

NPS Alliance Meeting notes
June 23, 2011 Forest Service
9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Present:

Joan Carlson	Loretta Lohman	Troy Bauder
Lucia Machado	Greg Naugle	Robert Sakata [phone]
Holly Huyck	Marcella Hutchinson	Julie Annear
Chris Sturm		

Introductions

Holly Huyck facilitating. Those present and on the phone introduced themselves.

WQCD Update

Nutrient Hearing Update: CDM is leading a cost-benefit study of point source nutrient treatment costs that is mainly focused on wastewater treatment facilities (WWTF). CSU is reviewing an earlier study associated with agricultural BMP costs, and is working on updating that information. The current proposal being discussed incorporates a control reg approach for WWTFs which would define the minimum expected treatment for nutrients. The control reg approach is also proposing monitoring for NPS and MS4 sources to assess associated nutrient contributions.

Staff Update: The WQCD received the required waiver to fill the vacant TMDL position. The job announcement will be open competition and should be posted in the next 4 to 6 weeks.

319 Grant Budget Issues

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is responsible for preparing federal budgets for the President and is part of the Executive Branch. EPA Headquarters is conducting a study of the NPS program with targeted to addressing OMB questions and concerns about the program. This study is focused on how Section 319 base funds are being used by the different states – mostly what base funds are paying for, what is being leveraged at the local level with these funds and what is the “value-added” by base funds. One outcome of the study will be justification to keep base funds as intact as possible past the 2012 budget; another is recommendations and potential changes to the NPS program.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is the investigative arm of Congress and is part of the Legislative Branch. They are conducting an independent study on the EPA funding and on the Nonpoint Source program more specifically, nation-wide. The GAO study is happening independently from any input from EPA or the states. They are conducting visits, surveys and in general evaluating how the NPS program is being implemented. No apparent focus on base funds or anything else. They are contacting State NPS program managers and about 200 local project sponsors nation-wide.

Ultimately, both studies will be used to develop federal budgets and will have unforeseen implications on how EPA and the NPS programs will be funded, especially after 2012.

For the 2011 federal fiscal year, overall Section 319 took a \$25 million budget cut; that translated to \$316,000 for the Colorado NPS program.. It is expected that an additional 11 million dollars will be cut from the overall Section 319 funds for FFY 2012. For next year Colorado is expecting that about \$300 thousand will be available for projects in base funding, compared to about \$900 thousand that was available in 2010.

Colorado, with Marcella's help, has been trying to mitigate this \$316 thousand dollars loss, which was to occur primarily in base funds. Lightner Creek was reduced by around 50%. There will be no funding for a website redesign. The Measurable Results Project was cut back, as was DSN.

Because of increasing restrictions on reallocating unspent funds, the NPS Program will continue to keep a list of contingent projects that were originally eligible for funding based on the merit of the proposal but the NPS program ran out of available funds. Those projects may be contracted later, if and when, funding becomes available through contract changes that reduced a projects scope and budget, projects that are cancelled or cannot meet match or state contracting requirements, and funds that may be left over at project completion .

Management Plan update

The draft 2011 Nonpoint Source Management Plan is posted on the website for review and comments. The plan is scheduled for the August 8th WQCC meeting, so the public notice period will start on July 8th when the plan will be posted on the WQCC's website. The current process includes incorporating Alliance comments by the July 8th public notice deadlines. Following the WQCC meeting, the NPS program will also incorporate any public and Commissioner input. Since there is no WQCC meeting in September, final WQCC approval is anticipated at the October meeting. Following WQCC approval the NPS program will submit the plan to EPA for final approval.

The WQCD strategic plan is a nexus with the NPS Management Plan. Using the 303(d) list, TMDL and M&E list, the focus for the next 5 years will be legacy mines. Selenium is the second priority and the plan outlines a basin specific approach. The Lower Arkansas Basin study being conducted by Dr. Gates is nearing completion and should help determine what makes selenium mobilize so that planning and implementation of large scale BMPs can be conducted.

Another focus in the plan is on producing measurable results. More collaboration among agencies is expected. National priorities will continue to be tracked in GRTS and they are load reductions in sediment and nutrients. The NPS program also reports on other measures of success, such as achieving water quality improvements at the watershed or the waterbody levels. One way this is reported is through success stories where at least some restoration has been successful to address NPS pollution sources.

The new plan still has a push for watershed plans to make use of incremental funds that can only be used to address impaired waters where there is an approved watershed plan.

Note that Chapter 6 is not complete because of needed coordination of information.

