

LYV-GWMA Implementation Committee Meeting

Thursday, August 14, 2025

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Teams Meeting

Attendees: Melanie Redding (ECY), Damon Roberts (ECY), David Haws (YCPHS), Anchee Durben (DOH), Savannah Crnick (SYCD), Rodney Heit (SYCD), Bailey Draper (SYCD), Heather Patt (ECY), Kyrre Flege (AGR), Obadiah Sheriff (AGR), Shawn Magee (YHD), Caitlin McConkey (ECY), Commissioner LaDon Linde, David Taylor (Dairy Federation), Jason Sheehan

- 1:05 – 1:50: Group Roundtable Discussion - Agencies Share on Current Activities
- Washington State Department of Agriculture
  - Kyrre – The thing that I have been working on is pulling the pieces together for a discussion around developing a strategic implementation area, as we spoke about during the last meeting. The plan is to get the folks most interested in being involved in that and to come up with a recommendation for the rest of this team.

A focus area/subset within the larger GWMA boundary, where we can devote resources and get closer to being able to measure impacts easily, is the goal.

Adam has been doing a ton of work on the GIS side, pulling together data that you all have provided.

The other thing I have been doing is meeting with Ricardi every three weeks to keep him informed of what we are working on.

We have been testing composting soil pads; the CAFO permit has a requirement that the soil pads be tested within a certain timeframe with permitted CAFOs. *\*Kyrre shared a photo with the committee of Obadiah using equipment to test a composting soil pad at a dairy in the valley\**

- Obadiah – Not much more to add to Kyrre's update, except we continue to get our presence out in the valley and make sure that we are staying ahead of anything we see that is not going right.

- Question – Savannah – I just had a question about the compaction tests. Is this for the new CAFO permit, or is it just going to be a requirement for dairy inspections in general?
- Answer – Kyrre – I will let Heather confirm about the requirement, but dairies who are composting on farm have areas that are required to comply with NRCS best management practices, including run off controls and having a compacted soil pad. There is a separate set of conditions in the CAFO permit that Heather can speak to.
- Heather – Testing the permeability of the soil pads is a requirement of the current permit, but there is no threshold at which there is a compliance point. The next permit cycle will have that. A couple of weeks ago, all of the dairies under the CAFO permit received a letter saying they were out of compliance with their permit because they hadn't completed a soil pad test. We are not pursuing enforcement against any of the facilities currently.
- Question – Jason – I'd like to know who is coming up with a number, and are we doing it in the field, or just picking it in the dark, and don't even know what we're going for? It's hard to pick something based on a couple of volunteers. It really would be good to base something on science and permeability studies.
- Answer – Heather – It will be based on science, and there will be a workgroup that will be mostly hydrogeologists who do a lot of literature reviews when it comes to this stuff.
- Kyrre – WSDA is working on a white paper review of conservation practice standards that apply to compost pads. It will help us establish a baseline of where the conservation practices standards stand on this, presently, and can let Ecology and the workgroup decide if that is good enough for permittees. And under the WSDA and Nutrient Management Act, we can evaluate that as well and determine if that meets the level of protection that we need.
- Jason – What I am saying is I would like to see a number before we start providing a bunch of data because it feels like, with this permit, that the bar continues to get raised, and no one knows why the bar is getting raised.

- Washington State Department of Ecology
  - Damon – Just a rundown on the work with Ricardi that we have been doing. What we are focusing on right now is the point source discharges and developing the information to put in the nitrate reduction plan. Met with Ricardi last week to go over an outline. Will start plugging that into the nitrate reduction plan.

My section is looking at the industrial and municipal sides. Not including CAFOs in my section – Heather is working on that. Also working on land treatment guidance and permit cycle reviews.
  - Will be working with Steven and our HQ non-point staff to cover the non-point section of the nitrate reduction plan.
  - Melanie – With the nitrate reduction plan, I am focused on the monitoring piece. Yes, we are doing the ambient groundwater monitoring network, but there are many other types of monitoring going on down in the lower valley. I tried to highlight some of that. SYCD, you’re doing a lot of work with deep soil sampling, and I want to make sure it is reflected in the nitrate reduction plan. I can either update the information, or if you want to, that is fine. With the EPA, I realized that they are guessing that our efforts are based on the documents that we give them. They are looking for us to show how we are moving into the future, so we need to find the sweet spot in there on how we talk about all of the collaboration and efforts that we are putting in.
  - Damon – They really want us to get down to project-oriented steps. So being able to say, “We did this in this area, here are the results we have seen”.
  - Melanie – The other update I have is that I have accepted another job, starting in September. I have committed to making sure all of our recent data, 2025, will be QA’d, trend analysis done, and I will update the story map. I don’t want to leave those things lingering. This was a really hard decision; I’m so invested in the lower valley; it’s really hard to leave.
  - Heather – From the CAFO world, I am working on two CAFO permits that are merging into one permit. I spent quite a bit of time reviewing the data that was collected from the cluster diaries.
    - Question – Heather - When I was reviewing one of the permittee’s proposed groundwater plans, I’m wondering how much of that data has been included in Ecology’s assessment, or if it has at all.

