

**Southern Willamette Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA)
Committee Meeting – October 23, 2008
Dari Mart offices 125 E. 6th Junction City**

Present: Jerry Marguth (Farmer)*. Tim Bunnell (City Public Water Supply Operator)*, Sue Lurie (Natural Resources Representative)*, Judy Volta (Coburg Mayor)*, Lanny Zoeller (Realtor)*, Annabelle Jaramillo (Benton County Commissioner)*, Roger Haffner (Wilbur-Ellis Farm Supplements)*, Pat Straube (Citizen and CAFO Representative), George Pugh (Linn County Farmer), Dennis Boeger (On-Site Engineer), Jim Pendergrass (Long Tom Watershed Council), Audrey Eldridge (Department of Environmental Quality), Denise Kalakay (Lane Council of Governments), Kevin Fenn (Department of Agriculture), Chrissy Lucas (OSU Extension Service), Tom Pattee (Department of Human Services), Bill Emminger (Benton County, Environmental Health), Chris Marko (Rural Community Assistance Cooperation); Court Sith (Benton County Water Project), Jacob Callister (Lane Council of Governments) Paris Edwards, (OSU Graduate Student). * denotes Committee member

Committee Members Absent: Jim Anderson (Truck and Travel), Linda Modrell (Benton County Commissioner)*, Karen Strohmeyer (Cascade Pacific RC&D)*, Rich Margerum (Long Tom Watershed Council)*, Faye Stewart (Lane County Commissioner)*, Gary Whitney (resident)*;

Announcements, Introductions, Adjustments to Agenda

There was discussion regarding a change of meeting day. Committee member Commissioner Steward is unable to attend on Thursdays and is interested in looking at Fridays instead. The question was also raised about whether a biannual meeting is sufficient, or if the quarterly meetings are the best way. It was concluded that Audrey would contact all committee members and solicit some conclusion about the possibility of Friday meetings and meeting frequency. Next meeting time TBA based on what Audrey finds out.

Public Comment

There were no public comments

How do we measure success? Audrey Eldridge, DEQ

Audrey Eldridge brought up the issue of a legal requirement for the GWMA to achieve a Nitrate level of 7 parts per million (ppm) before we can rescind the declaration. What does this mean, and what data is used to determine the GWMA is at 7 ppm. Questions for the Committee to keep in mind include: What do people know? Is the public comfortable with GW quality? Have we increased awareness? What about the actions/strategies identified in the Action Plan? How can we take advantage of our

survey? The Committee will one day need to determine how success can be measured in the GWMA.

Baseline Survey on Understanding and Perception

Paris Edwards, OSU Grad Student in Public Policy, reported that there were already 315 surveys returned from the first wave of the 1000 surveys mailed. This response has already met the critical mass to be statistically significant. Lanny was interested in having Paris come to January meeting to report on additional survey progress and findings.

Paris also informed everyone that a movie of the GWMA tour is available on YouTube as well as available in hard copy from Audrey.

To see PowerPoint presentation regarding Paris' survey follow this link:

[\(Survey\)](#)

Headlines and Happenings in the GWMA

- Roger presented information regarding new technologies for improving fertilization application efficiency. The improvements are being driven by fertilizer cost increases. The technology includes electronic conductivity testing and remote sensing technology. He presented maps and data that showed specifically how Wilbur-Ellis Field Technology has been applying the technology to increase crop yield and use fertilizers more efficiently.

There has been significant increase in the utilization of the technology. Most farmers have been hesitant, but there has been increased confidence in the effectiveness of the technology. Also while the capability to gather data has increased the costs have gone down making it more accessible and attractive at the same time. There is increasing confidence in the technology such that there is more comfort among the technicians to suggest fertilizer applications that widely deviate from traditional levels.

Roger suggested that the technology has been most useful in improving efficiency with Phosphorus, Potash, Potassium, pH related. Nitrogen has been more difficult. It requires more testing, but has been addressed using the technology.

Flights for aerial photography is more accessible and affordable now.