Alliance Outreach Process

There are four outreach related matrices at <http://npscolorado.com/NPSalliance.htm>. They are part of the Division/Alliance outreach process to select areas or projects that might benefit from Alliance assistance. The existing matrices were based on the 303d list. Now there are integrated listings http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/op/wqcc/Reports/waterstatus_305_b/305bRept2010.pdf and the soon to be adopted statewide water quality management plan <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/op/wqcc/Hearings/AAH/WQmanplan/wQmanplan.html> that is integrated with SWSI will help guide input into potential Alliance outreach.

These matrices provide the history of efforts as well as the framework to input data to discover the best new efforts. This is helpful to the Division as preparations state about two years out before priority basins and issues are determined. The Commission will have some priority discussion in October.

This is an Alliance/Division collaboration. The next step will be San Juan Gunnison in February 2013 followed by the Arkansas Rio Grande in September 2014. Barb and Tracy are not able to participate this year but Julie Annear is working on all the mining issues and Greg and Holly are working on the Ark & Rio Grande basins, including reformatting for ease of use.

For all of the outreach efforts it will be important to remember there will be less money, that watershed plans will be critical and that there are no priorities for 2012. However, the focus will be on mining and selenium.

Each matrix will be sent out when the draft updates are available. The Alliance then can fill in any gaps and see where its assistance best fits. WQCD will try to get San Juan/Gunnison done by September 2012 and the Ark by June 2013 for Alliance efforts.

Priority watersheds are an EPA measuring tool but the focus on the spreadsheets should be metals and selenium.

Concept papers

An announcement for concept papers should be out by July 1. This is an Alliance role, so an Alliance member needs to take the lead on Concept Day for this year, perhaps with additional facilitators or monitors for the day. Most of the rules from last year will be applied but a modification to the budget section related to a more general description of the proposed budget was suggested.

ALTERNATIVELY, we may prepare a table with types of projects within a given dollar range to assist proposers in determining where they might fit and what the chances are for funding.

Additionally, based on feedback following last year's concept day 3x5 cards, or a similar method, will be used to provide the project sponsors with immediate written feedback. The idea would be to not track these, but just provide them directly to proposal preparers at the end of their session at concept day.

Consultation day is scheduled for August 25 at USDA Forest Service. This year we will again attempt to schedule proposal preparers as a groups based on similar projects. Loretta will work on the schedule and distribute as soon as the concept deadline closes. We are requesting for individual volunteers to moderate these separate sessions, so when the schedule is distributed we'll also request volunteers to facilitate individual sessions. As always, we'd appreciate Alliance participation for the entire day, but would be grateful for any assistance. If you can only make one of the yet-to-be scheduled sessions dealing with your interest or expertise that would be more than welcome.

The announcement for proposals will come in October before the watershed conference with a due date of January 15 and final WQCC action at the April Commission meeting.

Alliance member updates

Joan Carlson, Forest Service – Rick Cable is leaving Forest Service to head the new combined Colorado DOW and Parks. The watershed condition framework classification effort phase 1 is completed. The worst in Colorado is the site of the Hayman fire.

Julie Annear, DRMS – lots of sampling using power authority funds for 2 years then to engineering and design.

Marcella Hutchinson, EPA – new financial system in October. Limited to no travel.

Troy Bauder, CSU – BMP monitoring guides is available online at

http://region8water.colostate.edu/PDFs/BMP_Monitoring_Guide_April_09.pdf.

There are some mobile apps to improve water management as well as a soil app. The current nutrient BMP study has 160 surveys return from 2000 sent out and the data is now being cleaned up. USDA dataset included some dryland farmers. Also, farmers underestimate their costs when implementing BMPs. ERAMS—environmental risk management system is undergoing a significant upgrade.

Chris Sturm, CWCB – there are 13 projects in the watershed restoration program. See them at

<http://cwcb.state.co.us/environment/watershed-protection-restoration/Pages/main.aspx>. Chris asked to be linked from npscolorado.com and Loretta would like suggestions where to place important links—a new title or topic line.

Holly Huyck, CDOT – CDOT is building the Fraser project. NEPA is okay and Denver water overseeing. Highway 119, half of stream restored so far near Blackhawk. But there have been 3 new applications for mining on the Clear Creek mainstem. Georgetown wastewater plant is removing nitrogen and zinc.

Greg Naugle, CDPHE – no sediment progress. State is redoing web pages and about half of the Health department is underway—mostly the health side. WQCD just started their process within the past week, and is expecting ‘new’ website pages by the end of the calendar year.

Loretta will put 2000 NPS Management Plan on npscolorado.com to prevent it from disappearing.

2011 planning, schedule, facilitator identification

NPS Alliance Meetings as USDA Forest Service

Aug 25	Sep 15	Dec 15
Consultation Day – Jason and others. All day	Quarterly Meeting - Ed	Quarterly Meeting - Marcella