

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, April 5, 2018 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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

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

- I. Call to Order:** This meeting was called to order at 5:01 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, Vern
 14 reviewed the Agenda. There was no additional business.

15
 16 **III. Working Group Reports:** David Bowen reported on the Data Working Group on behalf of
 17 Chair Melanie Redding. The Data group had met twice in March to listen to two sets of
 18 analyses of the deep soil sampling, one performed by Melanie Redding, the other by Jean
 19 Mendoza. Ginny Stern had agreed to compile the most compelling information from both
 20 documents. Future discussions will deal with how best to use this information as part of an
 21 education and outreach campaign, and to identify areas in need of future study.

22
 23 A member referred to the line in the deep soil sampling contract that referred to a project
 24 director, and asked who that person was. Vern replied that there was nobody with the formal

25 title of “project director”, but that since he had compiled the data as it came in, it was
26 probably him.

27

28 A member asked Vern if he wanted cost estimates on a future deep soil sampling program.
29 Following the 3/29 Data meeting, the member had talked with people at WSU about the
30 subject. He reported they had expressed an interest, but that further discussions would be
31 necessary. Jim Davenport asked the group whether a formal deep soil sampling study should
32 be included on the list of GWAC strategies. Some group members wanted more time to
33 discuss the idea, how it might be structured, who might conduct it, whether there should be
34 incentives for people to participate, and other questions that may come up before putting it
35 on the list.

36

37 **IV. USGS Update:** Matt Bachmann presented the group with the information USGS had gathered
38 in 2017 from its monitoring wells in the Lower Valley. The information is publicly available
39 online at the USGS website. A report on the matter titled “Concentrations of Nitrate in
40 Drinking Water of the Lower Yakima Basin, Yakima County Washington” by Raegan Huffman
41 will be made public once clearance is granted from Washington, D.C.

42

43 In summary, USGS field crews collected 891 valid samples from 156 sites. 179 of the samples
44 (20.1%) exceeded 10mg/L of nitrates, and 40 of the sites (25.6%) exceeded 10 mg/L at least
45 once. 131 of the samples were below the detection limit, 27 came up with no data, and 18
46 were rejected. The crews had started gathering samples in April. Nitrate levels had gradually
47 gotten lower over the spring and summer, and then jumped in October. Matt hypothesized
48 this was most likely due to the start of the rainy season, although a group member suggested
49 that plants taking up less nitrogen during the winter might be an explanation. Other group
50 members discussed what role canal leakage might play during the irrigation season. Since the
51 samples had been taken after the irrigation season started, there wasn’t a base of
52 information for early 2017 for comparison. A suggested area for future study may include
53 placing wells adjacent to irrigation canals to see if nitrate levels showed significantly different
54 variations than others over the course of the year.

55

56 A member asked whether any of the wells in the Yakima Health District’s high-risk well
57 assessment had been part of the USGS’s work. Matt replied that 38 people on the YHD’s list
58 had volunteered to have their wells sampled. As for the PGG wells that have not been drilled
59 yet, USGS will hopefully performing analysis of them. The County is currently trying to get a
60 contract extension so this can happen.

61

62 Another member asked for more information on two outlier wells that consistently showed
63 nitrate levels around 40 mg/L. One was 227 feet deep and was an open hole well. The other
64 was 102 feet deep and open end. The wells were not adjacent to each other, and had a lot of
65 low-testing wells in between them, so the anomalous results were most likely due to factors
66 unique to the site.

67

68 **V. Proposed Alternatives:** Jim Davenport reminded the group that he needed agency cost
69 estimates of the various strategies for lowering nitrate levels in order to set a priority list for
70 the GWAC to recommend. He stated his intention to start buttonholing agency
71 representatives in order to get their numbers. David Bowen volunteered that he had his 17
72 categories done, and agreed to meet in the near future.

73

74 Jim turned the floor over to Lower Valley Community Representative Kathleen Rogers, who
75 showed the group pictures of manure that had fallen off trucks owned by a nearby dairy onto
76 the road by her house, and spoke of her difficulties in resolving the situation with the dairy,
77 and the Yakima County Roads Maintenance and Sheriff's Office. She expressed skepticism
78 that any list of recommended best management practices could be translated into actions.
79 Kathleen also asked why the GWAC had stopped meeting in the Lower Valley, since this is
80 where most citizen representatives on the GWAC lived, and would be more convenient for
81 members of the public to attend. Vern and Jim pledged to address the issue.

82

83 **VI. GWMA Program Update/Member Comments:** Jim informed the group that he had received
84 some comments on the 2nd Draft of the GWMA program, and asked for more within the next
85 ten days. The data section had still not been written, pending analysis of the available
86 information.

87

88 The group discussed a member's concerns about the absence of a Problem Statement in the
89 draft. Jim had received the member's concerns, and intended to add a brief section to the
90 program summarizing the information already contained in the report. Discussion ensued on
91 whether it was appropriate for the Problem Statement to include a delineation of which
92 sectors were contributing the most towards the problem, or whether it was adequate to state
93 that the problem was nitrate levels in excess of EPA standards. Some members felt a
94 statement without estimated contribution levels would lead to a meaningless report. Others
95 felt the problem was stated adequately in the reports long descriptions of the various
96 agricultural and domestic sources of nitrates and the laws governing their disposal. Others

97 felt that attempting to describe which groups contributed what would hinder the report's
98 effectiveness, and the ability of a successor agency to move forward in cooperation with the
99 Lower Valley agricultural community.

100

101 **VII. Monitoring Well Contract:** Vern stated that the PGG ambient network contract was about
102 ready to go out to bid, pending some utility locates. He invited group members to come along
103 to observe the drilling sites, and intended to get a map of the well drilling sites to members
104 by the next day. Assuming there was enough money left in the GWMA's budget, he estimated
105 they would be able to install 30 wells. Details about the timeline for installation were
106 contingent upon when the contract went out.

107

108 **VIII. Committee Business:** Approval of the March 1 GWAC summary was tabled for the next
109 meeting.

110

111 **IX. Public Comment:** A member requested that the next GWAC meeting be held in the Lower
112 Valley. Vern agreed, and stated that from now on, meetings should be held in Sunnyside or
113 Granger unless there was a good reason otherwise. Another member objected to some of
114 the terminology used during the meeting in describing efforts to identify and quantify the
115 sources of nitrates in the Lower Valley's groundwater, stating this information was necessary
116 in order to reach effective solutions. Another member posited that trying to delineate which
117 commodities contributed what amount would cause its own problems, since any data or
118 data-source could be suspect, and if certain groups felt targeted by the GWMA, they would
119 be unlikely to offer cooperation to the GWMA in solving the problem.

120

121 **X. Next Meeting:** May 3, 2018.

122

123 **XI. Next Steps:** 1) Members will supply Jim Davenport with comments on the 2nd Draft GWMA
124 program within the next 10 days. 2) Vern will supply group members with maps of the PGG
125 well drilling sites.

126

127 **XII. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on May 3, 2018.

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