- Judy discussed the success in Coburg of progress on the Wastewater Treatment facility plant. Discussion began in 1973 and ground was broken recently (Finally). Costs keep rising and that has been a challenge. This will both remove nitrates from the GW, and also create jobs and growth opportunities.

- Lanny extended appreciation to Audrey and Denise for their attendance at a Willamette Board of Realtors meetings recently

GWMA Groundwater Monitoring Results,

Please see Audrey Eldridge's Powerpoint presentation on results from the monitoring of wells in the GWMA by following this link:

[\(MONITORING\)](#)

Notes and Comments about Audrey's presentation:

Laboratory technicians gathering the samples are the most experienced groundwater samplers out of DEQ Lab and Salem offices. Results of well monitoring are not terribly easy to understand, but the trend derived from the data show that there are decreasing, increasing as well as those wells that have relatively constant nitrate levels. Pat asked if there was research into why certain wells are improving. What is happening? Pat commented that the well she uses has increased in nitrate levels and was curious as to why. There was discussion of the larger impacts probable in the area. Discussion turned to a Corn field west of Junction City which is nourished by wastewater effluent. It was noted that corn is not a great absorber of nitrogen. It was also noted that septic tanks are a real issue. It was concluded that there is a great opportunity to investigate why there is improvement. If the trend changes in this well, what has happened differently?

Judy raised the point that it will be important to help the public understand that change will be a long term process and progress will need to put into context. Rick asked Audrey if the committee could expect that monitoring on the sites will continue, he noted that it seemed that there is valuable information being gathered. Audrey suggested that the individuals she had spoken with about continued funding and capacity for monitoring indicated an optimism for the continuation of GWMA monitoring.

Audrey suggested discontinuing monitoring on two wells: the Highway 36 well in Cheshire and the Wake Robin well in Corvallis. For various reasons the conclusion was that they were not providing valuable information to the groups research objectives.

Measure of Success Discussion

Denise Kalakay, (LCOG) solicited ideas about how the committee would like to measure success, by asking the initial question: at what point will the committee have accomplished its goal?

Jerry asked about getting some clarification on the same question. He wondered what was being required of the committee (GWMA). Is there a deadline? What happens if we don't hit this mark?

Audrey clarified that there is no clearly identified deadline or consequence in failing to meet goal

Jerry wanted to know what evidence would be required for Audrey to go back to DEQ and say that the mandated 7 ppm goal has been achieved.

Audrey indicated that the methodology for determination of reaching the goal is not well defined. Audrey cited that other examples have used a 95% standard for compliance with a standard. Jim wondered if that goal should focus on not just hitting 95%, but hitting 95% and maintaining it for some period of time. There needs to also be an identification of activities that change the contamination, and a better understanding for those activities.

Rick suggested that public understanding needs to be a key part of “declaring victory”. We need the issue to be common knowledge. There needs to be an acceptance and understanding for volunteer strategies. He suggested that we’ll know when we can declare victory. It must be Process and a quantifiable gauge (95%). Stakeholders must understand their stake and their piece of the puzzle. It must become a part of the “folklore”.

Judy agreed that it should be made ongoing, and that the GWMA needs to become a household name. Lanny said that the word needs to get out. He goes to meetings where people haven’t even heard of it at all. Rick suggested that there needs to developed, a sense of confidence that we understand nitrate levels and we can ensure certainty of controlled levels (not just hitting the mark).

Pat said that if we are going to recommend that water be brought to a standard of 10 ppm to 7ppm, we had better give the public a good sense for why contamination is happening and what can be done about it. Audrey noted that some people may not care about nitrate levels, and have made a decision that high nitrate levels are not an issue for them or their families. Jerry noted that the nitrate issue can be a hard sell. Commenting on the life of the committee related to achieving goals, he suggested that perhaps there is nothing wrong with maintaining the committee for a long time and perhaps trimming down meeting frequency. This would help to providing consistency and avoiding the challenge of starting up again.

Rick suggested focusing on wells that have increasing nitrate numbers.

Wrap up

Lanny reminded the Committee that the next meeting will either be Thursday January 22nd or Friday January 23rd, depending on the availability of Committee members. Pat mentioned that meetings could be an opportunity to invite public feedback and get public attention.