

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

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Thursday, May 18, 2017 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

*Denny Blaine Board Room  
810 East Custer Avenue, Sunnyside, WA*

*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 5:04 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	✓	

Robert Farrell	Port of Sunnyside		✓
John Van Wingerden	Port of Sunnyside (alternate)	✓	
Rand Elliott	Yakima County Board of Commissioners	✓	
Vern Redifer	Yakima County Board of Commissioners (alternate)	✓	
Dave Cole	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)	✓	
Virginia "Ginny" Prest	WA Department of Agriculture		✓
Jaclyn Hancock	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		✓
Lino Guerra	Hispanic Community Representative		✓
Rick Perez	Hispanic Community Representative (alternate)		✓
Jessica Black	Heritage University		✓
Matt Bachmann	USGS	✓	

13 **II. Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions:** Everyone introduced themselves and  
 14 paused for a moment of silence to prepare for the meeting. Vern reviewed the agenda and  
 15 asked if there were additions - there were none.  
 16

17 **III. Working Group Reports:**

18 **Data Collection:** Melanie Redding reported the group met on May 11 and was pleased with  
 19 the projects that were beginning to compile data. The County is working with Pacific  
 20 Groundwater Group (PGG) to finalize its contract so that the purpose built wells could be  
 21 installed and testing could begin. USGS has begun the drinking water and drain testing. The  
 22 working group is now looking at how data will be analyzed, stored and evaluated and will  
 23 work to establish consistent methods. The group also wants data to be accessible on a  
 24 website as quickly as possible and for the data to be assessed annually. All work will be in

25 line with the objectives PGG put together and the GWAC voted on and approved. The  
26 group had learned through the comments made by members that biosolids and land  
27 application of wastewater (that has nitrogen loading) had not been included in the Nitrogen  
28 Availability Assessment (NAA). The Department of Ecology is working on a biosolid piece  
29 and the Port of Sunnyside is working on land application of wastewater piece for inclusion  
30 in the NAA. The Data group also discussed long-term and short-term messages for the EPO.  
31 The group recommended that EPO inform the public about the monitoring initiatives and  
32 the long-term commitment to the monitoring effort. It was also suggested that a member  
33 of the Data Working Group attend the EPO Working Group to help with this project. There  
34 were no questions.

35 **Livestock/CAFO:** David Bowen reported his group had met in May and discussed the EPO  
36 request for short and long-term messages; the group suggested that there be education on  
37 the application of nutrients at agronomic rates. The group also commented on the NAA.  
38 David thanked the working group for their extra effort to work through their comments on  
39 the reports which had been completed and forwarded to Yakima County. One report  
40 documents the story of where the group started and the other follows the work plan  
41 highlighting a couple of areas where the group could not reach a consensus. There were no  
42 questions.

43 **Irrigated Ag:** Troy Peters indicated that his group's meeting had been postponed to  
44 Tuesday, May 30, 1:30 to 3:30 PM.

45 **RCIM:** Dan DeGroot was not present. RCIM did not meet in May but will meet on June 12.

46 **Regulatory Framework:** Jean stated that she had been unable to attend the May  
47 Regulatory Working Group meeting because of a conflict. Instead, Jim Davenport acted as  
48 the meeting chair. He and the group worked through and completed the report he had  
49 drafted. Jean indicated that her group would not meet again unless the GWAC or another  
50 working group requested that they examine other regulations and/or ordinances. Jean  
51 suggested that if the group desired they could examine and research Aquifer Protection  
52 Areas. There were no questions for Jean.

53 **EPO:** Lisa shared that her group had not met in May because they were waiting for  
54 direction from each working group. EPO will meet in June to work on refining messages.

55 **Funding:** Vern stated that Yakima County Support staff would send a notice inviting GWAC  
56 members and their alternates to the first Funding Working Group meeting scheduled for  
57 Wednesday, June 14 at the Yakima County Courthouse, 10:00 AM to Noon. Vern suggested  
58 he chair the first meeting; the group could then select a chair from its members. Everyone  
59 agreed. Vern stressed the importance of providing a response to the meeting invitation as  
60 it would allow staff to plan appropriately. He said the group will focus on determining the

61 funding needs from the working group recommendations and identify possible sources for  
62 funding.

