



**Groundwater Management Area Committee Meeting Notes**  
**January 28, 2010 8:00-10:00 AM**  
**125 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue**  
**Junction City**

**Attendance:** Jim Anderson (Truck and Travel)\*, Rich Margerum (Long Tom Watershed Council)\*, Tim Bunnell (City Public Water Supply Operator)\* Rick Partipilo (Linn County)\*, Judy Volta (Coburg Mayor)\*, Lanny Zoeller (Realtor)\*, Jim Pendergrass (LTW), George Pugh\*, Audrey Eldridge (Department of Environmental Quality), Denise Kalakay (Lane Council of Governments), Jacob Callister (Lane Council of Governments) Chrissy Lucas (OSU Extension Service), Tom Pattee (Department of Human Services), Bill Emminger (Benton County, Environmental Health), Wym Mathews, Department of Agriculture, Donna Schmitz (Benton Soil and Water Conservation Service), Dave Downing (Lane Soil and Water Conservation Service), Kevin Seifert (Linn Soil and Water Conservation Service), Karen Strohmeier\* (Cascade Pacific RC&D) Tom Snyder (Natural Resource Conservation Service), Kevin Fenn (Department of Agriculture), Debra Sorenson (Cascade Pacific RC&D), Ross Penhallegon (OSU Extension), Tom Mendes (City of Eugene), Terry Nelson (Resident), Tony Stroda (Monroe area farmer, Long Tom Watershed Council), Michael Merrill (NRCS, USDA), Dan Sundseth (USDA , FSA), Betsy Parry (DHS Drinking Water Program), Mike Wolf (DEQ--WQ), Jackie Fern (DEQ--WQ), Shawn Stevenson (DHS Drinking Water Program), Ed Moore (DLCD), Gary Briggs (NRCS), Will Tucker (Linn Commissioner), Denise Troxell (NRCS), Sue Lurie \* (Natural Resources). Absent: Roger Haffner\* (Agribusiness); Pat Straube\* (Rural Resident/CAFO), Gary Whitney\* (Rural Resident), Dennis Boeger\* (On-Site Business).

\* denotes GWMA committee member

**Announcements, Introductions, Adjustments to Agenda**

Lanny Zoeller, Chair, noted it was wonderful not having room for everyone!

**Public Comment**

Audrey Eldridge made a general announcement- she is trying to move this meeting towards zero waste—so please do not trash the cups. She will recycle.

**Approval of Last Meetings Minutes**

Lanny Zoeller, Chair, asked for comments on the draft minutes, received none. Minutes were approved as drafted.

**How the Agricultural Strategies are being Implemented**

Kevin Fenn (Oregon Department of Agriculture) discussed what the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are doing, and how the Water Quality Management Plans integrate the GWMA Action Plan. ([Click on PDF presentation here](#)) A question was asked regarding how ODA get the word about renewal of the Water Quality plan, which happens every two years. Kevin responded that an “Interested Parties” list is developed, and individuals from that list are notified. There was actually no update for the first few years. If you are not on the list and would like to be, let Kevin know and he can get you on it.

**Funding for GWMA Agriculture**

Gary Briggs, National Resource and Conservation Service, provided an update of the NRCS funding program, and an examination of the potential means to enhance resources in the GWMA. Gary shared his thoughts on how NRCS has been providing its’ services a long time. NRCS’s mission is to help famers and land owners. NRCS has spent 15-18 million dollars on projects in the last fifteen years. NRCS calls much of their work “Random acts of Conservation.” We haven’t been able to focus as much as we think we should. With our limited staff, NRCS wanted to focus more on priorities in order to see some real results: reducing nitrates, improving water quality, etc. One area that show promise for making a

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difference was the GWMA (Eugene to Corvallis 20 miles both directions). This is an area with existing partnerships, and helps NRCS to maximize resources to improve that situation.

NRCS saw a need on excessively drained soils so we started doing analysis looking at well drained and excessively drained soils (Soils identified on handout map ([Click on PDF map here](#))). NRCS identified approximately 100 landowners with those soil types, sent letters to each landowner about a month ago (December 2009). Then NRCS invited land owners to participate in the EQIP program. EQIP program includes nutrient management, crop rotation. There will be about a million a year for assistance (EQIP). ([Click here to see flyer](#))

Of the 106 letters, they received 12 responses from the GWMA. This is more than enough to utilize the grant money. Fairly expensive processes are involved in EQIP. NRCS will meet with the farmers and write the contracts. NRCS anticipates that 4 or 5 contracts will be realized over the next few months. It may be that those contracts are all NRCS can do this time, and it will take a long time to address the overall area (resource).

