

Volume 34...Issue 1  
January 2007

MEMBER JURISDICTIONS:

Grandview  
Granger  
Harrah  
Mabton  
Moxee  
Naches  
Selah  
Sunnyside  
Tieton  
Toppenish  
Union Gap  
Wapato  
Yakima  
Yakima County  
Zillah

**YVCOG EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE:**

Al Hubert, Chair  
*Toppenish City Council*  
John P. Hodkinson, Vice Chair  
*Regional Planning Commission*  
Jesse Palacios  
*Yakima County Commission*  
Susan Whitman  
*Yakima City Council*  
Felisa Cox  
*Tieton City Council*



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Website: www.yvcog.org

**YVCOG Executive Committee Membership  
Grows in 2007**

*By J. Page Scott, Executive Director*

The YVCOG Executive Committee membership changes from five members to seven beginning with elections for 2007. In October, the General Membership approved amendments to the Articles of Association to change the YVCOG Executive Committee composition to the following:



- 1 member of Board of Yakima County Commissioners*
- 1 member of Yakima City Council*
- 1 Planning Commission member at-large*
- \*1 member of Sunnyside City Council*
- \*1 representative from Area 1 (Naches, Selah, Union Gap, Moxee, Tieton)*
- \*1 representative from Area 2 (Wapato, Toppenish, Harrah, Zillah)*
- \*1 representative from Area 3 (Grandview, Granger, Mabton)*

*\* indicates change in YVCOG Executive Committee membership structure.*

The Nominating Committee will meet on Thursday, January 11 at 1 p.m. to finalize nominations for 2007 YVCOG Executive Committee. The elections for 2007 Executive Committee will be held at the January 17 General Membership meeting in Toppenish at the Mt. Adams Country Club.

If you would like to submit your name to the Nominating Committee for consideration on the Executive Committee, please contact Judy Price at (509) 574-1550 or email [pricej@yvcog.org](mailto:pricej@yvcog.org) **by Wednesday, January 10.**

***It's Official! We've Moved!***

*By J. Page Scott, Executive Director*

It was time for YVCOG to find a new space that would better suit our office needs. We are now located in the old Halverson Applegate office building between East Lincoln Avenue and East "D" Street.



Stop in and say hello if you are in the neighborhood! Our new address is:

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments  
311 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite #202  
Yakima, WA 98901

Phone: 509-574-1550; FAX 509-574-1551  
Website: [www.yvcog.org](http://www.yvcog.org)

## Critical Area Ordinance & Shoreline Master Program Update

*By Michael Buchanan, Senior Planner*

As the Yakima County Planning Commission completes its work on the county Critical Area Ordinance and Shoreline Master Program it will soon be time for cities in Yakima County to review their own Critical Area Ordinances and if a city has shoreline responsibilities, review and adopt a new shoreline ordinance.

The cities of Grandview, Wapato, Granger, and Toppenish have been represented by Conference of Government's staff in the development of the regional Shorelines Master Program.

Please contact Michael Buchanan at 509-574-1550 if you have any questions or concerns regarding this work.

### ***“Guaranteed Ride Home to the Rescue!”***

*By Brian Curtin, CTR Coordinator*

I hate to imagine how often this scenario takes place. The carpool/vanpool is loading up for the ride home and poor old Bob runs out and announces, “The boss just told me I have to work overtime. How the heck will I get home?” Or Julie, who religiously rides the bus to work, is informed that “Little Suzie” had to come home from school because she is sick and mommy needs to be home with her. Unfortunately, Julie has no idea how she will get home.

Well, the solution to their problems is here, in the form of the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program. The GRH program ensures that participants who utilize an alternative commute mode to the single occupancy vehicle (SOV), such as carpool/vanpool, public transit, walking or bicycle, are covered in the case of an emergency. The Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program, here at the YVCOG, funds a program that guarantees a ride home for those participating employees of employers affected by the CTR program.

It is ironic that survey after survey indicates that employees rank the availability of GRH as the most important factor influencing their choice to participate in a commute alternative. The ironic thing is that GRH is so under-utilized. It is rarely used, yet it is considered an important safety net that allows a comfort zone for those participating in the CTR program. This is a reminder to all of our Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs): you need to make your employees aware of this **opportunity** (gosh, I love that word). Posters, brochures and informational flyers, as well as the ride vouchers for the program have been distributed to your worksites. If you are an ETC and you need more vouchers or additional information about Guaranteed Ride Home, call me, e-mail me, and hound me. This is an important program that encourages your employees to use commute alternatives and it costs them nothing. In fact, A-1 Tri-City Taxi (the same folks that provide Dial-A-Ride for Yakima Transit) is providing this service at no cost as a very important service to the community.

So the next time an employee says “Now, how am I going to get home?” You can respond, “Not to worry, GRH to the rescue!”

## Introduction to Permaculture

*By Richard Spada, GIS Analyst*

The word "permaculture" was coined in 1978 by Bill Mollison, an Australian ecologist, and one of his students, David Holmgren. It is a contraction of "permanent agriculture" or "permanent culture."

