

NPS Alliance Meeting notes
16 June 2009, USDA Forest Service
9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Present:

Lucia Machado
Marcella Hutchinson
Tracy Yager
Loretta Lohman
Greg Naugle

Holly Huyck
Joan Carlson
Ed Rumbold
Jason Peel NRCS
Jim Webster TWP

Jeff Crane
Robert Sakata [phone]
Barb Horn [phone]
Troy Bauder [phone]

Introductions

Jason Peel is now representing NRCS. Jim Webster was observing the meeting for Trees, Water and People.

NPS Management Plan

Lucia handed out a draft outline for reference and noted that for the 2010 plan she hoped to revisit the two earlier plans and incorporate a strategic approach. What is needed now is a critical look at the draft outline. Based on comments during the meeting, a revised outline will be posted for Alliance review and comments. Alliance comments should be generated and passed to Loretta by July 31. They will be compiled for Lucia and Greg.

The idea is to assign one staff person to be the lead for each chapter and possibly more than one chapter per NPS program staff. Key issues would be in the chapter narratives and everything else in appendices. Greg will provide the introduction with a description of the processes followed by the division. The potential audience is broad although the primary targets are EPA and the WQCC.

Each chapter will be a standalone and will be posted with a contact for comments. A schedule will be developed. Lucia plans to see what other states are doing with their management plan updates.

Some questions that might be answered in the plan include identifying the various agencies and their respective groundwater quality authority in Colorado and what is the status of nutrients. Troy referred the meeting to his water quality website—www.csuwater.info—for up to date information on groundwater information.

Other issues of interest are the possibility of addressing more integration of NPS—TMDL in an effort to stop pollution at the source. Another potential issue is the new reasonable assurance requirements associated with TMDLs. There are few point-source related TMDLs, and NPS funds cannot be used for permit compliance. The only area that can be addressed is abandoned draining mine adits. They used to be considered NPS but now are considered unpermitted discharges – hence nonpoint source funding can be used to address the problem.

Some discussion focused on topic/chapter areas. For example, where should energy development be included—in mining with legacy hard rock, or with legacy drilling problems? Where should geothermal be placed?

It is hoped the plan can recognize the strong NPS-stormwater tie despite the split in funding resources and regulatory authority. The strategic goal of restoring impaired waters covers all areas.

One discussion was whether there should be a transportation category that included sediment and nutrients from roads, construction, etc.

At the least, similar problems or solutions will be cross referenced.

Also needed is recognition that this is a multi-billion dollar problem with million dollar resources.

There is no existing catalogue of what is needed in the state although EPA is working on a comprehensive list and map of watershed plans and what is in them.

Program effectiveness compared to funding should be noted in Chapter 8 and in other places. It was noted that the Introduction to the 2005 update had paragraphs about challenges to the program that still apply—in both state and federal funding in particular.

SWAP needs to be integrated with narrative in several places, but especially in the groundwater section.

Homework:

Ideas on the outline by July 31

Think about where you might participate

The documents will be posted and open for comments. Troy volunteered to review groundwater and Ag sections. Perhaps it might be worthwhile to reinstitute the technical committees for reviewing sections. Those groups include: agriculture/silviculture; mining; urban and construction; and stream restoration. Please contact Loretta if you were part of any of these committees or wish to be included.

Targeted Outreach

Greg prefaced his South Platte discussion by describing how priorities are identified by WQCD. There is an October scoping session for the WQCC that defines work for the next year prefatory for rulemaking in the third year. The Division briefing for issue scoping for the basin of concern identifies the NPS priorities 23 months out. This is part of a predictable five-year cycle and will help the targeted outreach be more organized.

The Alliance could begin a new Targeted Outreach effort this fall after the Division's October Scoping presentation to the WQCC. That effort for the San Juan/Gunnison will have about 2

years lead time before proposals are due. Volunteers for the San Juan/Gunnison Targeted Outreach effort will be solicited at the next meeting.

The Alliance spreadsheet for the San Juan and Gunnison basins is posted and always available for updating. It should serve as a template for other targeted efforts. WQCD will fill in TMDL information as needed.

South Platte Outreach

Greg acted for Tammy and Randy and passed out a spreadsheet containing preliminary data on possible projects for the Upper South Platte. Projects in the spreadsheet handout were not yet fully cross referenced to 305b reported problems, 303d listings, or the Monitoring and Eval list, hence FY 2010 needs are not fully prioritized. The spreadsheet will be posted. The work on a Lower South Platte watershed plan has started and Randy is working with a watershed group that encompasses the Republican River headwaters.