NRCS looking at a program to allow use of national dollars for the area, but it is not known if these programs will be funded. Even without that money, NRCS is making a start. However, NRCS doesn't have enough financial or technical resources to solve even this one portion of the problem – agricultural impacts to groundwater from land with excessively drained soils. There is still a real funding gap. This is an opportunity for local partners to expand results.

A question was asked if there is an effort to follow up with the 94 or so that didn't respond. Gary indicated that NRCS will send out additional letters or do personal follow up if possible. Gary also mentioned there are some other issues. The past few years have been difficult, particularly for grass seed growers. Poor crops and an environment that makes it difficult to survive. The question of whether other economic alternative crops should be pursued. Gary hopes that over three years, NRCS can allocate 3 million to these efforts and maybe 1 million more. Gary reports see that there are a number of producers in that area (grass seed) willing to help out.

Other Questions:

*Who have the partners been in the past?*

OWEB, DEQ (through the 319 program), there may be other private sources as well. Meyer Memorial Trust is an opportunity for example. With the climate in Agricultural world now, there is some opportunity for change. We see real potential. We need to build stronger partnership.

*Do you write grants?*

People associated with us do and can write grants for us.

*Is there a cash match for EQIP?*

Farmer signs up; we help them decide what they want to do. Half of the cost will be the farmer's responsibility to provide. They subcontract and have the work done and are then reimbursed. Cash can come from other sources (OWEB) only 50% can come from NRCS. They have to have the cash upfront as well.

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Scenes from the GWMA January – March 2010



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*Is there a way to help with the upfront payments?*

NRCS recognizes that this is a heavy load for the farmer. But, in the long run this will be a benefit. The farmer must find their own funding sources for the upfront dollars needed. The Conservation Stewardship program can provide funding based on what the farmer has done in the past. This program is available, but has been used more elsewhere. The drawback is that there is more limited funding in \$/acre, and does not provide as much funding as the farmer may need. However, if the farmer's stewardship is good, this is a good opportunity.

Tony Stroda, a *Monroe farmer*, offered his perspective. He looked into EQIP for the installation of a pivot irrigation system, and it was going to cost of 55-60K after USDA help. They chose not to do it because they calculated that the net profit was still not going to be enough. NRCS: He's exactly right. There is a real challenge with the cost.

Rich Margerum. *What is the typical payback period on savings?*

Depends on what you are replacing. Water savings may be substantial or could be less—NRCS did not feel comfortable with a guess. We (NRCS) have to show 20-30% improvement. EQIP program includes other alternatives to drive up incentive for pursuing funding, such as management practices, etc; ([see pamphlet](#)).

DEQ: *Does this address perennial crops as well as annuals?*

Generally, this is for annual crops. There may be some perennial examples, but Gary was not aware of any personally.

Rich Margerum. *NRCS focused on GWMA, how is your effort linked to some of the GWMA efforts?*

Because partnerships were already there in the GWMA, we looked at where we could focus of efforts for the big bang for buck. The structure of the GWMA and attention focused on this GWMA made it rise to the top as the best place to focus.

*Are nutrient management grants easier to calculate, or to make happen?*

They do not require the out of pocket expense. We look at amount of fertilizer being applied, and try to time it better etc. We may direct them to different crops. It does not cost as much. Any time you change your rotation system and thus your fertilizers, there is some risk involved. We provide an incentive and hope to reduce risk involved.

### **Confined/Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) Update**

Wym Matthews, Manager, Oregon Department of Agriculture, provided an update of the CAFOs and the actions taken to protect water quality. ([Link to Powerpoint here](#))

Wym indicated that the Oregon is not ideal for a one-size fits all state approach. For example; Tillamook can get 80 inches of rain or more, and Eastern Oregon has much less. ODA tries to remove too many "speed limits" in the process. We don't care how much they use, as long as they are not "discharging" wastes to the environment.

ODA promotes AND regulates; and it's nice to have DEQ and EPA assistance because their focus is regulation. This also eases our conflict of interest.

Southern Willamette Valley seems to show some "noise" in the data for nitrate – some areas up; some down, etc.

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A question was asked regarding the output for the co-digestion process. Wym indicated this would be a solid product which could be packaged as peat moss, something that can be exported off of the farm. This type of facility will allow for easier management of the nutrients. Once these CAFOs used disposal where now they are looking at "utilization." The liquid by-product will be high in nitrate.