63

64 **IV. Well and Drain Monitoring Progress Report:** Matt Bachmann (USGS) reported that the  
65 USGS had acquired permission to test 151 wells with associated well logs indicating known  
66 depths; all have been tested. USGS is looking for nine more wells (plus a few additional for  
67 backup). Matt received water quality data on 120 of the tests. Tests ranged from zero to  
68 about 45 mg/L but most were less than 10 mg/L. The average was 7.72 mg/L and median  
69 6.13 mg/L. There were two tests at 42 and 45 respectively (these are being re-tested for  
70 accuracy); the next nearest tested at 20. Matt explained that most of the wells they are  
71 testing are 100 to 200 feet deep – one is over 800 feet and most likely will be removed from  
72 the program. Matt said that he had just received the data and not a lot of analysis had been  
73 done yet. Twenty-four drains predetermined by PGG were also tested – one tested high. A  
74 member of audience asked what drain had tested high. Matt couldn't remember for sure  
75 but said it was number 31 or 34 near Mabton. He reminded everyone that no QAQC had  
76 been done yet, so he was presenting preliminary data.

77

78 **V. Nitrogen Availability Assessment:** Vern indicated that three sets of comments had been  
79 received. The authors completed a cursory review of the comments. Every comment will  
80 be answered and published for further review. Vern reminded the group that he was not  
81 asking them to accept the assessment but was open to questions and/or comments. A  
82 member stated that she understood the NAA was to be a living document and wondered  
83 how that would happen. Vern said that where assumptions were made updates would be  
84 generated as better data became available. The member inquired what would happen to  
85 the document at the end of the year. Vern said it would be passed on to the entity taking  
86 over the program. An alternate member stated that he thought April 28 had been the  
87 cutoff date for questions; he was confused because the working groups were allowed to ask  
88 questions and the opportunity was being given again tonight. Vern indicated that his desire  
89 was to ultimately get to a point where the GWAC could accept the study as complete and if  
90 the document has a role. His vision was for the working groups to discuss whether or not  
91 the information provided in the assessment makes them want to rethink what's been done  
92 in the past and if the assessment provides information they should consider. A member  
93 stated that in order to evaluate the NAA each member needed the Irrigated Crops N Mass  
94 Balance Table that Perry Beale had distributed at the joint NAA working group meeting.  
95 Vern said he would have it emailed to the group and posted with the other NAA reference  
96 documents tomorrow. The member encouraged others to look at the contribution of

97 apples on the Irrigated N Mass Balance Table, pencil it out and see what happens. Another  
98 member repeated concerns raised in his written comments to the authors of the irrigated  
99 ag piece. Melanie Redding felt that if the group was going to have a discussion on the NAA  
100 they must consider first the goals, what the assessment was designed to do and not to do.  
101 She felt that if someone was looking for specific numbers they would be disappointed, but if  
102 they were looking for generalities the assessment could be beneficial. Vern reminded  
103 everyone that the goal of questions and answers at this evening's meeting was more as a  
104 generality – basic general information for the group. He had not intended the group to get  
105 into specifics. He also noted that if members had additional written comments to please  
106 submit them sooner rather than later because the GWAC needed to move to a place where  
107 it could determine if the assessment was acceptable.  
108

109 **VI. Alternative Management Strategy Presentation by Jean Mendoza:** Jean reviewed how  
110 decisions are made and noted that WAC 173-100-100 required alternatives. Jean stated  
111 that alternatives could include new technological solutions, conservation solutions, ways to  
112 promote behavioral change, and local ordinances and programs. She also believed it was  
113 important to ask “what are acceptable losses?” Jean went on to say that people in the  
114 community had suggested various technological solutions and gave bio-char as an example.  
115 She added that Yakima County looked into bio-char in 2003, Heritage University had a grant  
116 to study it and USDA produced a document on its benefits. Jean also suggested that the  
117 group ask NRCS to require data sharing as part of the federal Environmental Quality  
118 Incentives Program (EQIP). A member said that EQIP is already doing this as it requires a  
119 number of years of soil sampling and the data is shared with NRCS. Jean suggested asking  
120 NRCS to share this information with the GWMA and its successor agency. Jean added the  
121 following suggestions: 1) encourage the use of soil moisture sensors with data sharing; 2)  
122 impose a government tax on the synthetic fertilizer industry in order to provide a vehicle to  
123 collect data; 3) place a sticker on fertilizer bags to encourage people to apply it at  
124 agronomic rates; 4) improve composting regulations (Jean proposed that the GWAC look at  
125 this and make proposals); 5) implement a bonding requirement for operations that pose a  
126 higher risk to groundwater in order to assure the public that it will be protected by  
127 providing funds for cleanup; 6) tap into the checkoff dollars available through commodity  
128 checkoff programs for research and development (Jean recommended Steve George as an  
129 expert on the topic); and, 7) Jean looked at several hypothetical models of a dairy in order  
130 to focus on their potential to pollute. She named several routes that other states or  
131 counties had implemented to address this including both health and zoning ordinances.  
132

