



Committee Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2014 8:00-10:00 AM
Harrisburg Old City Hall
354 Smith Street

In Attendance:

Lanny Zoeller* (Chair, Realtor), Dennis Boeger* (business owner, on-site engineer), Pat Straube* (Citizen and CAFO Representative), Mindi Thornton* (Farmer), Linda Modrell* (Benton County Commissioner), George Pugh* (Linn County Farmer), Steve Salisbury * (Wilbur-Ellis Farm Supplements), Gary Horning* (Farmer), Tim Bunnell* (Harrisburg Public Works), Rick Partipilo* (Linn County), 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), Shawn Stevenson (OHA Drinking Water Program), Jack Arendt (Department of Environmental Quality), George Ehlers (Lane County On-site Program), David Downing (Upper Willamette SWCD), Jacqueline Fern (Department of Environmental Quality), Alan Henning (EPA), Susanna Pearlstein (Benton SWCD and EPA), Heather Medina (NRCS), Amy Chinitz (Springfield Utility Brd.), Greg Verret (Benton County), Mike Mattick, (Water Resourced Dept.), Pamela Wright (DEQ), Paul Measles, (ODA), Susan Yellowtail (Marist High School), Ryan Moser (Marist High School), Tara Chetock (OHA), Kelly Cogswell (OHA), Jo Morgan (ODA) Toby Primbs (ODA), Wym Mathews (ODA), Jerry Paul (Benton SWCD), Ivan Gall (Water Resources Dept.), Sara Morris (Water Resources Dept.), Randy Hopson (OSU Corvallis Farm Unit),

Announcements, Introductions

Lanny introduced Jo Morgan who is replacing Kevin Fenn as the lead ODA staff on the GWMA. Lanny also thanked Audrey for coming to and speaking at the Willamette Realtors meeting.

What is Happening in the GWMA Hood:

Bill Emminger talked about a grant received by Benton County that will help fund 90 well water tests for bacteria, arsenic, and nitrate. The hope is to target areas where homeowners need help with domestic wells.

Mike Mattick provided an update on the Pioneer Valley Estate situation. Pioneer Valley Estates has about 40 homes and because of nitrate problems in the past with their wells they have been provided water by the City of Coburg for about \$30/month. Coburg is substantially increasing the monthly rate to serve Pioneer Valley Estates since the “real cost” of providing service is about \$130/month/home. The small lots will not support individual wells.

Audrey talked about having a booth/poster at the Oregon Rye Grass convention. She also acknowledged that the GWMA is a Groundwater Guardian Community again and that it will be Groundwater Protection week the second week in March.

Chrissy mentioned that the Daffodil Festival is coming up and she needs volunteers to staff the booth.

Susan Yellowtail and Ryan Moser talked about the testing for nitrates they are doing in the classroom and Marist High School. Students go out and take samples and then come back and test them.

Benton County Domestic Well Ordinance

Greg Verret, Benton County Community Development Director presented information about the new Benton County domestic well ordinance. Benton County sees about one new sub-division per year with anywhere from about 8-40 lots. As development increases, the county recognizes the need to address the long term supply, both for quantity (availability, interference, long term capacity) and quality (nitrate, bacteria). To view Greg's presentation click here:

http://gwma.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/greg_verret_-_water_and_rural_dev_-_water_supply_and_mgt_seminar.pptx

Pat Straube asked what the reason is for a 12 hour pump test. Greg responded that it indicates the longer term well capacity. Paul Measles confirmed that the more you pump the more you know about the well.

