

Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Municipal (RCIM) Work Group

Charge from Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee

Working Group Members

Dan DeGroot, Chair (Yakima Dairy Federation), Dave Cole (Yakima Health District), Elizabeth Sanchez (Yakama Nation), Jan Whitefoot (Concerned Citizens of Yakama Reservation), John Van Wingerden (Port of Sunnyside), Stuart Turner (Turner & Co.), Tom Ring (Yakama Nation), Kathleen Rogers (Citizen Rep), Sanjay Barik (Ecology)

Meetings/Calls Dates

Meeting: June 12, 2017
Sunnyside School District Administration Building, 1110 S. 6th Street, Conference Room 20,
Sunnyside, WA 98944
Call in: 509-574-2353 (pin 2353#)

Participants

Present: Dan DeGroot (Chair), Steve George, Stuart Crane, Kathleen Rogers*, Chris Saunders (Support Staff) *via phone

Key Discussion Points

The meeting began at 2:06 pm.

NAA Review: Dan opened the meeting on the question of whether the final Nitrogen Availability Assessment (NAA) should place a greater emphasis on the risks of comparing a cropping system to a leaching system. There was agreement that it should.

Dan also wanted the NAA to put a greater emphasis on the risks posed by high-density residential onsite sewage systems. As referenced on page 2 of the draft RCIM report, residential septic systems are designed to leach into the groundwater. With high-density residential development occurring and projected to continue to occur in areas of the GWMA, Dan felt the threat of increased nitrate contamination from this source deserved to be mentioned in the final draft of the NAA. Members agreed that it should.

YHD OSS Plan: Dave Cole was unable to attend the meeting due to a work-related emergency. Attending members reaffirmed their support for the recommendation on page 6 of the RCIM draft final report, that the Yakima Health District (YHD) prepare an on-site sewage system (OSS) plan, but with no representative from the YHD present, the subject was not explored further.

GWMA Work Plan: Dan felt that section 2.3.1(e) of the GWMA Work Plan, predicting the likelihood of future problems if no action is taken, should contain a statement along the lines of, "If no action is taken, the nitrogen load and nitrate contamination will increase, especially in high-density areas connected to residential onsite sewage systems." The group agreed.

A member felt that section 2.3.2 should contain a goal of monitoring groundwater in high-density residential drain fields. He felt the placement of future monitoring wells should include at least two such locations, preferably one with a shallow water table, and one with a deep table. Data gathered from these wells could be compared with data near cropland and CAFOs. Members agreed that it was preferable to have more data in this area.

RCIM Final Report: Dan asked members if they had any objections to his corrections, or the final recommendation he had inserted in the latest draft RCIM report. There were none.

Dan brought up paragraphs 3 and 4 on page 6 of the final report, and questioned whether a greater emphasis should be placed on one over the other. Paragraph 3 called for a feasibility study of installing community wells in high-density residential septic system areas, and paragraph 4 called for the same type of study regarding community sewage systems. A member stated that community wells were much faster and less expensive to put in place, which might lead residents in affected areas to choose this as their preferred option over being connected to municipal sewer lines. Members decided that residents should be educated in equal measure on the costs and benefits of both scenarios so they could make a fully-informed decision.

Dan asked whether the opening paragraph of the report should contain a brief history of the YHD and the reason for its founding. A member felt it wasn't pertinent. The subject was not added.

Returning to the subjects discussed earlier, the group agreed to include a new recommendation that monitoring wells should be placed under at least two high-density residential drain fields, one with a shallow water table, and one with a deep table. The last page should also include a final statement of purpose mirroring its proposed GWMA Work Plan warning that the nitrate load in drinking water aquifers will have a strong potential to increase in high-density rural residential areas if no action is taken.

Future Meetings: Dan did not anticipate holding any future meetings, but requested that the meeting room reservations be kept in place in case anything arose in the future. He foresaw two potential causes of future meetings: 1) If members of the GWAC object to the RCIM Final Report and ask for revisions; and 2) If the agencies that drafted the NAA respond to RCIM-related comments in a way group members wish to discuss. He did not foresee a YHD OSS Plan being a subject of future meetings, unless it was paired with another subject.

The meeting adjourned at 2:59 pm.

Resources Requested

Recommendations for GWAC

Deliverables/Products Status

Proposed Next Steps

A final report containing the discussed changes will be submitted to the GWAC's next meeting.