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August 24, 2023

Edward Kowalski
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 155
Seattle, Washington 98101

Dear Mr. Kowalski:

Subject: Lower Yakima Valley Comprehensive Work Plan

In preparation for our next quarterly in-person meeting on September 7, the Department of Ecology, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Yakima County Public Services, and Yakima Health District jointly submit the attached comprehensive response plan. This plan documents our continued commitment to the Lower Yakima Valley community.

The state, in partnership with Yakima County organizations, is committed to understanding the extent of nitrate contamination in groundwater wells in the Lower Yakima Valley, then to ensuring safe drinking water is available to all impacted residences. We recognize the public health risk that high concentrations of nitrate pose, predominantly to babies, and are motivated to swift and comprehensive mitigation of risk.

We are using newly acquired funding and resources to build on existing locally developed trust and partnerships. We are expanding our outreach to the community and will continue with a focus of providing safe, alternative water supply to all who need it. We are also gathering new data and implementing a robust monitoring program to track problem areas and guide our efforts to control sources of nitrates to groundwater. Current funding includes provision of nitrate test strips and follow up laboratory analysis, upon request, for up to 2000 homes. We have also requested EPA grant funding through the EJ Gov2Gov grant. The funding, if awarded, will continue to support education, outreach, and testing services. If we learn that current resources

are insufficient to address the acute issue of contaminated drinking water in private wells, we will seek additional funds through state legislative asks for 2024 and 2025.

As described in the response plan summary, we commit to immediate action to identify, contact, conduct testing, and offer alternative water to vulnerable residents in the Lower Yakima Valley and sustain these efforts for as long as nitrate concentrations in groundwater in the LYV remain elevated. Specifically, this includes actions to:

- Undertake a comprehensive and renewed effort to notify all potentially impacted residents on their potential exposure and provide information on the associated health risks.
- Distribute nitrate strip tests to at least 250 residents, prioritizing areas of the highest risk. We will follow-up with additional laboratory testing for concentrations above 5 mg/L.
- Provide alternative drinking water where the drinking water sample exceeds the MCL based on laboratory or nitrate test strip results. Alternative water will be provided as needed for drinking, cooking, maintaining oral hygiene and dish washing at no cost to the resident and in a manner that minimizes the burden on the impacted resident to obtain safe drinking water.
- Comprehensively track and publish our progress in implementing the response plan.
- Modify response plan and subsequent efforts to expand testing and alternative water alternatives as data is gathered and additional nitrate exposure is identified.

We appreciate and share your interest in finding solutions to the nitrate contamination in the Lower Yakima Valley, providing safe alternative water supply, and reducing nitrate pollution. The GWMA plan was finalized in 2019 and several committee members have added additional resources and technical tools in the last 2 years. This includes provision of alternative water through the pilot program, well head delineation analysis by Landau, nitrate concentration modeling by Tetratech, and Nitrate Health Assessment by DOH. This GWMA effort began in 2011 and has only been fully enacted for approximately 4 years. Since July 2023 we have brought additional state funding dedicated to focused education and outreach, identifying source impacts, community engagement, and supply of alternative water to impacted residents.

This demand for alternative water supply options will drive additional ask for legislative funding. Current program cost is approximately \$4,000 monthly for 48 homes. Our current fund allocation is \$370,000 toward this effort of expanding services to impacted residents. Our current funding allocation covers delivery of alternative water supply. Our grant application to EPA covers water supply treatment (RO filters). Ongoing delivery, and treatment beyond 2025 will require legislative funding allocations.

As a collaborative and coordinated team, state and local partners bring multiple strengths and skillsets to accomplish these goals. With recent funding awarded, we believe we have the tools, resources, and support necessary to ensure safe drinking water is available to all members of the community. As we implement the planned activities, we will re-evaluate what resources may be necessary to fully implement the plan. Should they go beyond existing funding sources, we are committed to requesting what is required to achieve our goals. We look forward to meeting with you in-person.

Sincerely,



Holly Myers
Director, Office of Drinking Water
Environmental Public Health
Washington State Department of Health

cc: Kyrre Flege, Program Manager, Dairy Nutrient Management, Washington State Department of Agriculture
Vincent McGowan, P.E., Water Quality Program Manager, Washington State Department of Ecology
Lisa H. Freund, Public Services Director, Yakima County
Shawn Magee, R.S., Director of Environmental Health, Yakima Health District