

North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed Advisory Group

DRAFT

Meeting Notes

May 20, 2010

1:00 – 3:00 pm

US Forest Service Bldg., Smelterville, ID

Next Meeting: June 24, 2010, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Please visit the WAG Website:

http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/north_fork_cda_river_wag/index.cfm

Contact Kajsa Stromberg with any questions:

(208) 666-4633 or Kajsa.Stromberg@deq.idaho.gov

Participants: Mary Terra-Berns, Mike Mihelich, Bill Rust, Roy Faler, Larry Runkle, Sandy Schlepp, Bob Clark, Ryan Glynn, Ashley McFarland, Chris James, Kajsa Stromberg

Meeting Purpose: To convene the Watershed Advisory Group for the purposes of water quality improvements and protection in the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Subbasin through Total Maximum Daily Load development and implementation.

Meeting notes for the March 25, 2010 meeting were circulated and posted on the WAG's website.

Agenda items and discussion:

- Chris James (new USFS contact): Chris James was introduced to the WAG as the new Aquatics Staff Officer for the USFS Idaho Panhandle National Forests Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. He replaces Ed Lider, who retired in January. Chris has experience with the USFS in California and Colorado and was most recently on the Payette National Forest before moving to Coeur d'Alene in late March.
- Antidegradation rulemaking: DEQ is conducting negotiated rulemaking to amend the Idaho Water Quality Standards for antidegradation. DEQ's website contains detailed information about these proposed rules and the rulemaking process: http://www.deq.idaho.gov/rules/water/58_0102_1001_negotiated.cfm There will be public meetings held June 2 and June 15 for interested parties and solicitation of comment.

- 2010 Integrated Report: The draft 2010 Integrated Report of Idaho's statewide water quality will be released soon for public comment. Kajsa will inform the WAG when it is available.
- Black Lake TMDL: The Black Lake TMDL for phosphorus is now available for public review and comment. See http://www.deq.idaho.gov/Applications/NewsApp/showNews.cfm?news_id=2975&CFID=588731&CFTOKEN=35018574 WAG members were interested in how nutrient management relates over the Spokane River Basin in Idaho. If there are more questions about how the NFCDA relates, we can invite Glen Rothrock and/or Bob Steed to come discuss this with the group as related to the CDA Lake Management Plan and Spokane River TMDLs.
- IDFG Updates and Access Sites: Mary Terra-Berns provided an update from IDFG regarding potential plans to help develop recreational access points to the river and to possibly purchase or secure easements on some of the areas identified as important for fish and wildlife, including coldwater side channels. Several WAG members were concerned about increased accessibility to the river encouraging motorized watercraft on the North Fork CDA River. Bob Clark said that North Idaho Fly Casters are interested in developing better sites for drift boat or raft access. Mary later clarified that the sites being investigated are for access for non-motorized recreation (drift boats, rafts, tubes, etc.).

Kajsa said DEQ would support efforts to purchase or secure easements on coldwater side channels, especially as these efforts relate to temperature TMDL implementation. Kajsa will also follow up on the status of the draft recreation-focused river management plan from Ed Warner and Dewey Skaggs. The WAG was also uncertain about the authorities to regulate motorized recreation on the river and what agency or government entity regulates those activities. Kajsa will follow up and report at the next WAG meeting.

- 319 Projects: The USFS-North Idaho Fly Casters cooperative project on Short-Riley Creeks will continue this summer with instream work and cleanup, having already completed the roads and culvert work in 2009. The North Idaho Fly Casters invited the WAG to participate in their Annual Conservation Festival at Magee/Tepee Creek on June 12th. The DEQ/USFS Idora mine clean up in upper Beaver Creek will be under construction this summer. Environmental planning documents are all being completed and tailings removal and remediation will be underway.
- Riparian vegetation management in the road corridor: Kajsa described observing trees cut from the riparian area along the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River near Castle Rock. In a stretch of approximately ½ mile, there were approximately 80 cottonwood trees cut down and removed. This is something of concern to the WAG due to temperature and sediment impacts. The WAG requested that Kajsa

collect more information on the WAG's behalf about this activity. The trees were cut by Shoshone County road crews as part of their responsibilities for maintenance and safety on the road. I have shared my concerns with both Shoshone County and the USFS about the possible impacts of this kind of activity and all parties have discussed measures to minimize environmental effects while providing for safety of the road infrastructure.

The "Main River Road" is Forest Hwy 9 and is managed as a National Forest System Road through a cooperative agreement between the federal government (USFS/Federal Highways) and the County Public Works Dept. As I understand it, the federal agencies maintain responsibility for capital improvements while the local government is responsible for road maintenance. The WAG discussed water quality issues associated with this joint maintenance including improperly functioning crossing structures, management of safety, and stabilization of banks adjacent to roadways. We discussed how expensive some of these projects are and how they can be funded and prioritized. The Cinnabar Creek culvert has been identified as a problem and the USFS has proposed to address the crossing structure, but it is unclear whether it will be ranked highly enough or there will be enough resources to fund its replacement anytime soon. We agreed to discuss these issues further at the next WAG meeting.

- North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Habitat Improvement Project: Craig Nelson had been the Kootenai Shoshone Conservation District's representative on the WAG and the coordinator of these restoration projects funded through a grant from the Office of Species Conservation. In April, Craig submitted his resignation from the Conservation District, but has continued to work on the project since that time to bring several important items to completion. The conservation plans, designs and contracts have all been completed and are being discussed with the participating landowners. Permit applications have been completed and will be submitted once the landowners agree to the designs and contracts.

The Watershed Advisory Group endorsed this project proposal and has received updates throughout the process. Bob Flagor, Jamie Davis and Craig Nelson have presented materials and updates to the group. This kind of on-the-ground work has been identified by the WAG as a high priority. Unfortunately, DEQ is concerned about the current lack of staff resources and ongoing delays in the project. Kajsa shared these concerns with the group. Kajsa said that DEQ remains committed and that there are several other resources including SCC that are available to provide continuing assistance. Kajsa said DEQ has not given up on the project, that it is currently not going well, and that there would be a status update at the June WAG meeting.

- Beaver Creek Watershed Assessment: Following the discussion about the North Fork Habitat Improvement Project, Kajsa provided a short update on the Beaver Creek Watershed Assessment that is beginning in June. The RAC funded this project with a grant through the USFS. Due to the concerns identified with the

ongoing North Fork Habitat Improvement Project and without Craig Nelson available to participate, the USFS and DEQ have decided to pursue a partnership with the UI Extension Service to assist in this effort rather than the Conservation District. Ashley McFarland from UI Extension was introduced to the WAG. Kajsia said that Aaron Prussian is the USFS lead on the project and he has hired a seasonal crew to work on the project beginning in June. DEQ, USFS and UI are developing the workplan and contract agreements to implement the project this summer.

We ran out of time before reaching the agenda items about the progress report and goals. These agenda items will be carried over to the next meeting in June.

All Presentations and Handouts will be posted on the WAG website:
http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/north_fork_cda_river_wag/index.cfm