



Committee Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2013 8:00-10:00 AM
The Harrisburg Old City Hall
354 Smith Street

In Attendance:

Lanny Zoeller* (Chair, Realtor), Jerry Marguth* (Farmer), Roger Haffner* (Wilbur-Ellis Farm Supplements), Pat Straube* (Citizen and CAFO Representative), George Pugh* (Linn County Farmer), Jim Pendergrass* (Long Tom Watershed Council), Mindi Thornton* (Farmer), Dennis Boeger* (business owner, on-site engineer), Steve Salisbury* (Wilbur-Ellis Farm Supplements), Audrey Eldridge (Department of Environmental Quality), Denise Kalakay (Lane Council of Governments), Donna Schmitz (Benton County Soil and Water Conservation Dist.), Tom Pattee (OHA Drinking Water Program), Shawn Stevenson (OHA Drinking Water Program), Ross Penhallegon (Lane OSU Extension), Jack Arendt (Department of Environmental Quality), Thomas Snyder (NRCS), 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), Ashley Johnson, David Downing (Upper Willamette SWCD), Kevin Seifert (Linn County SWCD)

Announcements

Lanny Zoeller started the meeting by extending a thank you to Ross Penhallegon. Audrey Eldridge expanded that thank-you by explaining that while she first had trepidations about Ross's participation in the GWMA she soon learned that Ross is a strong advocate for working with farmers to resolve environmental issues. Ross has worked through numerous pesticide roundup events and is responsible for helping to eliminate hundreds of tons of pesticides from potential risk to the Southern Willamette Valley. Ross stated the importance of solving issues without regulations and that by working together we can solve environmental problems.

Public Comment

Lanny stated to the Committee that the Department of Environmental Quality GWMA position may be eliminated due to the state budget. In November 2012, Governor Kitzhaber released his Governor's Balanced Budget (GBB), which represents the governor's priorities for the upcoming biennium and includes the budgets for all state agencies as well as other state funding commitments. For the 2013-15 GBB, the governor's priorities are investing in education, jobs and innovation, and lowering the costs of providing government services. The governor did not cut the GWMA positions.

In February 2013, the Legislators asked all agencies to provide them with a list of Lottery Funded and General Funded positions for potential 'cuts'. On DEQ's list is the 0.5 FTE Southern Willamette Valley GWMA position. The public hearing on the DEQ Budget is scheduled to happen on Thursday April 4th – although that may change in the near

future. If people want to share their thoughts that can happen two ways: testify in person; or mail a letter to the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources.

What is Happening:

Audrey stated that the Coburg wastewater treatment system is “almost there”. This Spring Coburg will start hooking up industrial sites. A purple pipe is being installed that will be used to carry treated wastewater for irrigation purposes at industrial sites and some parks. Audrey stated that she and Denise are looking forward to going out to Coburg to observe the existing tanks being inspected.

Alan Henning talked about the EPA RARE grant. Partners are developing a work plan for the research grant. Partners are many and include the Willamette Partnership, Lane Council of Governments, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, field contractors, and OSU Extension Service. The project will look at nitrate leaching past the root zones using lysimeters. It will explore the effectiveness of Best Management Practices in nitrate leaching. The work combines two grants – the EPA funds (\$100,000) and the ODA fertilizer funds (\$50,000.)

Chrissy mentioned that the Daffodil Festival is happening on a Saturday and Sunday on March 16th and 17th. Volunteers are needed to staff the booth. Chrissy also stated that she is wrapping up her current 319 project which should be completed by June 30th.

Denise stated that the two small schools in Northern Benton County that have been having high nitrate issues received a grant from the Oregon Health Authority to conduct work as a follow-up to the focus groups that will be held in the next few months. The purpose is to generate messages that will resonate with different groups (agriculture and residential) to reduce nitrate loading and to encourage residents to get their wells tested.

Action Plan:

Audrey provided a review of the original development of the Action Plan where Committee members along with staff and invited guests worked in working groups for each section of the Action Plan (Agriculture, Commercial/Industrial, Residential, and Public Water Systems). The working groups brought recommendations forward to the GWMA Committee and as each section was completed and approved by the Committee it got folded into the Action Plan. Once the Action Plan was compiled, it was submitted to the DEQ for review and approval which happened in December of 2006. For the update of the Action Plan Audrey suggested that the process be similar to what the Agriculture Section folks have done, with a combination of staff, working group, and full GWMA Committee input for recommendations. The Agriculture section of the Action Plan is done and ready to be folded into the full Action Plan update.

For the three remaining sections Audrey has “assigned” GWMA Committee members to particular working groups. Assignments include:

Working Groups				
GWMA Committee Members	Residential	Commercial/Industrial/Municipal	Public Water Supplies	Agriculture
Lanny Zoeller	X			
Linda Modrell	X			
Annabelle Jaramillo	X			
Rick Partipillo			X	
Mindi Thornton		X		
Pat Straube		X		
Tim Bunnell			X	
Dennis Boeger	X			
Jim Anderson		X		
Jerry Marguth				X
George Pugh				X
Gary Horning				X
Rich Margerum			X	
Jim Pendergrass		X		

A sign-up sheet was also distributed to audience members who want to participate in any of the working groups.