Wym mentioned that if one looks at 12 month impact area, a difference is being made. Long term effects are harder to track and see changes. Energy generation options are looking better under the current administration (green energy is being promoted and sometimes mandated). Still, facilities have to get permitted, and this can be complicated. Assistance is needed in that regard. Contractual things are up in the air now. There is a lot of brainstorming going on to make this work.

## **What is Happening in the Eastern GWMA's?**

Kevin Fenn (Oregon Department of Agriculture) and Audrey Eldridge (Department of Environmental Quality) shared some insights into what is happening after about 15 years of voluntary implementation of Best Management Practices in an eastern Oregon GWMA's. They did not address Malheur, but provided a handout regarding the Lower Umatilla Basin GWMA. ([Click here to see handout](#))

Some areas have to remove nitrates before pumping it out. Big question: even though 95% of users are taking action, nitrate levels have not improved. Audrey explained the article she recently found and provided to everyone: Bottom line is: Let's not go MANDATORY, but rather stay engaged and continue with Best Management Practices.

**Comment:** Wym Mathews: From the CAPOs on LUB GWMA, most are big feed lots. Most have been there a long time. Most of these are grandfathered; the scenario assessment is anecdotal at best. WSU researcher has shown historic layers of nitrate movement into groundwater. Geologic time is working against us. Surface part shows improvement, while the deeper stuff may not be changing.

## **Ask a Farmer**

Several GWMA Committee members and some other partners will help all of us understand the farming in the Southern Willamette Valley.

Jerry Marguth and George Pugh: We have legacy issues. There is likely 100 years of stuff in the ground. We need to maintain patience. Agriculture tries to keep up with science. There are some farmers who are not up to date. There is a lot of pressure to keep up with changes. Crop prices are so low and input prices are so high, that farmers are going to be under great pressure. There are pressures beyond soils there are economic pressures.

What are the likely changes? We (the farmers) are going to anything (crop) we can find. Ten years ago I would have told you I am a grass seed farmer, now I am a "seed" farmer. Some ask "why not livestock?" We have to focus our efforts, there are some reasons why we don't choose to do livestock (land dynamics and regulation mostly) One does what one can to make a profit. The rain in the valley is a real challenge. It is greatly limiting.

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Ross P. (OSU): Growers have stepped up and taken a huge risk with partnering on GWMA issues. Let's find out what is happening in the groundwater! It is our livelihood. We found out that the growers were doing an amazingly good job, and found out the things that we could reduce. The farmers deserve a pat on the back. They are tremendously humble people doing everything they can for the common good.

Future of farming: Grass seed to Hazelnuts has potential for a longer term positive trend. I see a lot of younger sons showing up. Generational shift is critical. We have had an easier time recruiting because of the successes of the 90's. We have been impressed by the new generations understanding of conservation and economics.

Legacy nitrate issue: Are we looking at the wrong info? Should we be interested in focusing more on that? Is there enough material that would constitute a presentation to this group? I think it is within the purview of this group to get into that?

Audrey: If the committee is interested we could certainly look into that.

Rich: Can you date the water?

Wym: You can date the water, but I don't know if you can date the fertilizer (nitrate).

## **Southern Willamette Valley GWMA Agricultural Workshop**

Kevin Fenn and Audrey Eldridge discussed the Workshop that will be held on February 3rd to identify priority research needs for the GWMA.

Mike Powers (ODA) will facilitate this meeting for us. We have invited researchers, NRCS, landowners, the Districts, Extension and many more. We are hoping to identify and prioritize research needs for the GWMA. We will try to identify some funding sources as well. We will have smaller focus groups. An example of future research needs may be to understand what sort of leaching occurs from manure piles.

The results of that meeting will be presented at a future GWMA committee meeting. Anyone interested in attending, please let us know immediately. [Link to Agenda here](#)

## **Coburg Update:**

Judy Volta spoke about the vote on the wastewater system which will happen in early March, 2010. The GWMA has unwittingly been very helpful in this process. There will be one more town hall meeting in February. "Citizens for Wastewater" group seems to be making significant efforts. She has also been going door to door, and has explained many reasons why this needs to happen now, such as the bidding climate is good, etc.

## **Close Meeting**

Lanny Zoeller, Chair

The current meeting room is too small for the attendance we are getting. Please share ideas for another room, location. Maybe we could meet in Harrisburg again? Also share ideas with Audrey about meeting more often. Lanny admits he hates to cut people off. We'll figure this all out.

Audrey is looking for Daffodil festival volunteers. All are invited to come out and join us. It is a great time.