- Answer - Melanie – Part of the problem has been that their data isn't publicly accessible. It wasn't until recently that I was able to get a copy of the tables in a spreadsheet. I can share that information with someone because I won't have any time to deal with it.
- Damon – We will be bringing on a new hydrogeologist here soon, so we will meet and talk about who will be looking at that data from the groundwater standpoint in the Lower Yakima Valley, as well as conversations I will have with the EAP program about Melanie's position.
- Melanie – Let's schedule some time in the next few weeks to meet.
- Damon – As some of you are aware, Eli took a position with another State Agency. So, I am working on whether I can get an exemption to hire for that Community Outreach position.

- South Yakima Conservation District
  - Savannah – We recently finalized the contract with WSDA for the funding we use for our deep soil sampling and soil moisture monitoring work. The Commission used to provide livestock technical assistance funding. It used to be a larger grant, and over time, it just got smaller and smaller. They announced that conservation districts will no longer be receiving livestock technical assistance funding. It's really important that we have a working relationship with Kyrre and Obadiah and everyone over at WSDA, and they're providing funding for our deep soil sampling, soil moisture monitoring, and planning for nutrient management and livestock. Without that, we would have to explore other avenues. It would be pretty difficult to take it out of the limited other funds we receive from the Commission.
  - Working on some updates to our deep soil sampling quality assurance project plan (QAPP), and that's just about finished. I sent it over to Kyrre and Adam, and I believe Adam is providing some comments. Hoping to wrap this up in September.
  - Continuing to work on our backlog of nutrient management plans and updates, and new plans, we must get started. There are also two plans for the Benton Conservation District for two dairies. They will reimburse us for our time.
  - Deep soil sampling - we're looking at lining up some fields for this fall. Looking at sampling in September, October, and possibly November. Will break it up into multiple events. We will need to determine which fields we will get to, and are looking at corn and triticale double-cropped fields.

- New fiscal year, so we are looking into new grants and funding we can apply for.
- Kyrre – I'll just add that Savannah spoke about the conservation commission funding for technical assistance that has been less reliable the last few years. The commission is putting together a supplemental budget package for technical assistance. It feels like a long shot in this budget climate, but it's really critical funding for all different kinds of resource issues we are facing.
- Savannah – Thanks for saying that. It's true. The conservation technical assistance that we received has taken a hit in the last legislative session; we didn't receive as much as we hoped and anticipated. Hopefully, in the future, that number will grow.
- Yakima County Public Services
  - David – I think everyone is aware that Lisa retired. In the meantime, we have finished off the Safe Drinking Water Initiative – that includes all the final billing, the sustainability plan submitted, and we will post the final report on the website.
  - One of our focuses on the sustainability plan and report has been to get all of our materials and information on there for anyone who may need to follow the same path. Our hope was to not only check the box but also provide valuable input for other agencies.
  - Damon – Just a heads up, Ricardi may reach out about the sustainability plan. It was brought up in a meeting Ecology had with him, and he was confused. We let him know it was a part of the deliverables for the funding you received.
  - David – Yes, he reached out to me. I called him on the phone and explained what it was. Hopefully, he has a better understanding now, or he can reach out if needed.
    - Question – LaDon – I know we have looked at nitrate reduction as a plan and as a strategy, particularly in the dairy industry, but from the ag standpoint and the various sources, is there anybody besides the dairy and livestock industry that is being asked to contribute to a solution?
    - Answer – Damon – With regards to sources, we are looking at everything – septic sources, livestock, industrial, etc. What people are doing will be part of that. All of the sources are addressed in the nitrate reduction plan.

They won't all be dealt with in the same way, but we will address them appropriately. For example, there's been a lot done on septic sources, rules, and changes that were put into effect, programs, and funding we have provided to the lower valley to address failing septic systems.

- Answer - Kyrre – I agree with Damon. We are writing a plan that is all-encompassing of all sources. We know that we have a variety and that we need to be holistic in how we address sources, so we aren't singling out a single sector or commodity.
- Answer – Melanie – From my perspective, it goes beyond septic systems, farm, and ag. It goes to every individual person in the lower valley. What are they doing? How are they protecting their well? What are they putting down their drains? What we did early on was to send out a postcard to the community on how they can protect their well. We have to make sure that we characterize that in the nitrate reduction plan. I really like the idea of strategic implementation areas. I think we have developed and are developing tools to help us see progress.
- Question – LaDon – Earlier, there was a mention of the strategic implementation area. Could you provide a little description of what that would look like once you have that in place?
- Answer – Kyrre – The GWMA is 273 sq miles of area, we can't spread field staff and resources around that large an area and be effective. So, finding a focus area of about 25 or 50 sq miles that has the existence of sources and the data that will help us prioritize our work so we can focus our attention on a specific area and report successes a lot faster.
- Yakima Health District
- Shawn – Since the wrap-up of the Safe Drinking Water Initiative and budget cuts, the next round of focus will be on how we build out our septic program and septic system observations, how we can leverage the new state regulation requirements around operation and maintenance to help build that database and keep a status update on septic development in the GWMA. Current situation, how do we set up that type of development and have minimal impact on groundwater moving forward?
- Washington State Department of Health
  - Anchee - We have executed our contract with FULCRUM. They will be doing the well site assessment and taking water samples. We will be working with

