

1 **YAKIMA VALLEY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
 2 **(GWAC)**

3 **MEETING SUMMARY**

4 **Thursday, February 15, 2018 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

5 *Yakima County Roads Maintenance Conference Room*
 6 *1216 South 18th Street, Yakima, WA 98901*

7
 8 *Note: This document is only a summary of issues and actions of this meeting. It is not intended to be*
 9 *a transcription of the meeting, but an overview of points raised and responses from Yakima County*
 10 *and Groundwater Advisory Committee members. It may not fully represent the ideas discussed or*
 11 *opinions given. Examination of this document cannot equal or replace attendance.*

12 **I. Call to Order:** This meeting was called to order at 5:04 PM by Vern Redifer, Facilitator.

Member	Seat	Present	Absent
Stuart Turner	Agronomist, Turner and Co.,		✓
Chelsea Durfey			✓
Bud Rogers	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 1	✓	
Kathleen Rogers	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 1 (alternate)	✓	
Patricia Newhouse	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 2		✓
Sue Wedam	Lower Valley Community Representative Position 2 (alternate)	✓	
Doug Simpson	Irrigated Crop Producer	✓	
Jean Mendoza	Friends of Toppenish Creek	✓	
Eric Anderson	Friends of Toppenish Creek (alternate)		✓
Jan Whitefoot	Concerned Citizens of the Yakama Reservation		✓
Jim Dyjak	Concerned Citizens of the Yakama Reservation (alternate)	✓	
Steve George	Yakima County Farm Bureau		✓
Frank Lyall	Yakima County Farm Bureau (alternate)	✓	
Jason Sheehan	Yakima Dairy Federation		✓
Dan DeGroot	Yakima Dairy Federation (alternate)	✓	
Ron Cowin	Roza-Sunnyside Joint Board of Control	✓	
	Roza-Sunnyside Joint Board of Control (alternate)		
Laurie Crowe	South Yakima Conservation District	✓	

Rodney Heit	South Yakima Conservation District (alternate)		✓
John Van Wingerden III	Port of Sunnyside	✓	
Rand Elliott	Yakima County Board of Commissioners	✓	
Vern Redifer	Yakima County Board of Commissioners (alternate)	✓	
Myers, Holly	Yakima Health District	✓	
Ryan Ibach	Yakima Health District (alternate)		✓
Dr. Troy Peters	WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center		✓
Lucy Edmondson	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency		✓
Nick Peak	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (alternate)		✓
Elizabeth Sanchey	Yakama Nation		✓
Stuart Crane	Yakama Nation (alternate)		✓
Gary Bahr	WA Department of Agriculture	✓	
Perry Beale	WA Department of Agriculture (alternate)		✓
Andy Cervantes	WA Department of Health	✓	
Sheryl Howe	WA Department of Health (alternate)		✓
David Bowen	WA Department of Ecology	✓	
Sage Park	WA Department of Ecology (alternate)		✓
Lino Guerra	Hispanic Community Representative		✓
Rick Perez	Hispanic Community Representative (alternate)		✓
Jessica Black	Heritage University	✓	
Alexander V. Alexiades	Heritage University (alternate)		✓
Matt Bachmann	USGS	✓	

13 **II. Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions:** After the customary introductions and
 14 moment of silence, Vern reviewed the agenda. He noted that he would like to add an agenda
 15 item – an update on the Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA). He asked the group if they
 16 had any additional agenda items. There were none.

17
 18 **III. Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA) Update, Gary Bahr, WSDA**
 19 Gary stated that WSDA is continuing to review the comments made on the draft NAA and to
 20 make changes based on the comments. He explained that WSDA staff has been working with
 21 WSU professors on topics including reviewing the nitrogen mineralization for the 15
 22 identified crops and cover crops. WSU believes there may be some under- and over-
 23 mineralization for various applications (commercial fertilizer, manure compost applications).
 24 He said some items change related to nitrogen mineralization related to each crop. Based on

25 WSU's feedback, adjustments have been made to the low/medium/high numbers. This
26 recalibrating should result in more accurate data.

