

May 4, 2025

Hello Rob,

Thank you for this information. I was unaware of several of the studies you cited. May I add that many believe Ecology should take a closer look at precursors for ozone which, as we all know, is a criteria air pollutant. So, my question is, how deeply will Ecology explore ozone pollution?

Just as a reminder I will list some of the problems that people on the ground experience when we try to engage on air issues in Yakima County.

The Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency (YRCAA) is governed by a five-member board of directors. Currently there are only four members. The fifth position should have been filled by the Yakima City Selection Committee in March, but that committee will not meet or vote until later in May despite the fact that the YRCAA knew about the pending vacancy last year. The YRCAA may have violated RCW [70A.15.2020](#) which requires the selection process to begin four months prior to a scheduled vacancy.

YRCAA Board Position 3 came up for appointment by the Yakima County Commissioners last December. Initially the Yakima County Commissioners just re-appointed a man with a PhD in dairy science who has served on the YRCAA board for about ten years. Citizens protested. The commissioners then advertised the position and received applications from a man with a PhD in environmental science who has worked in air quality for over 25 years, a retired physician, a retired dentist, a community activist with a business background and strong links to the Hispanic population. Without interviewing the applicants, the commissioners re-appointed the dairy nutritionist again.

The YRCAA has been recently audited by the WA State Auditor and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Both audits listed deficiencies in the agency that should be addressed soon. The EPA listed seventeen specific concerns. I have attached a copy of the EPA audit.

One of the EPA concerns was this: "YRCAA has a very knowledgeable and experienced permit writer but needs to prepare for succession planning."

That experienced permit writer, who was also the Permitting and Planning Supervisor, left the YRCAA in January of 2025. There was no succession planning. There are three positions in Planning and Permitting at the YRCAA and only one young engineer remains. The third position has been unfilled since May of 2024 when the engineer who held the position filed a Whistle Blower complaint about failures of the YRCAA to comply with the law and protect the public.

In April of 2025 a group from the Lower Yakima Valley requested a pre-permitting conference with the YRCAA to discuss an air quality permit application. The YRCAA sent an air quality specialist from the Compliance and Monitoring division of the YRCAA to meet with the applicants. I seriously doubt that a man with qualifications for employment in Permitting and Planning would be working as an air quality specialist.

The YRCAA currently has a staff of six when there should be a minimum of ten employees. The front office staff has turned over twice since January of 2024. I received this anonymous message last week via email:

*Message:*

*YRCAA only has 7 employees now. A formal complaint was made against him for verbal sexual harassment and they are sweeping it under the rug many complaints were made at once and they swept it under the rug. The executive director is unfit to run this place. He keeps chasing out its employees. He doesn't have the qualifications for this know how to run the systems the office has and didn't know how to run a credit card machine until recently.*

The YRCAA Board of Directors will review a proposed budget for 2025-26 this month and next. The YRCAA has \$1.6 million in reserves. How did this happen? The agency is chronically short staffed and chooses to hoard monies designated for salaries rather than invest in staff and programs.

In the past, the YRCAA held a public work session every May to discuss and analyze the agency's proposed budget. This year that work session is scheduled as part of the board's monthly agenda with an estimated time of 30 minutes for the entire meeting. The current proposed budget lacks information on prioritization, workload assignments, or staff time allocated for grant writing, community engagement, planning, data analysis, or translation.

Board packets for the YRCAA monthly meetings no longer contain executive director reports, air quality reports, or division reports regarding the number of complaints, inspections, etc. For a few months this year there were no payroll reports.

I am sending you this information Rob, so you will better understand the frustration people in Yakima County feel when we interface with officials regarding air quality issues.

Thanks for listening.

Jean Mendoza