

North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed Advisory Group

Meeting Notes

February 20, 2008

1:00 – 4:00 pm

US Forest Service Bldg., Smelterville, ID

Participants: Edward Lider, Mike Mihelich, Jeff Legg, Dan Guy, Fred Brackebusch, Roy Faler, George Hemphill, Bill Rust, Serena Carlsen, Bob Steed, Kristin Keith, Kajsa Stromberg, Bob Flagor, Bob Clark, Jon Cantamessa, Chris Tretter, Len Young, Reid Ahlf, Don Martin, Earl Frizzell, Del Kerr

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. The meeting focused on water quality improvement projects, TMDL implementation planning, and updates on TMDL development.

WAG Business:

- **PERMITTING WORKSHOP:** A workshop, "Users Guide to Stream Permits," will be held **March 5, 2008** from 1:00-4:00 pm at the USFS Smelterville Bldg. The workshop will include a panel of representatives from Army Corps of Engineers, Idaho Dept. Water Resources, Idaho DEQ, Idaho Dept. of Lands, and the local Conservation District.
- **WATERSHED PROFESSIONALS NETWORK REPORTS:** Kajsa distributed additional copies of reports generated by the Watershed Professionals Network. These are also posted on the website. The WAG discussed the contents of these reports and how they will be useful for water quality improvement planning in the North Fork CDA Subbasin.
- **PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT:** Idaho's Integrated Report of water body assessments and 303(d) list of impaired water bodies is up for public comment through February 20. Find it here:

http://www.deq.idaho.gov/Applications/NewsApp/checkNewsCache.cfm?news_id=2115

There was some WAG discussion that the integrated report, in paper and interactive map forms, is not easy to understand or comment on. It is not easy for other agencies or members of the public to utilize this report.

- **WATER QUALITY PROJECTS:** Two applications to the DEQ 319 Program were submitted by WAG members with WAG support: 1) the **Short-Riley Creeks Porter Memorial Project**, a collaboration of the North Idaho Fly Casters with the US Forest Service, and 2) **Mine Tailings Removal from Upper Beaver Creek**, a project by DEQ's Waste and

Remediation Section. These will be presented to the Basin Advisory Group March 12, 2008.

- Another project proposed by the US Forest Service and supported by the WAG, the **Laverne Creek ATV Project**, will be circulated for a second public scoping process.
- WAG members also discussed other potential funding sources. For example, Jeff Legg suggested there may be funds from FEMA for flood-related studies and projects.

Subbasin Assessment Update/Addendum: This is a work in progress and DEQ is requesting information on past and current water quality improvement projects. The WAG urged that this report be completed soon so that the information can be utilized in TMDLs and implementation planning.

Five-Year Review of Sediment TMDL: Ed Lider received US Forest Service funding to evaluate restoration projects and their effectiveness at reaching TMDL targets. This will be coordinated with DEQ as part of the Five-Year Review of the 2001 Sediment TMDL.

Metals TMDL: Data compilation and analysis is continuing. The complexity of the issue and the scope of remediation make this process difficult. A draft TMDL was completed by the State Technical Services Office and this is being revised now by the Coeur d'Alene office staff.

Draft Temperature TMDL: Comments from the WAG on the current draft temperature TMDLs are due at the March 26 WAG meeting. DEQ will incorporate comments into a revised draft which will be distributed back to the WAG this spring for a final review before seeking public comment. There were many comments on the current draft from Chris Tretter, IDL, and he questioned DEQ's use of canopy cover in the draft TMDL. The language in the draft will be reviewed to make sure the next version is clear. The Potential Natural Vegetation method for setting temperature TMDL targets utilizes effective shade rather than canopy cover. The method uses visual estimates of effective shade which are calibrated by Solar Pathfinder studies in the field. DEQ will clarify the methodology (assignment of VRUs, expectations for ground-truthing, etc.) in the next draft.

Kajsa will be analyzing US Forest Service temperature data and working with Ed Lider to evaluate potential reference watersheds. The purpose of the analysis is to complete water body assessments and to determine "natural background" temperatures, if possible. At the next meeting, DEQ will clarify the water quality standards for temperature.

Implementation Planning: Water quality improvement projects should continue, but we see a need for a strategic plan. This plan would maximize effectiveness, "bang for the buck" and would help the WAG clearly establish priorities. DEQ and the WAG would like to tackle sediment, temperature, and metals TMDLs

simultaneously through a watershed-scale effort. Bob Flagor, conservation district, urged a strategic watershed-scale approach to deal with water quality problems rather than a “band-aid” approach. Jeff Legg, Shoshone County, agreed and suggested the group identify problem areas, and address the concerns of landowners in the subbasin.

Beaver Creek was consistently identified as a priority for the WAG. There are a lot of questions about the sources of pollution/sediment and how to accommodate a “naturally” functioning river along with increased human development in the floodplain. Roads and bridges are also concerns as aggrading stream channels raise the water level’s surface and increase flooding.

Several WAG members pointed to the Watershed Professionals Network reports and Subbasin Assessment as guiding documents and that we need to compile what we know about current conditions, the desired conditions, and identified project ideas into a comprehensive, usable plan. WAG members consistently stated that landowners generally want to do the right thing for protection of the river’s resources if they have the tools and information needed. There was discussion of dredging and how to handle the large amounts of sediment that move through the river system.

Kajsa distributed a draft outline for the implementation plan and requested comments from the WAG at the March 26 meeting.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 26, 2008 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at the US Forest Service Building in Smelterville, ID.

The WAG will host presentations by Ed Lider (USFS) and Joe Dupont (IDFG) regarding recent research on trout populations in the North Fork Coeur d’Alene River system. The presentations will cover radio tracking studies of fish movement and habitat use and relationships to water quality parameters. There will be time for questions. Following the presentations, there will be further discussion of the draft temperature TMDL. **Comments on the current draft are due at this meeting.**

Please visit the WAG Website:

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

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