133 The group was invited to comment or ask questions on the presentation. One member  
134 stated that the Irrigated Ag group had a discussion on taxing commercial fertilizer but had  
135 concluded that nothing prevented a farmer from bringing in fertilizer from a neighboring  
136 county or state. He also stated that most vendors supply a spreader and written  
137 information on how to apply at an agronomic rate. Jean said that she had been thinking  
138 more of the average buyer. Another member indicated that while he thought the idea of  
139 soil moisture management was good the group would be better served by going after the  
140 conversion of rill irrigation to other types and thought perhaps this could be coupled with a  
141 soil moisture sensor requirement. Troy Peters agreed that this would be a good effort and  
142 noted it is impossible to use rill irrigation and not leach. The member stated that funding  
143 assistance was now focused elsewhere and believed the GWMA should push for its return.  
144 Laurie Crowe agreed and stated it was the biggest issue for SYCD last year. Vern recalled  
145 that Irrigated Ag had discussed that some crops grow better with rill irrigation. Troy agreed  
146 that mint and sometimes corn do, but great yields can also be attained with pivots. A  
147 member said the biggest resistance comes from the organic farming community because  
148 weed distribution tends to follow the rill making it easier to stay away from chemical weed  
149 killers. Troy emphasized that there is a great need for funding for the equipment. A  
150 member agreed that this should be included in the GWMA's suggestions.

151  
152 A member asked Vern if the County had found anything good when it looked at the  
153 possibility of bio-char. Jean thought one of the determinations had been that it might not  
154 be cost effective. Troy Peters stated that while bio-char is good for the soil, the amount one  
155 would need would be so big it would be very expensive to be effective. Vern believed that  
156 the County had investigated bio-char as a way to get rid of organics and burnable material  
157 which would result in reduced deposits to the landfill. He also remembered that it would  
158 burn up to 50 to 60 percent of the moisture which would be helpful as it relates to manure  
159 but he didn't remember all of the details. He did not remember whether it was  
160 economically viable and would have to look into it. A member indicated that Dr. Black of  
161 Heritage College had looked into it. Another member asked if the furnaces would be  
162 portable which he thought would be important. Jean thought so and said that WSDA had a  
163 handout on it. Vern thanked Jean and the group for their input and thought there may or  
164 may not be other great ideas out there that the group had not yet talked about.

165  
166 **VII. Working Group Reports to the GWAC:** Vern asked Jim Davenport to update the group. Jim  
167 stated that when the reports are received from the working groups groups they will be  
168 combined. He has looked at two – RCIM is almost done and Livestock/CAFO has been

169 completed and was forwarded to him. Between the two there were approximately 30 to 40  
170 recommendations; more were anticipated from Irrigated Ag. Once the reports and  
171 recommendations are combined they will be brought to this group to ask – “are all of the  
172 good ideas here or are there others, what is the feasibility and can they be implemented  
173 (including cost).” He hoped to have everything to the GWAC in June or July. Vern believed  
174 that additional recommendations might arise in this process. He asked if the group had any  
175 questions or comments. A member asked if a small group needed to talk about local  
176 ordinances and a great deal of discussion ensued. Some members thought that it was  
177 important to identify recommendations before discussing implementation. Vern pointed  
178 out, however, that the working groups had already looked at management strategies and  
179 made their recommendations so he believed implementation was an appropriate topic to  
180 discuss. Other members returned to the member’s question and thought that voluntary  
181 programs had been highly successful and regulatory measures were not needed. They felt  
182 that the goal should be to change attitudes/practices through positive incentives and that  
183 ordinances would only increase the need for a policing effort. Another member suggested  
184 that it would be most appropriate for the Regulatory Working Group to look at what  
185 ordinances are already in effect in Yakima County, if they could be tweaked and those in  
186 effect in other counties. Other members agreed.

187

188 **VIII. Committee Business:** The April 20, 2017 meeting summary was approved as presented.

189

190 **IX. Public Comment:** There were no public comments. The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

191

192 **X. Next Meeting:** June 15, 2017.

193

194 **XI. Next Steps:** 1) Yakima County Support staff will send a notice inviting GWAC members and  
195 their alternates to the first Funding Working Group meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June  
196 14 at the Yakima County Courthouse, 10:00 AM to Noon. Members should RSVP to the  
197 invitation. 2) Vern will have the Irrigated Crops N Mass Balance Table that Perry Beale  
198 distributed at the joint NAA working group meeting emailed to the group and posted with  
199 the other NAA reference documents.

200

201 **XII. Meeting Summary** approved by the GWAC on June 29, 2017.