

## North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed Advisory Group

### Meeting Notes

August 27, 2009

1:00 – 4:00 pm

US Forest Service Bldg., Smelterville, ID

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, October 29, 2009 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at the US Forest Service Building in Smelterville, ID.

**Please visit the WAG Website:**

[http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/north\\_fork\\_cda\\_river\\_wag/index.cfm](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/north_fork_cda_river_wag/index.cfm)

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**Participants:** Mike Mihelich, Roy Faler, Ed Lider, Bill Rust, Jamie Davis, Don Martin, Larry Runkle, Ryan Glynn, 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.

**Summer updates from IDEQ and WAG members:**

**North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Management Plan (update from Ed Warner):** The Coeur d'Alene River Preservation Committee and Shoshone County have been working for years to develop a recreation-focused river management plan for the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River from Shoshone Camp to Enaville. Recently, they were awarded a grant from the Resource Advisory Council (RAC) to hire two graduate students at the University of Idaho for research and development of this plan. Two students were hired and worked this summer to draft a river management plan that would address recreational needs, private property rights, law enforcement and natural resource considerations including water quality. A draft plan is expected soon and comments will be solicited. A final version of the plan is expected by the end of the year. Those involved hope that the plan will facilitate grant writing and implementation of projects. We'll discuss this plan further at the October WAG meeting.

**Arsenic and cadmium rulemaking:** The Board of Environmental Quality has approved new water quality standards for arsenic and cadmium. This rulemaking was completed to protect human health from adverse effects of elevated arsenic and protect sensitive aquatic life from cadmium toxicity in low hardness waters. This rule will become final and effective upon adjournment of the 2010 legislative session if approved by the Legislature. For more information, see [http://www.deq.idaho.gov/rules/deq\\_rulemaking.cfm](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/rules/deq_rulemaking.cfm) and [Docket No. 58-0102-0801, Pending Rule.](#)

**Analysis and results of USFS temperature data:** The U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District collected stream temperature data on streams in the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Subbasin from 1999 to 2008. Temperature data were collected from 252 sites on 40 assessment units and 65 streams. These data were supplied to DEQ and analyzed for compliance with Idaho water quality standards. Data were analyzed for compliance with Idaho water quality criteria for cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning (WQS 250.02.b and 250.02.f; Table 1). Members of the Watershed Advisory Group requested this analysis during review of the draft temperature

Of the 252 temperature logger datasets, 21 exceeded Idaho water quality criteria for cold water aquatic life and 244 exceeded criteria for salmonid spawning. Only 8 temperature logger datasets did not exceed the salmonid spawning criteria: Coal Creek (2000), Halsey Creek (2002), Iron Creek (2000), Little Elk Creek (2000), Miners Creek (2000), Prichard Creek (1999), Sentinel Creek (2002), and Tepee Creek (1999). In each of those cases other temperature logger datasets within the same assessment unit or from another year showed exceedances of salmonid spawning criteria.

Overall, temperature logger datasets revealed exceedances of Idaho water quality temperature criteria in all 40 assessment units evaluated. Eighteen of these assessment units were listed as impaired by excess water temperature in Idaho's 2008 Integrated Report. This analysis indicates an additional 22 assessment units could be proposed for new 303(d) listing as impaired by excess water temperature in the next Integrated Report. This would require development of total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for temperature for these streams.

Kajsa presented several potential options to the WAG and sought input from the WAG on how to proceed during TMDL development. Potential options included:

- Recommend 40 assessment units for proposal as impaired in next Idaho Integrated Report.
- Include these streams in the temperature TMDL currently under development.
- Develop temperature TMDL for these streams after impairments identified and approved in next Idaho Integrated Report.
- Conduct further analysis to determine whether exceedances of criteria are caused by natural background conditions.
- Combination of above? Other?