Audrey also reminded the Committee that the update of the Action Plan should include a determination of “how do we measure success?” What do nitrate levels need to be at in order to determine that the Action Plan is sufficient and the GWMA can be rescinded? What criteria should be used? Denise suggested that the “How do we measure success?” question be the topic of most of a meeting in the future and that the Committee update sections of the Action Plan first. Denise asked for clarification of how the Committee and working groups want to “process” the update. One option is to have staff work through the current sections first, then bring forward ideas to the working group to adjust and/or add to. Another option is to have the working groups go through the sections first and then turn ideas over to staff for refinement. The Committee agreed that having staff go through the sections first and then bringing those suggestions to the working groups would be best. Denise also mentioned that especially for people who were not present during the first development of the Action Plan, may want to participate in more than one working group and get a feel for the various areas of the Action Plan.

Nominations

It is time for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair nominations again. George Pugh nominated Jerry Marguth for Vice-Chair and no other Vice-Chair nominations were made. George Pugh nominated Lanny Zoeller for Chair and no other Chair nominations were made.

Jerry questioned the “gap” in the Coburg area as Jim Anderson is not able to attend meetings often. Would a private citizen work? Dennis asked if anyone has approached the Mayor or Public Works Director.

Update on the Oregon Department of Agriculture Water Quality Program

Kevin Fenn (ODA) provided the Committee with an overview of changes being made in the Water Quality Program. In May 2012, the Board of Agriculture recommended that the Water Quality Program develop alternatives to complaint based compliance. In addition, staff were to identify current processes that could be streamlined or eliminated, in order to devote more resources to building relationships, plan implementation, and compliance. As a result of this, over the summer and fall of 2012 the Department identified five key areas for streamlining, including 1) Compliance, 2) Monitoring, 3) Building relationships, 4) Area Plans and rules, and 5) work with SWCDs. After continued discussion, the Department chose to focus on work with SWCDs, the Water Quality Compliance program, and Area Plans and Rules. To proactively implement the program the Department has been working with SWCDs to focus work in small geographic areas and is developing a process for strategic implementation beyond this.

Pat asked about what types of complaints they are dealing with. Kevin says it varies and depends on site capability. An example is a manure pile just south of Harrisburg where he has been working with the property owner. The idea is to be function-based rather than a set standard (like a 25 foot buffer).

Focus Group Update

Denise and Audrey provided information on the location, timing, and “focus” of the Residential and Agricultural Focus Groups in northern Benton County. Denise explained that the Agriculture Focus Group would be postponed until after the growing season. Letters inviting participants were sent to about 150 people with agricultural lands within about a 5 mile radius of Children’s Farm Home and Fairplay schools. Twelve people responded and several of those respondents would not be considered commercial farmers. One strategy being considered and suggested by Committee members is to do a more targeted invitation and reach out to “leaders” within the agricultural community. Denise pointed out that the Residential Focus Group was planned for May.

Committee members were asked to review the draft questions for focus group participants. Although both residential and agricultural questions were included the focus of the discussion was on potential questions posed to the Agriculture Focus Group. Comments from Committee members and others attending the meeting include the following:

Roger – Thought it would be best to do a 15 minute presentation to the focus group.

Steve – The group will not trust anyone – they will not answer questions. They will not share, as they will think they are being told they are doing something wrong. Need to establish trusting relationships. They trust their neighbors, and Agronomist.

Roger – The questions are too “hard” and need a softer approach.

Jim - Sophistication is needed as the questions are too baseline. Do this upfront.

Pat – Start as a combined group (Agriculture & Rural Residential) then move to separate the groups.

Jerry – Need to find leadership from each sector.

Jim – Define the Agriculture Focus Group by size – residential may be more responsive.

Pat – Need to define more of a process.

Mindi - Offer multiple choices.

Chrissy – Part of the purpose of the focus group is to not assume they know something. You cannot give too much information up front or it biases the responses.

Roger – Do you think more is better? What kind of a question is that? Don't treat farmers like they are stupid.

Bill – Likes softening questions – not to damage the demographics – use survey as well.

George – BMP is a government word. A BMP is what we did the year when we made money!

Pat – A bigger pool could be reached through personal phone calls.

Jerry – Go to the Agronomist.

Roger – Probably 5 big growers in the area that could be targeted.

George – Extension has the best rapport with the community.

Tom S – Having a neighbor to neighbor assist would be helpful.

Mindi – Field agents go to famers – they can refer. Pesticide training (OSU Ext) is an opportunity.

Kevin F – Local school contacts may be helpful.

Denise – Children's Farm Home may have some good connections with the community

Jim – He could help with the Ag Focus Group

Pat – Are we sure it is Ag or is it also residential?

Denise – Probably both

Jim – Do you need to separate the 2 groups?

Chrissy – There are lots of lifestyle farms in the area and we may want to get their views too and collectively they can cause problems.

Roger – It sounds like you are saying “We know the answers do you?”