



**Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**October 24, 2013 8:00-10:00 AM**  
**Harrisburg Old City Hall**  
**354 Smith Street**

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**In Attendance:**

Lanny Zoeller\* (Chair, Realtor), Dennis Boeger\* (business owner, on-site engineer), Pat Straube\* (Citizen and CAFO Representative), Jerry Marguth\* (Farmer), Mindi Thornton\* (Farmer), George Pugh\* (Linn County Farmer), Steve Salisbury \* (Wilbur-Ellis Farm Supplements), Jim Pendergrass\* (Long Tom Watershed Council), Gary Horning\* (Farmer), Tim Bunnell\* (Harrisburg Public Works), Audrey Eldridge (Department of Environmental Quality), Denise Kalakay (Lane Council of Governments), Alan Henning (EPA), Chrissy Lucas (OSU Extension Service), Ed Moore (Department of Land Conservation and Development), Kevin Fenn (ODA), Bill Emminger (Benton County Env. Health), Tom Pattee (OHA Drinking Water Program), Shawn Stevenson (OHA Drinking Water Program), Kevin Seifert (Linn County SWCD), Jack Arendt (Department of Environmental Quality), George Ehlers (Lane County On-site Program), Thomas Snyder (NRCS), Bob Butler (Coburg Public Works), David Downing (Upper Willamette SWCD), Jacqueline Fern (Department of Environmental Quality), Dave Belyea (Department of Environmental Quality), Jana Compton (EPA), Susanna Pearlstein (Benton SWCD), Renee Brooks (EPA), Tom Mendes (Eugene/Springfield Metro Wastewater), Heather Medina (NRCS), Michelle Lovrich (resident.)

**What is Happening in the GWMA Hood:**

Bob Butler, City of Coburg Public Works Director shared information about the new Coburg wastewater treatment process and installation. Coburg (population about 1,000) is installing a step system which has a treatment “facility” that does not handle solids. Instead residents will continue to use either their existing or new septic tanks with liquids of over 4 million gallons a day going to the treatment ponds. The city has contracted with a service to inspect and evaluate all existing septic tanks requiring access to people’s property which many people find to be intrusive especially since the process usually requires excavation on private property. So far, about 70% of tanks need to be replaced although it should be noted that these are mostly in the older part of town. The city will be responsible for maintaining the tanks and the treatment facility.

Chrissy shared the latest on the amount of well water testing she has been doing. Free nitrate testing is provided both at community events and classes as well as for people who drop off samples to her office. Chrissy also discussed how OSU Extension is in a transition period and many long-term people like Ross Pennhallagon are retiring.

Jana Compton and Alan Henning shared information about the lysimeter study being conducted with the funding assistance of EPA and the Oregon fertilizer funds. They are busy finding and testing lysimeters that were used in the 1990s to see if they can still be used for this study. A technical expert panel is being set up to help advise the study.

**Focus Group Update:**

Audrey provided an overview of the purpose and design of a focus group and held a brief mock focus group scenario for the Committee. Denise presented information about the rural residential focus. The rural residential focus group of 11 participants met on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2013 at the Children's Farm Home campus. The purpose of the focus group was two-fold 1) Explore barriers to residents having their well water tested and 2) Probe barriers to residents taking action to protect groundwater. Over a two hour period the facilitator worked through a series of questions with the group.

Denise shared key concepts that arose from the focus group discussion that have implications for future social marketing purposes. They include:

**Barriers to well water testing**

- None of the group were aware of the Southern Willamette Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA). Participants perceived a GWMA to mean that there is some sort of problem, within a certain area, that needs to be managed.
- Most participants had a basic understanding of groundwater. There was some perception groundwater was like an underground water body (river, lake, etc.).
- There is a mixture of belief in whether their personal drinking water is clean and safe.
- Taste is important and sometimes associated with "safe". Perceptions are not based on testing. Only one participant tested on a "regular" basis whereas others tested infrequently.
- Most participants had some sort of "treatment" (UV, reverse osmosis, softener, charcoal filter, etc.) indicating a willingness to purchase a "treatment" system for an identified problem (iron, sulfur smell/taste, hardness, etc.). With the exception of one participant however, nitrate was not an identified problem that treatment addressed.
- Most participants agreed that it was difficult to know where to take water samples and results are difficult to interpret.
- Awareness and concern levels seem to be greater the closer to a known problem (neighbor has high nitrate vs. the GWMA has high nitrate.)

**Summary of "Barriers" to well water testing:**

1. Competing with taking time in busy lives
2. Not knowing where to take the samples
3. Belief that you cannot do anything about it anyway
4. Lack of knowledge of the health risks
5. The "problem" is not "close to home"

**Barriers to taking action to protect groundwater:**

- A wide range of potential contributors were identified and the land uses perceived as having the highest risk include agriculture (fertilizers and pesticides) and rural residential (primarily septic systems).
- Group members thought that the big contributors should be identified and address problem. They also thought that with a public health issue that the government should solve the problem.
- Participants were not sure what they can do, because the problem is so large.
- None of the group were aware of the Southern Willamette Valley Groundwater Management Area (GWMA), although one focus group participant was also involved with OSU and well water nitrate testing.

**Elections**

Elections were held for chair and vice-chair. Lanny has been re-elected and chair and Jerry as vice-chair.

**Groundwater Quality Report**

Audrey provided the Committee and guests with an update of what is known about the groundwater quality in the GWMA. The 14 Domestic Wells had an average nitrate value for the last 8 sampling events that was down 3.43 mg/L from background, while the 23 Monitoring Wells indicated their average nitrate value was down 2.05 mg/L from background. Her Power Point presentation can be viewed here:

Part 1

<http://gwma.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/gwmamonitoringoctober2013part1.pdf>

Part 2

<http://gwma.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/gwmamonitoringoctober2013partii.pdf>