**WAG Feedback:** Members of the WAG suggested a report on which sites exceed each criteria and whether those locations are already included in the draft temperature TMDL. They suggested looking particularly at sites that exceeded cold water aquatic life criteria and ensuring that those locations are included in the temperature TMDL. The WAG suggested considering further analysis of natural background conditions. WAG members suggested determining whether biological impairments have been observed or documented along with numeric criteria violations. WAG members questioned whether the fall salmonid spawning criteria should apply in all waters. The USFWS is re-evaluating the critical habitat designation for bull trout in this area and WAG members suggested talking with FWS and IDFG biologists to determine whether fall salmonid spawning criteria protective for bull trout should apply. Additionally, WAG members suggested that Category 4B designation could be an alternative for USFS-managed sites rather than pursuing a temperature TMDL for all waters.

**Summary of BURP data:** Kajsa presented a summary of all BURP program data available from DEQ for the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Subbasin. A draft report is in development and was reported in a PowerPoint slide show. The DEQ GIS database reports 123 BURP sites from 1995-2008. For 2 sites conducted in 2008, the data is not yet available. An additional 1 site from

1997 used a river protocol and is not BURP compatible. An additional 22 sites were reported, but no BURP data was collected. Reasons for absence of BURP data included low flow, no access, the repeat of a site in a single season, and that the stream was too large for wadeable protocols.

Once these sites were removed from analysis, there were 98 sites with sufficient data for analysis following the DEQ Water Body Assessment Guidance (WBAG). Preliminary assessments based on BURP data along indicated that 22 sites (22%) could be considered impaired and not supporting beneficial uses. Another 76 sites (78%) indicate full support of beneficial uses and compliance with Idaho water quality standards. Based on these scores alone, 18 assessment units could be considered impaired and 34 would indicate full support and no impairment. There are an additional 18 assessment units without BURP data. It's important to look at patterns and trends over time and space. Older data may no longer be relevant and representative. Other water quality data (such as temperature logger data) must be considered in water body assessments and violations of numeric criteria may result in a determination of impairment. A final summary report will be available soon and will be incorporated into an updated subbasin assessment. See PowerPoint slides online.

**Summer monitoring by DEQ and USFS:** During summer 2009, DEQ and the USFS are conducting a cooperative sampling effort with additional support from EPA. USFS crews have already conducted monitoring according to PIBO (PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion) survey protocols on 8 streams. On those same streams, crews are now conducting monitoring according to DEQ BURP (Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Program) protocols. Solar Pathfinder shade measurements have been added per the WAG's request for additional ground truthing in shade estimates. So far, 3 sites have been completed. More information is included in PowerPoint slides online and the report mailed with this meeting's announcement.

**Update on North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Habitat Improvement Project:** The Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation funded DEQ for a contract with the Kootenai-Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District. Additional and crucial support has been supplied by Jamie Davis through the Idaho Assoc. of Conservation Districts and Bill Lillibridge with the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission. Applications for the project were solicited from NFCDA landowners in May 2009. We received 15 complete applications and reviewed them through an interagency technical team using a project rating form. Projects were then ranked and selected for funding. All applicants will receive follow-up support. Lots of work has occurred this summer to prepare designs and project plans; however, with staff turnover and other factors, it is likely the project will need to be extended for construction next fall in 2010. More information is included in PowerPoint slides online.

**Discussion of Implementation Plan for water quality improvements, future projects and Beaver Creek watershed study:** The Beaver Creek watershed consistently comes up in our conversations about water quality in the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River subbasin. The NFCDA Habitat Improvement Project received several applications from landowners in the Beaver Creek watershed and many landowners have contacted DEQ with concerns about their properties. County government has also expressed concerns, particularly related to protection of transportation networks. The watershed has been impacted by historic and present-day land uses and the stream channel is degraded, highly unstable, and transports a tremendous amount of sediment. We discussed a planned visit from Rob Sampson, NRCS State Conservation Engineer, in September. We also discussed the possibility of timber management activities by the USFS in the watershed. Another possibility discussed was the development of a Beaver Creek watershed analysis. Because the watershed crosses multiple boundaries of land use and

land ownership, we talked about coordinating for an analysis across these boundaries that would identify water quality issues, pollutant sources, and opportunities for improving conditions. We are seeking opportunities that would be cost-effective. The WAG endorsed further development of this idea into a proposal for WAG review. WAG members also discussed funding sources and other programs that could help with development of a watershed analysis. Ideally, we would come up with a set of opportunities that the WAG could then prioritize and pursue for implementation. We'll discuss this idea further at the October WAG meeting.