



STATE OF WASHINGTON

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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February 21, 2017

Jean Mendoza
Executive Director, Friends of Toppenish Creek
3142 Signal Peak Road
White Swan, WA 98952

Dear Jean:

As you requested in your letter of January 4, 2017, Conservation Commission staff investigated the discussions occurring at the December 1st, 2016 meeting of the GWMA CAFO/Livestock Work Group regarding your concerns about representations made by South Yakima Conservation District staff. We also obtained and reviewed the notes from the meeting you reference.

The conversations with meeting participants and review of the meeting notes corroborate your disagreement at the meeting with Laurie Crowe's statements regarding "manure seal" that prevents leaching from compost yards. However participants did not agree with your assertions of misconduct on the part of Ms. Crowe that would require discipline by her board of supervisors as you suggest.

Disagreements and productive discussion over data, research, and technical standards are not foreign to working groups engaging with land owners on complex natural resource issues. Other members of the working group mentioned they previously received letters of complaint against them by your organization regarding technical standards and data used at previous meetings. This suggests disagreements have occurred at prior meetings and points to the challenges on these issues. Be assured that conservation districts utilize scientifically developed and peer reviewed standards and specifications of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and rely on the research related to the development of those standards. This information can be provided to your organization if you wish.

Concerning your request to discipline Ms. Crowe, it might be helpful for me to describe the relationship between the Conservation Commission and conservation districts. Each of the 45 conservation districts are independent political subdivisions of the State of Washington and operate from policies and procedures that are developed in each district. As such, the Conservation Commission has no disciplinary authority over conservation district staff. I have instructed Conservation Commission staff to share your complaint and background information to the Board of Supervisors of the South Yakima Conservation District for any further action they deem appropriate.

I also offer facilitation assistance from Conservation Commission staff if the Friends of Toppenish Creek board members would desire a meeting with the South Yakima Conservation District to discuss this or other issues that need attention between the two organizations. Please contact me if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Clark".

Mark Clark,
Executive Director