Permaculture is about designing ecological human habitats and food production systems. It is a land use and community building movement that strives for the harmonious integration of human dwellings, microclimate, annual and perennial plants, animals, soils, and water into stable, productive communities. The focus is not on these elements themselves, but rather on the relationships created among them by the way we place them in the landscape. This synergy is further enhanced by mimicking patterns found in nature. A central theme in permaculture is the design of ecological landscapes that produce food. Emphasis is placed on multi-use plants, cultural practices such as sheet mulching and trellising, and the integration of animals to recycle nutrients and graze weeds.

However, permaculture entails much more than just food production. Energy-efficient buildings, waste water treatment, recycling, and land stewardship in general are other important components of permaculture. More recently, permaculture has expanded its purview to include economic and social structures that support the evolution and development of more permanent communities, such as co-housing projects and eco-villages. As such, permaculture design concepts are applicable to urban as well as rural settings, and are appropriate for single households as well as whole farms and villages.

"Integrated farming" and "ecological engineering" are terms sometimes used to describe permaculture, with "cultivated ecology" perhaps coming the closest. Whatever the definition, permaculture is an answer to many of the energy and agricultural costs/issues of the present and future.

The reader will probably ask “So what? What does this have to do with me?” My answer is, the Yakima Valley is a major agricultural region and needs to be on the cutting edge of agricultural advancements and knowledge. Currently, demand for agricultural products is increasing as the amount of natural resources needed for the production of these products is either staying the same or in decline. Resources such as the glaciers that recharge the valley's aquifers, reservoirs, streams and rivers are receding. The valley will become increasingly more dependent on annual rainfall and snowmelt in the mountains and valleys. Also, fossil fuels will continue to become more expensive and scarce.

The luxury of having deep natural resources in which to fall back on in times of hardship is becoming increasingly a thing of the past. What will be important is to find ways to minimize inputs and optimize outputs. The valley will be in a better position if they adopt agricultural techniques that efficiently utilize natural resources (land, soil, water, oil, etc.) required in the production of agricultural products. Permaculture is something that anyone who has a small backyard can practice. It has potential to save money and help preserve our natural resources.

## WAPATO HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVANCES

*By Gene Weinmann, Housing Rehab Coordinator*

The City of Wapato's Housing Rehabilitation Program has made considerable progress since its inception in April of 2006. To date, 49 prequalification interviews have been conducted, 15 of which were advanced to the formal application phase and are currently being processed; title reports have been received and reviewed on 13 projects, with the staff currently addressing required legal issues on those projects; lead-based paint assessments, reports and cost estimates have been completed on 6 projects and the results incorporated into the respective lead scopes of work; 12 rehabilitation, lead and weatherization proposals (including scopes of work, floor plans and cost estimates) have been generated; 7 projects (3 rehabilitations, 2 lead and 2 weatherizations) have been approved through the administrative review process; and 7 projects have been let for bid.

Consistent with the 2006 Wapato Housing Rehabilitation Policy Plan, each project follows a specific process, summarized below:

- Housing staff performs application intake. Applicant completes wish list of desired remodeling activities.
- Application information is reviewed, processed, verified and augmented with a title report, verifications from employers, banking institutions and mortgage lenders.
- Initial inspection is conducted on the applicant's property.
- Lead-based paint assessment and report is ordered.
- Housing staff resolves title and legal issues related to the applicant's property.
- Detailed inspection is performed on the applicant's property.
- Lead-based paint assessment and report is received and reviewed.
- Staff creates lead-based paint construction proposal including scope of work, floor plans and cost estimate.
- Staff creates rehabilitation and weatherization construction proposals including scopes of work, floor plans and cost estimates based on wish list items and construction priorities from the adopted 2006 Wapato Policy Plan.
- Scope review meeting is conducted with the applicants, providing a detailed review of the program's rehabilitation, weatherization and lead construction proposals.
- Construction proposals are modified, if needed.
- The administrative review process is conducted by Wapato Housing Rehab Program staff. All elements of the proposed projects are reviewed and evaluated, including rehabilitation, lead and weatherization construction proposals, applicant qualification data, legal and title issues, and property status considerations; and a tour of the project site is conducted. Following review and discussion, the projects are approved, disapproved, altered or tabled pending additional information.


- Projects are placed to bid. Housing staff conducts contractor bid tours, and bid opening is conducted within 2 weeks of the bid request date.
- Pre-construction conferences (PCC's) are conducted, generally within 7 days of bid opening.
- Contractor notices to proceed are executed within 5 days of the PCC date.
- Construction is initiated within 10 days of the notice to proceed mailing date.
- Construction work is completed.
- Loan closing is performed.

The Wapato Housing Rehabilitation Program anticipates assisting 15-18 Wapato families with housing rehabilitation or weatherization assistance. The program is substantially funded by a 2006 Community Development Block Grant from the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), with the remainder provided by City funds and program partnerships.

The City of Wapato and the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) have enjoyed a very successful long-term partnership, having conducted 8 previous housing rehabilitation programs since 1986, remodeling a total of 242 homes and directly impacting approximately 915 Wapato residents.

