

February 21, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area Committee

Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center
Hermiston, OR, 97838

List of Attendees

Gerald Breazeale – City of Irrigon	Leann Rea – Morrow County
Phil Richerson – DEQ	Carla McLane – Morrow County
Janet Greenup – Morrow SWCD	Kayleigh Fisk – Hermiston Foods
Tom Demianew – Umatilla Co SWCD	Craig Williams – Hermiston Foods
Tom Straughan – ODA	Bill Dean – RiverPoint Farms
Sheree Smith – Morrow County Public Health	Dave Lovin – Port of Morrow

10:03 Meeting Commencement Time

Introductions- The meeting was called to order by Chair Leann Rea. A signup sheet was circulated and everyone introduced himself or herself.

Action Plan Focus – The question up for discussion was “Should the GWMA remain as one large unit or should it be divided up based on land use, hydrogeology, or something else”? Carla started out the conversation by circulating copies of five plates from the 1995 LUBGWMA report that she thought should be updated. Once updated, she thought they would help us focus our efforts. The plates included the nitrate map (Plate 4.2), the geologic map (Plate 2.2), the Livestock Operations map (Plate 3.3), the Generalized Agriculture Areas (Plate 3.1), and the Density of Homes and Facilities Using Septic Drainfields (Plate 3.5).

Carla framed the conversation by asking the questions:

Are we doing the right things in the right areas?

Can we focus efforts to get better results?

Where should we focus?

She continued by noting that the first Action Plan had broad goals and asked if the second Action Plan should focus on problematic areas. She posed several questions including:

What caused the problematic areas?

How do we fix it?

Who is at risk?

For example, should we focus on community water systems and the recharge area for those wells?

Phil agreed to produce an updated groundwater nitrate concentration map but cautioned that it would be easy to misinterpret the map. For example, if such a map identifies a few “hot spots”, it is likely there are other areas with similar land use and nitrate concentrations but no nearby wells are being sampled that would allow detection of the hot spot. Phil also said he would contact the people who produced the first nitrate map to see what factors were accounted for during preparation of the map (e.g., groundwater flow direction).

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Sub-Committee Reports –

Irrigated Agriculture – Bill reported that the Ag sub-committee co-chairs have a second draft of their portion of the next Action Plan developed. They intend to send it to the full sub-committee for their review next.

Food Processors – Dave reported that he is struggling coming up with BMPs to list. He also said he has not yet connected with the other co-chair, but will continue to try to get that done.

Communications/Outreach – Jerry described DEQ's ability and willingness to fund outreach. DEQ management requested a cost estimate for an artist to complete the stylized cross section as well as a cost estimate to place an ad on a billboard. DEQ is willing to translate documents into Spanish and to post them on the web page. Leann offered to look into the possibility of using an artist company that she was aware of. It was also pointed out that Microsoft Office translator might be a good first attempt at translating outreach publications. The translated document would still need to be checked by someone bilingual. Jerry also described the septic bulletin being produced for installers and owners. He also described the nitrate health issue flyer being developed for the medical community and general public.

Rural Residential – Leann reported that Art Kegler has agreed to chair the rural residential sub-committee. Art could not attend today's meeting. Because the focus of the irrigated agriculture sub-committee is agricultural land that is 40 acres or larger, the focus of the sub-committee will include property that is 40 acres or smaller with some agricultural land use. Issues will include septic systems, well head protection, animal density, manure management, and gardens.

There were no other sub-committee reports.

Ground Rules Discussion – Phil circulated the Southern Willamette Valley GWMA Ground Rules and suggested that the LUBGWMA Committee should have some sort of rules that guide our decision process. Phil also indicated that he would circulate similar guiding principles adopted by the Lower Yakima Valley GWMA. Phil asked that committee members review the information and provide input at the next meeting regarding LUBGWMA Committee Ground Rules.

Lead Agency Discussion – Phil started off the discussion by describing what the lead agency should do, which includes tasks associated with running the meetings (e.g., working with the Chair to develop agendas, sending out announcements of meetings, developing meeting minutes, arranging guest speakers, etc.) as well as tasks associated with implementing the Action Plan. In other words, the lead agency should assist everyone in implementing the Plan's recommendations. For example, if the Plan recommends research or conducting surveys, the lead agency would assist the party identified as implementing the recommendation in pursuing funding or other means to implement the recommendation.

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For context, Phil pointed out that the local SWCDs are the lead agencies in the LUBGWMA and Northern Malheur County GWMA while DEQ is the lead agency in the Southern Willamette Valley GWMA.

Phil indicated that DEQ is willing to be the lead agency if that is the committee's desire. Phil asked that ODA and the SWCDs have a conversation with their decision makers regarding their desire to be a lead agency and bring their response to the next meeting.

There was a brief discussion regarding the need for a facilitator, and the group decided a facilitator was not needed at this time.

Round Table Discussion – The following items were discussed:

- A request was made to ask Wym Matthews if he could give a presentation to the group on the state of CAFOs in the LUBGWMA. Phil said he would follow up with Wym and make the request.
- Phil told the committee about a project that Steve Hinkle, with USGS in Portland, recently told him about. As part of the USGS' National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) program, he has been tasked with identifying, and then studying, 7 locations around the country. At each of these locations, he would instrument about three wells and collect water quality data over about 8 years. The purpose of the study is to further the understanding of groundwater flow systems, including the effects of both natural and man-made influences. Steve is interested in having one of these locations in the LUBGWMA. Phil asked if any of the food processors, the city of Irrigon, or some other entity would be interested in participating in the program. The food processor representatives that were there (Craig Williams and Dave Lovin) expressed interest. So did the City of Irrigon. The suggestion was also made that the Umatilla Basin Recharge Project folks might be interested. Phil will follow up with Steve Hinkle and arrange a meeting to discuss the project with those interested in participating.

There were no other round table discussion items.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday April 16, 2013 at OSU Experiment Station in Hermiston

10:00 am to noon

12:10 Meeting Adjournment Time