

**Southern Willamette Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA)
Committee Meeting – Harrisburg City Hall
May 24, 2007**

Present: Tim Bunnell*, Karen Strohmeyer*, Jerry Marguth*, Rich Margerum*, George Pugh*, Pat Straube*, Linda Modrell*, Lanny Zoeller*, Audrey Eldridge, Denise Kalakay, Nicholas Chambers, Gail Andrews, Katherine Howell

Committee Members Absent: Annabelle Jaramillo*, Mike Warner*, Cliff Wooten*, Frank Wright* Faye Stewart* Judy Volta* Sue Lurie*

Announcements, Introductions, Adjustments to Agenda

Chair Tim Bunnell opened the meeting with announcements and introductions.

Public Comment

There was on public comment taken at this meeting

Transitions, Retirements, New Faces,

Audrey Eldridge announced that Mike Powers, the Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) representative got married and that the official ODA representative is now Nick Chambers. Audrey introduced Catherine Howell who is one of the people that provided substantial comment on the Action Plan and is interested in continuing work in the GWMA. Audrey also announced that Gail Andrews, OSU Extension Service will be retiring in June and that a special acknowledgement gift had been prepared for her and would be shared at the break time.

Update on Action Plan Implementation

Audrey Eldridge opened the presentation/discussion by saying that staff would provide an overview of Action Plan implementation activities by focus area (agriculture, comm./ind./municipal, residential/public water systems. She explained that in some areas there has been a substantial amount of activity and in other areas little activity, and staff would like input and discussion from the Committee for how to make additional progress.

Nick Chambers, ODA provided highlights of implementation related to agriculture. Nick reported that ODA is more fully integrating groundwater issues and concerns into their complaint process noting if the complaint is groundwater related. He also noted that there is a need to do additional monitoring in agriculture areas both to document problem areas and to document practices that are making groundwater quality improvements. ODA will be organizing a “research” forum next year to pull together and discuss the relevant existing research as well as research needs. George Pugh asked if groundwater complaints go to the DEQ. The ODA works closely with the DEQ and complaints might go to either agency depending on the complaint. Jerry noted that confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are highly regulated and Nick commented that “meeting CAFO waste management Plans is huge”. Karen Strohmeyer wanted the Committee and staff to know that Cascade Pacific RC and D is working with eight farmers to do Farm Plans for implementation of BMPs and TMDL planning with some of the small cities.

Audrey Eldridge provided highlights of implementation activities related to the commercial/industrial/municipal and the residential land use sectors. Staff from DEQ and LCOG have been active in presenting information about the GWMA at several workshops and conferences throughout the State and a newsletter was created and distributed. Gail Andrews added that Rural Living classes in the area have drawn over 150 people; however there were relatively few people from the GWMA attending the classes. George commented that people outside urban areas have been around for awhile and are either aware of the issues or not all that concerned in terms of feeling threatened. Lanny Zoeller said that he thought that about 99 percent of people he works with say they have had their water tested within the past year. Jerry McGrath concurred with George in that nitrate is not the biggest concern for most people. Audrey highlighted the Farm Chemical Collection event that was held in Lane County where 20 tons of unwanted and unused farm chemicals were collected. Information about the GWMA was distributed to people participating in the event. She also noted that there seem to be outreach barriers in schools. After school activities work but it is difficult to get during the day classroom time. Karen shared the concept of a “traveling watershed instructor” that has a course set up and travels to schools. Pat Straube thought that tying in with recycling programs would be useful. George commented that sometimes posters are a good way to get information out. Rich reported success with watershed councils in having “sub-watershed” meetings/trainings that are at more of the neighborhood scale. Nick commented on the success of the Agriculture in the Classroom program and that a GWMA or groundwater program could be designed after it.

Denise Kalakay provided an overview of implementation activities related to public water systems. She noted that like many of the other implementation activities in the other categories there have been many first steps that will need additional work and follow through. Outreach has included presenting information at several professional conferences and providing information about the GWMA to jurisdictions and agencies such as the counties, and state agencies such as ODA. Technical assistance has been provided to many of the public water suppliers, businesses, and public officials in the region. Lane Council of Governments in concert with the Department of Land Conservation and Development has completed a draft of the Water Quality Model Code and Guidebook which includes samples of drinking water protection ordinances. It will be important to get this guidebook out to those that can best use it. Many of the public water supply activities as well as those in the other sectors are targeted in grant proposals that are still awaiting decisions by EPA.

Funding Opportunities and Successes

Audrey reported that two DEQ 319 grant proposals will be funded for work in the GWMA. The three Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be funding to operate a small grants program for GWMA and/or total maximum daily load implementation activities of farmers. OSU Extension Service will also be funded through a separate grant to implement portions of the Well Water Program. Melissa Ferry will be coordinating that effort.

Denise reported that Lane Council of Governments is still waiting to hear about two grant proposals from EPA – Targeted Watersheds and CARE. The Targeted Watersheds Grant would substantially move things forward and spread the funds across

the many land use sectors. The CARE grant proposal is not as large as the Targeted Watershed proposal but would still significantly help to jump start and in many cases finish many of the strategies identified in the Action Plan.

Break

Audrey and Denise presented Gail with the “world’s first septic system cake”

Outreach Update

Gail talked about the Volunteer Monitoring Program. Laura Moscovitz established the program but has left the area. The program offers 20-22 volunteers testing a way of engaging citizens and data gathering for 120 wells. On-going data collection and analysis is an issue with the desire by those sampling to do something useful with the data. One of the ideas of the program was for those who get their water sampled and who are doing the sampling to share information with their neighbors. A survey could determine it that is happening as expected. Gail wanted to know if the Committee thought the program was moving along the right path and since this is a transition time should any changes be made. The data collection takes anywhere from 5-20 hours a month and there will probably be more staff time needed as Benton County Extension takes over the program.

Pat thought that people who got their wells tested and received information about the testing don’t know what the information means. Information could be included in a postcard or newsletter with each having some kind of water related tip on it. It was also noted that the volunteers need basic training to understand the issues and what the results mean. Jerry stated that there might be a “danger” of not having enough training to know what is going on.

Monitoring Results

Audrey talked about the data collection from 3 monitoring events including 25 monitoring wells and 15 domestic wells that comprise the long-term monitoring network for the GWMA. These sample collections have been held once every three months and preliminary results are in for the August and November 2006 and the February 2007 events. Audrey supplied some charts and graphs that summarized nitrate values from the domestic wells and from the monitoring wells, The good news is that the so far, nitrate data appear to be ‘normal’. If this trend continues, it will be relatively easy to determine when the nitrate values reach 7 milligrams per liter (mg/L) throughout the GWMA. As of the date of this meeting, the average nitrate value for each set of data (monitoring wells and domestic wells) is around 5 mg/L.

Wrap Up

Audrey reminded the Committee that Linn County Commissioner Cliff Wooten resigned and they should be thinking about who they might recommend to the DEQ for his replacement. She also noted that Rich Margerum will be leaving for a year and asked if the Committee would prefer to replace him with another member representing the Watershed Council. Lanny thought that the Committee should have someone else sit in for a year to represent the Watershed Council but that the Committee shouldn’t “boot Rich” The Committee is not in a policy-making phase so a temporary replacement should work.

Next Meeting

Denise also reminded the Committee that they should probably elect a new Chair and Co-Chair next meeting, per the Committee's Ground Rules. The next meeting will be November 8th.