The YVCOG has been developing and administering housing rehabilitation and weatherization programs since 1984, and offers a variety of housing rehabilitation-related assistance to interested communities, ranging from identifying funding and developing grant applications to creating and administering customized low-income housing rehabilitation programs. The programs target health and safety problems, housing overcrowding, and structural and visual dilapidation of low-income, single-family homes. Typical program benefits include preservation of low-income housing stock, improved family health, reduced heating and cooling costs, neighborhood beautification and a strengthened tax base.

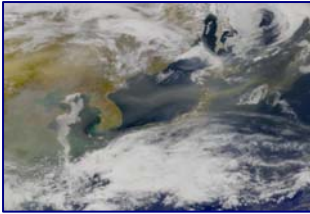
Additional information regarding YVCOG-administered housing rehabilitation programs may be obtained by contacting Gene Weinmann, YVCOG Housing Rehab Coordinator at (509) 574-1550.



**2006 YVCOG  
OUTSTANDING SERVICE  
AWARD  
PRESENTED TO...**

*Commissioner Jesse Palacios was awarded the YVCOG's 2006 YVCOG Outstanding Service Award at the December 13, 2006 YVCOG General Membership meeting.*

*Jesse has been instrumental in helping to develop the DRYVE committee in the Lower Yakima Valley.*



## Transboundary Air Pollution

By Drew Miller, Planner

Washington State has encountered a number of unanticipated air quality problems this winter. A thermal inversion in the Yakima Valley ceased the normal mixing of air and caused pollutants to be trapped near the ground, which was exacerbated by the surrounding hills. These factors led to a Stage 2 Burn Ban called on December 6 by the Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority, the first elevated burn ban issued in seven years. Likewise, the severe wind storms that hit western Washington and knocked out power for over a week in December some locations had a negative impact on air quality. Without electricity, the only heating option left for many was to burn wood, which creates high levels of particulates and other pollutants.

While the prime culprit for the poor air quality in both of these cases was wood smoke used for home heating, there may be other possible sources of local air pollution. Air pollution from mobile sources like cars certainly is a factor to some extent, but there is another source of local air pollution that isn't often thought of: China.

At an air quality monitoring site on the Olympic coast in Washington State, there is evidence of an industrial revolution taking place thousands of miles away. Tiny, airborne particles have drifted over the ocean from coal-fired power plants, smelters, dust storms and diesel trucks in China and other Asian countries. Ozone, carbon monoxide, mercury and particulate matter from Asia have been gathered at the Olympic monitoring station.

Researchers say the environmental impact of China's breakneck economic growth is being felt well beyond its borders. They worry that as China consumes more fossil fuels to feed its energy-hungry economy, the U.S. could see a sharp increase in trans-Pacific pollution that could affect human health, worsen air quality and alter climate patterns.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that on certain days nearly 25 percent of the particulate matter in the skies above Los Angeles can be traced to China. Some experts predict China could one day account for one-third of all California's air pollution.

In 2001, NASA satellites tracked a cloud of dust up to 2,000 km long as it left Asia, drifted across the Pacific Ocean, and traversed North America from Alaska to Florida, raining dust and pollutants over the continent.

The dust storms give visible evidence of a "conveyor belt in the sky" that ferries air from Asia to North America. So, the next time the Yakima Valley experiences bad air quality, just remember that some of that pollution may be coming all the way from China.

The image above shows a trail of brown dust streaming east over North Korea and Japan and heading out over the Pacific Ocean. This was only the beginning of the dust's long journey, which finally came to an end in the mid-Atlantic.



### JANUARY MEETINGS...

**MPO/RTPO Technical Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, January 11, 2007 - 10:00 a.m.**  
**New location: 311 North 4th Street, Suite 202**  
**(The 300 Building)**  
**Yakima, WA**

**YVCOG Executive Committee & MPO/RTPO Executive Committee & Policy Board**  
**Wednesday, January 17, 2007 at 1:30 p.m.**  
**New location: 311 North 4th Street, Suite 202**  
**(The 300 Building)**  
**Yakima, WA**

**YVCOG General Membership Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 17, 2007 - 6:30 p.m.**  
**Mr. Adams Country Club**  
**1250 Rocky Ford Road**  
**Toppenish, WA**

**Program: Election of 2007 YVCOG Executive Committee & Officers**

***(Reservations are needed no later than Friday, January 12. Please call Judy at 509-574-1550 or email her at [pricej@yvcog.org](mailto:pricej@yvcog.org) with your reservations. Thank you!)***

#### Your YVCOG Staff:

J. Page Scott, Executive Director  
Brian Curtin, CTR Coordinator  
Michael Buchanan, Senior Planner  
Vacant, Senior Transportation Planner  
Drew Miller, Planner  
Richard Spada, GIS Analyst/Systems Administrator  
Gene E. Weinmann, Housing Rehab Coordinator  
Jim Dixon, Housing Rehab Building Inspector  
Tamara Hayward, Housing Rehab Office Specialist  
Nancy Soules, Administrative Finance Officer  
Judy Price, Office Specialist