Many sub-watersheds in the South Platte River, for example the Poudre River, still need a watershed plan. Some of the existing watershed plans may need updating or more information. A comprehensive GIS cover containing data and location for the existing watershed plans in the state will be available at the end of the summer, as EPA has an intern working on this. This effort will help us evaluate watershed plans in the state: whether they address EPA's Nine Elements, the ones that need updating, the gaps where one is needed and the ones that are complete.

Sediment Task Force

Again, Greg presented information, along with Holly, who is involved in using Straight Creek sediment load reduction reporting as a starting point for the larger problem of capturing that type of information. Bonie will be the contact person working with Holly on the Straight Creek project.

Straight Creek has been monitored for 17 years, with a 2007 assessment on TMDL goals. Various types of measurements have been used but it is hard to identify trends because of the physical morphology of the creek. Now they are trying to figure out if the TMDL goals are appropriate.

They are also looking at various ways to measure progress associated with the different land uses in the basin, and with the several types of BMPs being used, such as vacuuming rather than cleaning with water, earlier sweeping, etc. It is all very preliminary and the bottom line is how it translates into the health of the stream. That is the hard part to determine and perhaps channel stability may be the measure that better reflect the health of the system overall.

Ed commented that nothing has happened with the Task Force even though there has been help wanted posted. Holly's work may provide the foundation to start a Task Force. Lucia will send out meeting dates on a Sediment Task Force.

SP-12 Collaborative Effort Reporting

This is a report sought by EPA to see if the watershed approach is working. It is different than water quality reporting by impaired segment or by project. The watershed report is based on 12 digit HUCs and involves all the partners and all the activities that helped bring an impaired segment back to attaining water quality standards. The Forest Service provided the information for the 2007-2008 reporting cycle regarding water quality improvements at the Box Canyon project, located in the San Juan National Forest in Montezuma County, Colorado.

This report is generated every year and Lucia will be sending e-mails to Alliance members and other partners asking for reports or data on a project that might meet the requirements for such a report.

Alliance member updates

WQCD: Greg started by discussing staffing changes at the Division. Kathleen is retiring July 31 but will return after thirty days for the maximum six month consulting. She is needed to do the water quality planning under 604B and 208 that has received extra funding. Tammy is going to work at EPA on NEPA for six months. The division will be even shorter staffed than usual although Greg is hoping to hire someone for six months. They are still looking at LID and are leaning toward allowing MS4s to monitor LID rather than implementing it.

CWA: working with about 74 groups.

NRCS: Jason will be the rep for the time being but things are in flux in the state office.

EPA: No regional administrator has been appointed yet.

CDOT: Holly is working on five different legal documents involving NPS. The Straight Creek traction sand study begins on July 15. DOT just finished a redo on an old 319 project on the Frasier River.

TWP: Jim Webster is involved in the Western Headwaters Roundtable and international and watershed programs.

CSU: Troy is on the steering committee for the Lower South Platte watershed plan headed up by Mark Cronquist. This is on a fast track for CDPHE. He has a new well and septic system DVD available.

DOW: Barb is working on the data sharing project and getting a fisheries database up and running.

WQCC: Robert said that the WQ Forum will be focusing on regulations July 20-21. There will be a state water quality effort that ties into Kathleen's consulting on 208 plans.

Forest Service: Joan attended a how to write better TMDLs workshop that should be useful.

BLM: Ed said BLM got \$20million in stimulus funding for culverts, bridges, roads, and habitat restoration. Dominguez-Escalante is a new wilderness area in the state. There is a NAS publication on coal bed methane produced water nearing completion. Bob Abbey is the first career BLM person nominated for national director. He has expertise is geothermal, solar and small hydro.

USGS: Tracy said research shows that the DOMINANT source of high E. coli concentrations in Fountain Creek appears to be pigeons (E. coli from ruminants and humans also were present). The pigeons probably reside under bridges, possibly in Manitou Springs. The contact for more information is dpm@usgs.gov. USGS stimulus funds will be used for infrastructure removal.

NPS Coordinator Contract

The contract has been continued for two more years, now ending June 30, 2011.

Other business

The agenda is under development for Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference. There is a space on the agenda for NPS mentoring. Marcella is the contact. The Conference is October 7-9 in Vail.

Next meeting

Marcella will facilitate. Lucia and Loretta will work on the agenda. The meeting will be September 15, 2009, 9:00, Forest Service auditorium