27

28 A member commented that time and energy was spent arguing over crops that do not require
29 additional nitrogen and that there seemed to be disagreements in the industry as to the
30 numbers that make it dubious and call to question the ranking. Vern declared that work has
31 not stopped and that the Department of Agriculture is taking this very seriously, making
32 appropriate adjustments. The intent is to have the numbers finalized by April. The numbers
33 discussed tonight are old numbers.

34

35 **IV. Review and Refine Alternatives**

36 Jim Davenport started the discussion on the refined alternatives spreadsheet. He mentioned
37 that we have gone out to the agencies and asked for their input. When those come back we
38 will get together with the funding group and work out those estimates. If you have an idea,
39 please provide ASAP so we can move on. Taking some 200 alternatives, green alike and make
40 one yellow column of details, columns to the right are factors called out in the WA Admin
41 code (WAC). We are now in the 80 range, and 30-40 would be realistic. The information
42 currently with WAC factors was filled in by Chris, Jim, Lisa, and Bobbie. They looked at the
43 Yakima County Comprehensive Plan for the last column. The judgments were subjective and
44 not quantitative. Jim would like more quantitative information. We did get a little feedback.
45 On line 48-Update Western Fertilizer Handbook-by Western Plan Health Association, their
46 response was that they are already doing it. He reminded the group to provide more
47 quantitative information.

48

49 A discussion ensued regarding pursuing funding for alternatives: would requests be made
50 directly to the Legislature, or through an agency, or by other means? It was determined that
51 each request would be considered from various funding angles (e.g., Yakima County making
52 a direct request to the Legislature, or Ecology making the request with Yakima County
53 supporting and/or providing an in-kind contribution to the project, etc.). The funding "ask"
54 would be tailored to the specific project.

55

56 Vern observed that requests would need to be reasonable and balanced. A member asked if
57 Gary Bahr would be providing cost information from related work he had performed in Idaho.
58 Gary replied that yes, he would provide that information.

59

60

61 **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Funding**

62 Bonda Habets, State Resource Conservationist with the NRCS, was introduced. She explained
63 the NRCS' three-year funding cycle and the available capital facilities funding through her
64 agency. She explained how and when to make proposals: For example, NRCS may not have
65 funding this year, however, unspent funds allocated for this year will be returned in August,
66 and need to be expended by September 15. If an agency is prepared to make an immediate
67 proposal in August, they might receive some of these unspent funds. She also explained the
68 required Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans that must be in place for certain types
69 of funding. She added that producers typically pay 25 percent of the entire cost. In reply to a
70 question regarding NRCS' funding source, she replied that it was allocated by Congress and
71 administered through the US Department of Agriculture. She then described a current project
72 – the Yakama Nation's request for funding to assist all producers within the Yakama Nation
73 prepare Nutrient Management Plans. Vern believed this was a good example of supporting
74 an agency and not going straight to the legislature.

75
76 Vern asked if there were any other comments on the alternatives. A member replied that he
77 believed that the group agreed not to propose regulations (#13). Jim Davenport explained
78 that the term "regulation" is much broader than a "just do it," and offered revised wording
79 for the alternative. Another member added that the alternatives need measurable language
80 to make sure people don't pollute water. Gary described a new, national Priority Watershed
81 program (Whatcom County was identified as an example) that offers areas the opportunity
82 to become a priority watershed. He added that Dee Carlson, the National Water Quality
83 Initiative (NWQI) Coordinator for NRCS, was interested in talking to this group.

84
85 Another member requested that personal opinions be kept out of the alternatives
86 spreadsheet "comments" column. In response, another member suggested that the
87 comments field is exactly for that purpose: like the opinions expressed around this table,
88 members should have a forum to express themselves. Beyond that opinions should be backed
89 up by facts and data.

90

91 **V. PGG Contract**

92 Vern discussed site maps he printed, but they did not have road names so he did not bring
93 hand-outs for everyone. The proposed purpose built wells are staked out. Vern offered to
94 create the maps with road names that will be downloadable from the website. A member
95 asked if land owners had been notified of the reason stakes were put out. Vern replied that
96 they were not since they are all on publicly owned property.

97

98 A member observed that the GWAC was missing an opportunity for outreach as the proposed
99 purpose built well locations are staked for surveying. Landowners will wonder what is going
100 on when they see the stakes; communicating with them will build understanding and help
101 allay concerns. Vern acknowledged the need for outreach but advised the group to wait until
102 it's appropriate. At this point we are only at the planning stage. Once a definitive decision is
103 made regarding the well locations, outreach can be launched. Discussion ensued regarding
104 the definition of public right-of-way (i.e., the location of all the purpose-built wells) and
105 courtesy to the public.

