

# Mid Snake Watershed Advisory Group

## Meeting Minutes

Department of Environmental Quality  
650 Addison Avenue West, Suite 110, Twin Falls, Idaho  
Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 10 a.m.

### Attendees

Jay Barlogi – Twin Falls Canal Company  
Jason Brown – City of Twin Falls  
Sonny Buhidar – Department of Environmental Quality, Twin Falls Regional Office  
Rich Bupp – Department of Environmental Quality, Twin Falls Regional Office  
Gary Fornshell – University of Idaho  
Brian Hoelscher – Idaho Power  
Rick Lowell – Idaho Fish and Game  
Randy MacMillan – Clear Springs Foods  
Andy Morton – Clear Springs Foods  
Chuck Pentzer – Soil and Water Conservation Commission  
Katie Shewmaker – Department of Environmental Quality, Twin Falls Regional Office  
Sue Switzer – Department of Environmental Quality, Twin Falls Regional Office  
Craig Thomas – Department of Environmental Quality, Twin Falls Regional Office  
Jim Younk – Idaho Power

### Welcome

The meeting of the Mid Snake Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) was called to order at approximately 10:05 a.m. by Randy MacMillan. The WAG chairman was unable to attend; Randy MacMillan was acting chairman for this meeting. The attendees introduced themselves and who they represented.

### DEQ Discussion about consultation

Sonny Buhidar talked with the WAG concerning the formal consultation that was submitted by the WAG relating to the Tetra Tech Report. At the end of discussions/presentations, he needs to have a written notification from the TAC to the WAG as to what position the WAG is going to take. There was some discussion as to whether this meeting was a TAC or WAG meeting. Discussion points included: the advertisement went to the whole WAG, attendance is voluntary, and years earlier it was voted that the TAC and WAG were the same group because of the size of the group. Randy MacMillan stated, “For the record, this is a WAG meeting and no positions will be taken today. Today’s meeting is to focus on other data that is available and the interpretation of that data.”

Brian Hoelscher asked, “Is the House Bill strictly a technical arena or is policy also open for discussion?” Sonny replied it is open for anything you wish to discuss. Relative to the policy under consultation, he cannot answer that completely.

## **Idaho Power – Snake River Data & Trends**

Brian Hoelscher distributed to the attendees a copy of his PowerPoint presentation, *Data Trend Assessment Middle Snake/Upper Snake-Rock Subbasin TMDL*. Idaho Power has been collecting TP in the Mid Snake since 1990's. The data from 2011 back was provided to Tetra Tech for King Hill. From March of this year Idaho Power has been monitoring every two weeks at Milner, the bridge below Crystal Springs, and King Hill. Brian presented some trends using the old and new data sets collected by Idaho Power. Recent data indicate that there may be a declining trend, and the target as an average is being attained; the TMDL has been implemented. However, data indicate that macrophyte biomass is continually increasing and flows are declining. We need to have discussions on really what is causing the issue and how can we address it.

Sonny asked three questions:

1. Is the data you present strictly Idaho Power data? Brian replied that it was just Idaho Power data and everything prior to 2011 was giving to Tetra Tech. How would this new data affect the Tetra Tech report?
2. The 2010 report that DEQ developed was based strictly on DEQ data. There is a discussion in there on reduction of phosphorus that should not be ignored. It was not suggested that the TMDL be opened, but continued.
3. What are you inferring with the macrophytes chart? Brian replied that the macrophyte standing crop has increased in the system since 1991. This brought up some discussion concerning macrophytes and at what level they become a nuisance.

## **Clear Springs Foods – Data Presentation**

Randy MacMillan presented new data and analysis for Clear Springs Foods. Since 2001 Clear Springs Foods has been sampling the Snake River at the Clear Lake Bridge once or twice per month. Both Clear Springs Food data and Tetra Tech data were used in the data analysis. Two of the DEQ Snake River monitoring sites used in the Tetra Tech reevaluation were looked at in the Clear Springs Foods analysis: the Box Canyon site and the Crystal Springs Site. Statistically, there was no correlation found between water flow and concentration. This indicates the core argument of Tetra Tech is invalid. At the Clear Springs site total phosphorus as measured by an annual mean concentration continually decreased since 2001. Statically there was again no correlation found between water flow and concentration. But there is some seasonality in concentrations. From Clear Springs Foods' prospective the target requirements of the TMDL have been met.

In the Tetra Tech draft report and the EPA documents provided during the course of the Tetra Tech study, it was suggested that further modeling was needed to change waste load and load allocations because water flow had diminished that adversely impacted phosphorus concentrations in the water column. The statistical correlation analysis does not support that argument and Clear Springs Foods will argue there should be no change to the TMDL. Clear Springs Foods will not recommend opening the TMDL. Resources need to go towards improving water flow in the river and in the springs.

The Clear Springs Foods data is not included in the Tetra Tech report; Randy will get the data to DEQ when they make formal comment on the Tetra Tech reevaluation, so it can be incorporated into the Tetra Tech report.

## **Discussion of Mid-snake/Upper Snake Rock Subbasin: Data Summary, Evaluation & Assessment**

We have fulfilled the Clean Water Act requirements. Continued efforts are important to maintain and improve the designated beneficial uses. As a WAG we can engage in further discussion after the Tetra Tech report is final and the State makes a decision on the TMDL.

Rich Bupp suggested that both of these presentations would be good to have at the statewide surface water conference sponsored by DEQ in February. Abstracts and/or titles can be submitted to Don Zaroban. The call for papers has not come out yet. You can find details on the DEQ website. It is important to keep the dialog open and keep the substantive information data out there to attest to the success and shortcomings of TMDLs.

**Conclusion – Establish a plan to Proceed**

Sue encouraged the WAG to submit written comment on innovative ideas on what the WAG can do or DEQ can do that is an alternative to reopening the TMDL.

Brian Hoelscher suggested that if the Tetra Tech report suggests reopening the TMDL, the WAG present written comment clearly stating that the WAG does not support the recommendation to reopen the TMDL for water column total phosphorus.

At the next WAG meeting, scheduled November 13, a brief summary of the presentations given tonight will be given. The WAG should vote whether to support the Tetra Tech report or not. Then the WAG should compose a letter with reasons why the choice was made one way or the other.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Randy MacMillan at approximately 11:45 a.m.

  
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WAG Chairman

11/13/13  
Date