

Irrigated Ag Working Group (IAWG)

Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee

Working Group Members

Dr. Troy Peters (GWAC-WSU); Bob Stevens (interested party) Bud Rogers (GWAC-Citizen), Chelsea Durfey (GWAC), Dan McCarty (interested party), Dave Cowan (interested party), Dave Fraser (Interested Party - Simplot Agronomist), Donald Jameson (interested party), Doug Simpson (GWAC-Farmer), Frank Lyall (GWAC-Farm Bureau), Ginny Prest (GWAC-Dept. of Ag), Jean Mendoza (GWAC-Friends of Toppenish Creek), Jim Newhouse (GWAC), Kevin Lindsey (interested party), Kirk Cook (GWAC-WSDA), Laurie Crowe (GWAC-South Yakima Conservation District), Melanie Redding (Ecology), Mike Shuttleworth (interested party), Ralph Fisher (EPA), Ron Cowin (GWAC-SVID), Scott Stephen (interested party), Stuart Turner (GWAC-Turner & Co.), Tom Tebb (GWAC-Department of Ecology), Rosalio Brambila (interested party), Vern Redifer, Jim Davenport.

Meetings/Calls Dates

Meeting: Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District Office, 120 S. Eleventh Street, Sunnyside, WA

When: March 21, 2017, from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM.

Call: (509) 574-2353 – Pin # 2353

Participants

Troy Peters (Chair), Kathleen Rogers, Jean Mendoza, Frank Lyall, Stuart Crane, Laurie Crowe*, Bobbie Brady (Yakima County Support Staff). *Via telephone.

Key Discussion Points

Troy Peters called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. His goal was to work on cost recommendations and funding sources for the group's primary recommendations found in No. 4 of the EPO Questionnaire the group completed at last month's meeting.

Increase funding to state conservation districts and WSU extension for nutrient management and irrigation water management in the Yakima Valley – 1.0 full time employee at conservation office – soil sampling and soil moisture monitoring: Laurie estimated it would require approximately \$47,000 per year to cover salary, benefits and overhead for another full time employee annually at the South Yakima Conservation District. Troy estimated that WSU Extension would need \$70,000-80,000 annually for another full time employee. Laurie explained that the cost of the work would be built into the employee's salary and testing would be \$45-65 per test depending on what the test included – nitrate testing only would be on the lower end of the spectrum. The group also discussed the cost of education outreach. A member wanted to know if education outreach would be best one-on-one or a larger outreach event. Several members suggested that

the Yakima County Extension Office could do the outreach since extension agents already have an office and transportation with a record of credibility in the agriculture industry. Troy pointed out that a request would need to be made to the legislature for the agents to redirect their purposes. Members added that their purpose is to educate; they are familiar with publishing materials, working with the media and the topic of soil health. A member suggested the group could invite an extension agent to a meeting to explain what they do, but he felt that their focus now was more on programs with larger groups rather than individual farmers. Troy agreed and said that more and more they have specialists available in a variety of areas.

Troy said the group could ask the GWAC to recommend that there be a more intentional focus on nutrient management and irrigation water management in the GWMA area either through the efforts of the South Yakima Conservation District or WSU Extension services. Another member added that whether the conservation district level or extension level this needs to be the focus of a full time person. A member asked if WSU Extension services focused either on nutrient management or irrigation management. Troy explained that irrigation management is his focus for WSU; he speaks at approximately 30 conferences (events others have organized) per year statewide.

A member stated that commodity groups also put together grower meetings during the winter on a variety of topics. They procure a venue and serve lunch. These meetings are usually well attended especially those that provide credits to the growers for their pesticide applicator's license. Meeting focus is subjective and changes year to year. To a degree irrigation water management and fertilizer use is a continual part of the program, but some is theoretical. Troy thought this working group could recommend more focus on water quality. A member indicated that the meetings providing credits for the applicator's license become more of a priority than those without. A member reminded everyone that Ginny Prest suggested a nutrient applicator's license could be proposed by the group. This is required in other states and has ongoing credit requirements. There would then be more meetings on irrigation water management and soil management because they would be required for accreditation and would become a priority for growers. Another member stated that such a requirement would require legislative action and he didn't feel the agricultural community would support it, but added that if the classes fell under the pesticide application you would get a larger attendance.

Laurie said her team at South Yakima Conservation District work with the WSDA to get grants to put on workshops annually. WSDA provides speaker travel and refreshments. Troy asked Laurie if she could do more if there was more funding from WSDA. Laurie said yes, but felt it was important not to saturate the audience. The group agreed that it would recommend that the WSDA be given more money to spend in the Yakima County GWMA for WSU and SYCD to bid on for the purposes of education and outreach.

Cost Share Irrigation Management and Soil Sampling: Troy said that as much money as could be provided could be used. A member felt however, that if funds were limited education would be a better choice. Other members agreed. He added that education should be a multi-year program and not a one-time opportunity.

Troy asked Laurie how the Conservation District worked statewide. Laurie said that each district has their own goals and they go after grants to fund those goals - each district is diverse/different.

However, they do receive some guidance from the NRCS annual meeting priorities. Troy asked Laurie to explain what would happen if the GWAC asked the legislature to fund \$60,000-70,000 in education and outreach related to water quality. Laurie explained that there is a State Conservation Commission in Olympia that acts as a liaison and if the ask was specific to the South Yakima Conservation District, money would channel down through this commission. Troy thought that instead of recommending the hiring of one full time employee it might be better to make more funding available for dealing with water quality issues pertaining to nitrates in the Lower Yakima Valley. With regard to the cost share soil sampling/analysis the recommendation would be to fund education and outreach first, but whatever additional funding was made available for this project could easily be utilized.

Troy asked if the group was satisfied that it had finished the tasks it had been assigned and the group agreed to keep meeting dates open in case something comes up. A member was concerned that the group had not yet seen the Nitrogen Loading Assessment and that it would reveal synthetic fertilizers were making a greater contribution to nitrates than previously thought. She went on to say that dairies can't over apply the way they used to because they are supervised by the WSDA and now understand the importance of knowing the level of nitrates in manure through soil tests and water management. Her concern was that most growers don't have this knowledge base and no one is addressing third party applications of manure. Troy didn't feel like there would be consensus on those things in this group.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 PM.

Recommendations for GWAC

Resources Requested

Deliverables/Products Status

Proposed Next Steps

- Troy will update the group's questionnaire to the EPO.