we decided in another meeting regarding this hotline number is that DOH will be keeping track of anyone who wants their well water tested until we get our program up and moving.

- Holly – The only update is that we are happy to have been included in the budget for our GWMA work. It's a relief that we do have money for the next biennium.

Anchee will be moving into our public education team as a Health Services Consultant.

We will be working to maintain the Safe Drinking Water Initiative.

Not moving very fast with the unregulated water systems, but we were made aware that there may be dairies and other ag entities that are serving greater than 25 individuals more than 60 days per year. We are working with David Taylor and the Dairy Federation to put together a letter that we will send to dairies to see if they meet the criteria of a regulated public water system.

Anchee – We are continuing with the bottled water pickup in Sunnyside.

Holly, Rob, and I were asked to attend an event hosted by ELLA (Empowering Latino Leadership & Action) as a panel on July 10, for the screening of their documentary.

- Dairy Federation – *Not available for the meeting**
- Nick EPA – Not a lot of updates since this is my first meeting. I received a brief message from Ricardi that work is going well. One thing I want to bring up from an administrative standpoint is that tomorrow is the last day for a whole slew of EPA employees who are resigning or taking early retirement.
- 1:50 – 2:05: Continued Discussion of GWMA Logo Letterhead
 - Emily presented the group with an updated GWMA logo letterhead.
 - The group overall liked the design and how it could be used/applied.
 - Shawn – Just want to confirm that when this letterhead is used, whatever the message is, that it goes through this committee before it goes out.
 - Eli – There may be some confusion with all the logos there at the bottom. It might be good for us to have a specified contact if someone were wanting to reach out instead of wondering if they should call each of the agencies.

- Emily – I think I should come up with a few other options with smaller logos, and perhaps something with a landing page specified would be a good idea.
- 2:05 – 2:35: Draft Safe Drinking Water Initiative Sustainability Plan
 - Rob – opening this up for discussion to see if anyone had any feedback or comments.
 - Holly – I can share that we did talk about the opportunity for using some of the information in the plan for the new comprehensive nitrate reduction plan that we’re working with Ricardi on.
 - Question: Melanie – I feel like I reviewed a draft of this a month or two ago. Has it changed significantly since then?
 - Answer: David Haws – A month or two ago, I sent out a skeleton version/draft. It’s been updated since – this is the version I would like comments on, and I hope to be done with my editing in the next couple of weeks.
- 2:35 – 3:00: Open Discussion
 - Damon – We had a meeting with Ricardi yesterday about the nitrate reduction plan. It went really well, and we’re pulling a lot of information. Primarily looking at timelines. He knows we can’t commit to hard timelines/deadlines regarding the nitrate reduction plan. Mostly what we are doing right now is laying out the outline and talking about who is responsible for what. We will keep everyone updated as we move forward with this.

** The GWMA logo letterhead and the draft Safe Drinking Water Initiative sustainability plan for your review.

- Next meeting: Thursday, July 10, 1:00-3:00 pm