Lysimeter Installation and Monitoring Progress

Susanna presented information about the lysimeter study portion of the Regionally Applied Research Effort (RARE). The core concept of the research is to conduct testing to see if nitrate is leaching below the root zone of various crops grown in the GWMA. She is also doing interviews with the farmers she is working with. The project relies in part on passive capillary samplers (PCAPS) that were installed by John Selker, OSU, in the 1990s to measure nitrate leaching. The new project uses lysimeters that are much smaller but that are paired with the older working PCAPS to look for similarities (or differences) in the data collected. To view Susanna's presentation click here:

http://gwma.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/lysimeter_installation_and_monitoring_progress222.pdf

Agricultural Focus Group

Denise and Audrey shared information about the results of a meeting in January with 7 local area large growers. The meeting was scheduled for an hour and a half although several participants stayed and talked for nearly 4 hours. Denise presented a summary of the meeting highlights of what perceptions, barriers, and understandings farmers in the group have in relationship to groundwater. Key concepts that arose from the focus group discussion that have implications for future outreach purposes include:

- Grower participants are incredibly knowledgeable about geology, groundwater, well operations, etc.

- Some farmers have their own test plots, and are testing their own water.
- Nearly all participants had heard about the GWMA and understood that the overall issue was high nitrate. There was a lack of knowledge of some of the details such as when the GWMA was declared, how big it is, how it is funded, how the focus group is funded, etc.
- The Willamette River and urban runoff were perceived to be a major source of the N in groundwater. One participant told a story about HP having to shut down because of high N in the Willamette River during a rainstorm.
- The same rainstorm that impacted HP also caught many farmers off guard (lots of rain after a major fertilizer application period).
- Several participants felt that nitrate in groundwater is a cyclical and long-term issue with fluctuations occurring over time. They were curious if this is a natural cycle and where it is now?
- Field agents are the most trusted source of information. Even though they are trying to sell a product they know that if they “oversell” that they will not remain the trusted field agent and the grower will buy the products elsewhere.
- Agriculture has changed since the late 50s early 60s. The “Grandfathers generation” – only had manure – every farm would be considered organic. The group talked about fertigation that used to happen but is rarely used now. They don’t rinse out spray cans next to a creek like in the old days. Agriculture practices changed again and by early 90s everyone was pretty much on the same page that these practices are not acceptable.
- Post WWII it is assumed that the average lb/acre has already plateaued. Economics drive some of this. “We don’t want to put on more than what our crop will consume”. However, additional fertilizer is sometime added as insurance. The goal is to grow the best crop possible and not spend more money on fertilizer than needed.
- Growers cannot wait to see if the plant is “green” enough, because by then it is too late to add fertilizer.

- Sometimes, the modeling for Precision Ag fertilizer amounts will indicate adding more N to sandier soils (high permeability) which is contradictive to protecting groundwater.
- At least one participant thought that the schools with public water systems that either municipalities should bring water out to the schools, or the schools should be removed from the area because the water was not suitable. Same participant thought because there are no standards for domestic wells, that the area should be converted to residential use.
- Group felt residents need to be better educated about agricultural practices and the substantial work farmers are doing to protect the land and water quality.
- The group stressed that if there is a problem, show us what it is. Don't force regulations on us – if there is a problem – let us address it! There are often multiple ways to address an issue and the “best” solution can vary depending on a variety of variables (farmer, soil conditions, etc.).
- Some techniques pose barriers. For example, cover crops take time and money. First you have to plant it, grow it, and then kill it before planting the “real” crop. Slow release fertilizer tends to not “pencil out” in terms of additional cost.

Nitrate and Pesticide Results and Public Meeting

Audrey presented information about the nitrate and pesticide testing results of 33 wells in northern Benton County. A public meeting was held to share those results on February 25. About 35 people attended including several farmers that had participated in the focus group. In some of the wells there were detections of pesticides although there were no detections anywhere near a public health standard. Chrissy stated that people appreciated having a meeting and having free nitrate testing at the meeting. Most of the nitrate samples were in the 6-11 mg/L range. To view Audrey's presentation about the pesticide testing results click here:

<http://gwma.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/pesticidemonitoringfeb2014part2.pdf>

Oregon's Domestic Well Safety Program

Tara Chetock and Kelly Cogswell from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) briefly talked about a new grant funded program strengthening the safety of domestic wells. The program is funded for 2-3 years and has three focus areas: small grants to water providers, compilation of real estate data, and promoting domestic well stewardship. Benton County and Harney County were each awarded one of the \$5,000 grants.

Wrap-up

The next GWMA Committee meeting is May 22nd