106

107 VI. GIS Mapping Results

108 Yakima County GIS Manager Mike Martian displayed various map layers (i.e., RCIM
109 availability, Irrigated Ag Contributions, CAFOs (Pens and Corrals) and Lagoons).

110 Vern explained that each layer can be used as a tool for overarching analysis of nitrogen
111 loading.

112

113 David Bowen clarified that the "red" squares indicated a collection of high nitrate that may
114 or may not be reaching the [ground]water. Vern added that the study group was seeking
115 correlations from the GIS data. The brown dots in the RCIM layer are septic systems. We are
116 not saying septic is the problem, but we have a high density that may be adding to the
117 problem. Theories would be considered, then they would return to the data to test the
118 theories. He advised that there were 20 or more GIS data layers to be considered. We
119 originally correlated high nitrogen availability to high nitrate in wells, but that theory was
120 blown. He noted that the USGS' 2017 well sampling had not been added yet, but would be.
121 USGS data would include well logs, and that data could be compared against Ecology's well
122 log data. A lot of different analysis can be applied.

123

124 A member asked about the source and time span of the GIS data. Vern replied that it contains
125 the VIRE Data (2001-02), Department of Health, USGS, and WSDA sampling. It also includes
126 Yakima County's 2011 Nitrate Treatment Program sampling results and the GWAC's high risk
127 well assessment survey data. The EPA data has not been added yet; although it's available on
128 the EPA website, it is in PDF format. Vern noted he will ask Eric Winiecki for a different data
129 format.

130

131 Matt Bachmann noted that there are complications in comparing old to new data. He
132 observed that the USGS is gathering multiple samples (from the same wells) and in different

133 seasons. He noted that seasonal changes in groundwater add complexity to the analysis, as
134 does location, depth, nitrogen level, and time of year.

135

136 A member of the public voice concerns about the water table dropping, which he believes
137 will affect nitrate concentrations. Regarding the RCIM septic system layer, was it known how
138 many people/houses are contributing to the nitrogen load? Vern replied that he/GIS staff
139 were using census tract data to calculate population. Approximately 26,000 people were
140 estimated to be on septic systems in that area.

141

142 Matt Bachmann noted that the Sunnyside and Roza canals have been added to GIS. It
143 appeared the red dots (hot spots) generally follow an East-West trending band that roughly
144 followed the Sunnyside Canal. If so, were leaking canals contributing to nitrate
145 concentrations? He added that groundwater contours may also influence nitrogen (or
146 influence well depths). These are at least worth investigation.

147

148 It was asked if the group could correlate individual land use to levels of nitrogen in
149 groundwater. Matt replied yes, but it would be very expensive and time-consuming to track.
150 Another member asked if the group would be evaluating proposed Best Management
151 Practices (BMPs) to this mapping. Vern replied not individually, but it is set up to measure
152 changes over time.

153

154 **VII. Committee Business:** No action.

155

156 **VIII. Public Comment:** There was no public comment. Two GWAC members requested a more
157 detailed Yakima County GWMA expenditure report than the document provided at the
158 meeting. They also requested expenditure records from agencies who had provided GWMA-
159 related work (e.g., SYCD, USGS). Vern noted he could provide all the County's information;
160 however, requests for other agencies' expenditures would have to be made to those
161 agencies. After discussion, another member suggested that the budget be reviewed at
162 another meeting.

163

164 David Bowen and Gary Bahr commended the County for its work, noting that the quality of
165 its leadership and GIS analysis are superior.

166

167 **IX.** The meeting adjourned at 7:19 PM.

168

169 **X. Next Meeting:** Thursday, March 1, 2018.

170

171 **XI. Next Steps:** 1) Alternatives Spreadsheet - member input is requested, particularly in the cost
172 and funding source columns. Please provide input to Jim Davenport as soon as possible. 2)
173 Purpose built well maps - Vern will reprint the 30 site maps with road names and distribute
174 to the group via the web.

175

176 **XII. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on March 1, 2018.