them in the next few weeks to make sure they are trained. Working on our workflow of how we will notify residents in the LYV and western Benton County. Rob is still working on executing our contract with Leprekon Foods in Benton City and Prosser to get bottled water pickup up and running.

- We're working on three nitrate videos for the public, and they should be done in the next 6 weeks. Please let me know if you would like a link to those.
- EPA – Unable to attend - Email update was sent – See Anchee's note below
- Roza/Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District – Unable to attend
- Dairy Federation
  - David – As we start looking at regulatory requirements, I would encourage the group to look at the maximum benefit for minimum impact to the property owners.
- 1:50 – 2:05: Nitrate Reduction Plan Updates

Kyrre – Just wanted to make sure this group is apprised of Ecology, Health, and Agriculture's conversations with EPA around the state nitrate reduction plan. If anyone has any questions, we can discuss them.

  - Question – Heather – This February 2010 document, where did this come into play?
  - Answer – Melanie – This was one of the documents that was instrumental in getting the GWMA established. It made a big impact on the community and sparked interest from all the different agencies to take a closer look at what was happening in the GWMA. I haven't looked at it recently, but it's similar to what we are being asked to do now. It's a good building block, even though it's dated. I understand that what we're being asked to do is not just point them in the direction of previous documents; they want something new.
- 2:05 – 2:35: Mission & Purpose for the Implementation Committee
  - Kyrre – I was hoping that for this topic, we could talk about the needs of the members of this committee. Making sure that this meeting serves us. I spoke with Rob about this, and I want to float this idea to you all. Perhaps take this implementation committee and create implementation committee teams.

Perhaps a field staff team, and one that is more of a manager-level team that is coordinated around reporting to EPA, for example, but more importantly, be there and available to solve problems for field staff.

- Melanie – I do feel like we are doing a lot of this kind of work, maybe making it more coordinated and purposeful might be a good thing. I support this.
- Kyrre – If we have this structure, we could expand our resource pool if we were more organized in this way. What about the concept of a manager's meeting? How do the managers feel about that? Field staff?
- Damon – I think it would be a good plan and necessary.
- Obadiah – I think this would be a better way of handling things and would help with communication.
- Kyrre – I also might suggest to Rob about creating a queue for information-sharing presentations so we can take a deeper dive into the work people are doing within this committee.
- Damon – I suggest we do an event for the community, either at the university or the schools. KDNA hasn't been holding events lately. Will reach out to the program and communication staff to put something together.
- Kyrre – I will follow up with Rob about this discussion and work out some more details about all of this at the next implementation meeting.

  

- 2:35 – 3:00: Open Discussion
  - LaDon – I just wanted to compliment David Hawes for his work on the sustainability plan. I thought it was very thorough, well-written, and thought-out.

#### *Shared In Chat Window*

Anchee Durben – Email Update Received from Nick Peak (EPA) -

- Ricardi mentioned to me last week that the work with the state agencies is going really well. It sounds like he's very pleased with the progress and the work.
- Alix Fidis is currently acting as Washington Operations Office director until the end of August. After that, Danielle Meinhardt will fill in for September.

- Krishna Viswanathan has been named the permanent director for the Office of Water in Region 10. He's been acting for a little over a month, but has now stepped in to make it a permanent position. Region 10 continues to rotate, fill, and manage staff and manager reductions.
- In mid-July, the EPA announced a third deferred resignation and early retirement opportunity.

Melanie shared the following image:

The image shows a slide with a light blue header and footer. The main content area has a white background with a thin blue border. The title 'Accomplishments' is centered at the top in a large, dark blue serif font. Below it, a section titled 'Preliminary Assessment' is shown in a smaller, dark blue sans-serif font. The text in this section is a paragraph about a groundwater quality assessment document. At the bottom of the slide, there is a blue link: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/ezshare/wq/groundwater/preliminary-assessment.pdf>.

Accomplishments

**Preliminary Assessment**

Ecology (Washington State Department of Ecology). (2010). Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Quality: Preliminary Assessment and Recommendations Document. Ecology Publication 10-10-009. Prepared by Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Health, Yakima County Public Works Department, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/ezshare/wq/groundwater/preliminary-assessment.pdf>

- Next meeting: Thursday, September 11, 1:00-3:00 pm