

NPS Alliance Meeting notes
December 15, 2011 Forest Service
9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Present:

Lucia Machado	Jason Peel	Troy Bauder
Loretta Lohman	Julie Annear	[phone]
Greg Naugle	Marcella Hutchinson	Joan Carlson [phone]
Robert Sakata	Barb Horn	Connie O’Neill [phone]
Ed Rumbold		Holly Huyck [phone]

Introductions

Marcella Hutchinson facilitating. Those present and on the phone introduced themselves.

WQCD Update

Interviews with the final TMDL candidates are done and hope to have the position filled by the first of the next year.

The 303(d) listing hearing had 40 hearing parties and about 50 new waterbodies were added to the list. This was the first hearing when the multi-metric index policy was used to identify aquatic life impairments. The Commission elected to adopt some modifications to the Eagle river temperature listing and final action on the 303(d) list is scheduled for the February Commission meeting.

Project Solicitation Process

Note that there is a new section about data use in the announcement—data collected or developed for a project are part of the project deliverable and must be uploaded to Storet and available for use by the Division.

Base funding continues to be cut, and without any final decisions, the Division elected to not solicit any proposals for base funding. Incremental projects eligible for funding are those with an impaired segment and/or completed TMDL AND have a State- approved watershed plan that conforms to EPA’s nine elements. The next step is how to prioritize received proposals for funding. The first cut is well-designed, well-presented proposals. Second will be opportunities for successful restoration or remediation of impaired waters. The State will accept provisional, M&E, listings, but not EPA. Requirements for incremental funding are black and white—303d listing or TMDL, with a watershed plan. A TMDL trumps a 303d listing.

Feedback on NPS Workshop at Sustaining Watersheds Conference

The workshop covered the proposal process with lots of interaction and basic questions. Folks also followed up the workshop with questions. Suggested that more time be left in the workshop for breakout groups with specific question topics. These could be spread around the meeting room.

There was some discussion about having a separate NPS workshop like there used to be. Right now, the conference is very diverse and not so focused on NPS attendees. There are different goals—outreach and education and focus on how to get funds.

It might be a good idea to have workshops at various times using the webinar technology. Ideally, folks would have a microphone but a telephone link would work for those who do not.

DSN and the NPS staff had a good meeting to discuss ways that data management could be integrated in both the proposals and associated budgets.

Management Plan update

The entire draft is being circulated at EPA. In the meantime, staff is working informally with Marcella. Chapters 2 and 3 have been significantly rewritten in light on studies about the NPS program and EPA comments. Chapter 2 has matrices that are the core of the program. Chapter 5 lists partners. These are posted at <http://npscolorado.com/2012management%20plan.htm>. For some reason, these two files will not come up in the latest version of IE. They do work in earlier versions, in Firefox and in Chrome. Please review and comment by December 30 with a focus on the matrices in Chapter 2 and on Chapter 5.

After Alliance comments are received the plan will be reviewed and edited for consistency

The hearing on the new management plan will be in February. EPA anticipates the studies will require that every state have a new or updated management plan and Colorado is ahead of that schedule and will continue to move forward.

State of National NPS Program

Marcella expects State/EPA workgroups to revise guidance documents. Also, expect more funding cuts at the national level. State programs will get more scrutiny but EPA is trying to keep the administrative burden from falling on the states. EPA is reporting that some states are doing a very good job and that States in general are making effective use of available funding

The GAO study is not out. GAO asked project sponsors and related federal agencies about program administration and looked at different levels of implementation.

Expect a tightening of the way NPS business is done.

It becomes a matter of maintaining a balance, perhaps choosing specific spots and a priority for funds. EPA may set up workgroups or subcommittees to address recommendations or to develop guidelines from the studies. However, anticipate more emphasis on expenditure instead of only obligation. To address this issue the state may revert to an entire PIP at the proposal stage to shorten the time between proposal and implementation.

It looks like this is pointing toward an RFP process.

Also, need a good watershed assessment tool and a well-defined approach for outreach.

Part of the problem is that OMB wants effective results from on a tiny fraction of the funds necessary to address the problem, and without allowing necessary time for results to show up. Barb suggested starting to discuss the true cost of the nps problem, not just the cost for a small project on one segment. It would be a way of education OMB and Congress about the scope and needs.

An example would be Straight Creek, which, after 20 years, is not yet showing clear results.

2012 Scheduling

The proposal review meeting is scheduled for February 16 at CDPHE. The room is reserved for the entire day so that a brief Alliance meeting can be held prior to proposal review. Information on proposals and the meeting schedule will be posted as available.

Alliance member updates

Holly Huyck – the Fraser project is completed except for final seeding in the spring.

Joan Carlson – Watershed prioritizing has taken place and one or two watershed were chosen for an action plan—there are more projects than money. Final edit of tech guide for national BMPs is underway. Still no regional forester and leadership is in flux. Web page is <http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/>

Troy Bauder—finishing nutrient BMP adoption study and finishing the tech bulletin that goes with it. He'll send the link to the list. The study is Exhibit 9 in the WQCD prehearing statement on nutrients.

Connie O'Neill—trying to keep my head above water on nutrients. WQCD approved the updated 208 plan and now EPA is reviewing.

Barb Horn—Jan 31st meeting on DSN. Have products and now looking at long-term structure and leadership. Meeting at Leonard Rice facilities. National Monitoring Council end of May. Discussed the possibility of a workshop on Water Words that would be for ¾ day at a cost of about \$40.

Robert Sakata—no January commission meeting. February will be San-Juan/Gunnison issues formulation hearing, triennial for Chatfield, oil and gas commission report, NPS management plan, Pueblo COG 208. May not be reappointed but expects to be around at least for nutrients.

Julie Annear—working on about 20 sites aiming for implementation. There is some private funding.

Greg Naugle--noted that some older mine projects needed maintenance and got some Water and Power Authority funds to address the issue.

Several people noted there is no way to consistently fund operations and maintenance and it is a huge problem. Straight Creek alone could take a million a year for sediment removal. A chronic issue.

Maintenance is not in the report to OMB and probably not in GAO.

Lucia Machado—good partnership with DRMS. Hope Alliance reviews management plan and, at a minimum, matrices and partnership sections (now posted at NPSColorado).

Ed Rumbold—Steve Sanchez now Pueblo Forest Service and the Kerber Creek. The SLV position will not be filled. Fen inventory going on in Gunnison area and monitoring plan for Roan plateau. Land management plans for Dominguez-Escalante and Montrose. Mentioned well that blew near Canyon City that they are monitoring for 4 mile creek and plan to get a NPDES permit. See story http://groups.google.com/group/arkriver/browse_thread/thread/47da7b5dc7422095/5459b40ec4378c15?lnk=gst&q=well#5459b40ec4378c15.

Jason Peel—Frank Riggle is retiring and his job is not being filled. Duties are being redistributed. There is a new WQ Tech note #7 open for review until January 6. It would eventually be used in 13 states. SPARROW catchments approved for use in planning process. Colorado River is into salinity pot for reimbursement. Did some tech transfer with Uzbekistan.

Marcella Hutchinson—Ayn Schmidt is on temporary detail for one year and Carol Campbell, Assistant Regional Administrator for the Ecosystems Protection Program is retiring. Johanna Miller will be acting Unit Chief until Ayn returns. The Assistant Regional Administrator for the Office of Partnerships and Regulatory Assistance, which includes NPDES, is also retiring. Dov Weitman, head of the NPS Branch at HQ is retiring in Washington. Lynda Hall is now the national NPS program chief.