

LYV-GWMA Implementation Committee Notes

Thursday, October 9, 2025

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Attendees: Caitlin McConkey (ECY), Damon Roberts (ECY), David Haws (YCPS), Anchee Durben (DOH), Holly Myers (DOH), Obadiah Sheriff (AGR), Rodney Heit (SYCD), Savannah Crnick (SYCD), Scott Tarbutton (ECY), Heather Patt (ECY), Commissioner LaDon Linde (Yakima County), Bailey Draper (SYCD), Shawn Magee (YHD)

- 1:00-1:05: Introductions
- 1:05 – 1:50: Group Roundtable Discussion - Agencies Share on Current Activities
 - Washington State Department of Agriculture
 - Obadiah – We have an employee all-staff meeting today, so Kyrre is out. Aside from that, I don't have much other than we are continuing to do our inspections in the valley, and so far, there haven't been any water quality violations.
 - Washington State Department of Ecology
 - Damon – I don't really have a lot outside of the nitrate plan reduction stuff. We are continuing to work on that. Also, with non-point source and continuing to move forward.
 - Scott – Planning for sampling for next week.
 - South Yakima Conservation District
 - Savannah & Rodney – There has been quite a bit of deep soil sampling activity. We've got three irrigation projects on the move: they're smaller. We did miss out on an irrigation efficiency grant. We weren't notified in time to submit an application.
 - Savannah – Bailey and I went out sampling about two weeks ago. We sampled all week, Monday through Friday, and we completed 14 fields. We got quite a bit of participation, and we're hoping to have more going into probably the end of this month/early November and maybe again into late November depending on what the weather looks like. We sampled a lot of alfalfa, some grass hay, and some fields that were coming out of tree production or nursery. We weren't able to get corn and triticale double-

cropped fields like we wanted to get. We had a couple of folks who were going to let us sample those fields, but they kind of backed out at the last minute. There's a possibility we might have another chance later this fall. I think later this fall, if nothing else, we should be able to get some corn fields that maybe aren't double cropped.

- Bailey – We completed soil moisture monitoring activities for the year and pulled the last of the probes out yesterday. We will be continuing the program next season.
- Yakima County Public Services
 - David – I don't really have anything to report on.
- Yakima Health District
 - Shawn - Nothing really to report, still reviewing a lot of the Group B proposed septic treatment systems and what we need to do. Probably get some sampling done down there, as well as future plans for treatment and nitrate reduction. As we continue to redevelop our onsite septic program to follow the new WAC updates that are going into place, we are looking into building out a more robust septic plan. Looking into how we catalog the different permits and repairs, and things that are happening. Decide what is critical vs what is not.
 - Holly – I would encourage you to apply for alternative drinking water funding.
- Washington State Department of Health
 - Holly – As Damon mentioned, the nitrate reduction plan has been on our plate. I'm communicating with Ricardi frequently because we are continuing the same safe drinking water work. We have a contractor set up. We have sent out our postcard mailings. We sent out 160 mailers within Benton City. Benton-Franklin Health District is still working on its nitrate database and is close to having that set up and in a format where we will have more access to it.
 - We are setting up a bottled water pick-up in Benton City similar to what we have in Sunnyside. As you all know, we have switched from delivery to ALL bottled water pick up.

- LaDon – What does Benton City feel or believe are the prime sources of nitrate issues, and how do their levels compare to some of the levels we are seeing in Yakima?
- Holly – I don't have that data in front of me. But they have been monitoring with their own nitrate plan, and they do have quite a bit of information. Ideally, we will have all the information gathered into a data source that we can pull from and easily compare.
- Damon – It is in the agricultural areas around Benton City. Also, the Badger Creek area, have they talked about that at all?
- Holly – Yes, Badger Creek/Badger Mountain is a public water system that has high nitrates, no water rights, and is most likely going to try to connect to a nearby public water system. The cost would be in the millions to get water from that far away. But there's definitely nitrates. I don't know if there's been the level of studies that we've done in the Lower Yakima Valley, but it is, I suspect, tied to agriculture.
- Damon – Some of the data is in EIM (Environmental Information Management System). Some of the work in Benton County was funded by Ecology, so all of that has to be uploaded into EIM.
- Link: <https://stateofwa.sharepoint.com/sites/ECY-ITSO-EIM>
- EPA – *Not present at meeting*
- Roza/Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District – *Not present at meeting*
- Dairy Federation
 - David – No updates for the group.
- 1:50 – 2:00: Nitrate Reduction Plan Updates
 - Damon – First and foremost, we are going to be talking about a lot of things that you've already done. We've done a lot with our non-point source plan and groundwater sections. There's the Ag maintenance that has been updated this year. There is a lot tied to agricultural work as well. Plugging all that information in there is part of what we are going to do, and then just making sure that we get everything updated, when we plan to update it, and get those timelines in there for the nitrate reduction plan. Outside of that,

just focusing on the priority areas, and will begin to chat with landowners. As long as we have the funding and the staff to do it.

- 2:00 – 2:20: Recommendations yet to be started – Group Discussion on Recommendation 56 - **Make shallow (1, 2, 3 foot) soil testing reports prerequisites for funding, lending or building permits. (Washington State Legislature)**
 - Damon – It would have to go through as a bill. It's a big lift, and I can't imagine that the legislature would want to take that up. And I'm almost certain that local communities are not necessarily interested. I guess I would ask the question of, where does it get us? What is the end product?
 - Add to next month's discussion
 - Question – Rodney: Does anybody remember why there is a one, two, and three-foot samples?
- 2:20 – 2:50: Proposed Structure of Future Implementation Committee Meetings = Field Staff, Managers, and Full IC Meetings – Kyrre & Obadiah
 - Obadiah – Rob, Kyrre, and I had a meeting about having managers and staff meetings, and to discuss different policies on the nitrate reduction plan, everything relating to the plan that can support field staff. So, the idea here, we already have a few groups like the Yakima Nitrate Project (YNP), which is the WSDA subgroup that is also focusing on the same work for the GWMA. There is also the Communications Subgroup and the field implementation staff group. We are talking about starting these meetings once a month, and we can adjust the frequency of the meetings if needed. The IC (Implementation Committee) group, we are proposing quarterly meetings. There will be no managers' meeting on the day of the IC meetings, but there will be a field staff meeting on IC meeting days prior to the meeting. We are still working on a proposal for the group and will present it at the next meeting.
 - Obadiah – Rob will be coordinating these meetings and will send out notices, agendas
 - The group is good, and no one is opposed to this plan

- 2:50 – 3:00 Open Discussion

- Holly - We sent out the Same Farm Exemption information to agricultural entities. We received about a dozen back that indicated that they do not meet the criteria for a public water system. I am not receiving pressure from the EPA to bring all those water systems immediately into compliance.

Regarding the tour of the dairy lagoons with legislators, I know others went through the full tour; I was just there for the first stop. I had a conversation with Kevin Freeman (sp?). He has been working with some of those water agricultural entities that believe that they are public water systems. We are having our first meeting to discuss what it would look like to bring them into compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The purpose of my sharing this today is just to let you all know that we are not in the same rush that we were in before the new federal administration was here. EPA was adamant and with pretty high pressure on us in the office of drinking water to bring in these entities into compliance that might be meeting the public water system definition but not operating as a public water system. We have a letter; we sent it out. David, we worked with the ag industry to move forward and adapt the draft so that it was more acceptable to the Dairy Federation. We are not pushing that. We have enough on our plates right now. EPA has enough on its plates. We are transitioning Tribal water systems that are on Tribal lands to the EPA. So just a heads up, it's not something that is going away, but it's not something that has the same level of priority that it did about nine months ago.

- Next meeting: November 13th.

Notes from TEAMS chat:

Holly –

- Field Staff meet once per month, 1 hour earlier than managers.
- Managers meet once per month (same date).
- Full IC team meeting once every 3 months (quarterly).
- Comms attend field staff meetings as needed.
- Field staff – send to Rob via email to add members.

Links Shared within chat:

<https://www.bentoncountywa.gov/files/documents/GroundwaterNitrateCommunityActionPlan217101233112818AM.pdf>

<https://www.bentoncd.org/groundwater>