

**MINUTES FOR:  
BLACKFOOT WATERSHED ADVISORY GROUP  
APRIL 16, 2009  
DEQ, Pocatello Regional Office  
444 Hospital Way # 300**

**Attending:**

Sandi Arena	US FWS
Monty Johnson	JR Simplot
Justin W. Krajewski	ISCC
Kerrie Mathews	Shoshone Bannock Tribes
Kathy McKinley	Agrium
Jim Mende	Idaho Fish & Game
Greg Mladenka	DEQ
Marcy Pearhill	DEQ
Josh Schultz	DEQ
Sue Skinner	Environmental Protection Agency
Dean Smith	NRCS
Condon Tanaka	Shoshone Bannock Tribes – Water Quality
Melissa Thompson	DEQ
Lynn Van Every	DEQ
Michael Vice	Monsanto
Louis Wasniewski	US Forest Service
Krystle Wengreen	Idaho Department of Lands

Melissa Thompson called the meeting to order, attendee introductions were made. Agenda was reviewed and no changes were made.

**Blackfoot River Continuous Water Quality Monitoring** *Greg Mladenka, DEQ*

Greg presented information on riparian vegetation, its ability to shade the river, thereby reducing water temperature. He felt the Blackfoot Watershed Advisory Group should work towards increasing the natural riparian vegetation which would help create lower temperatures and increase dissolved oxygen in the watershed. There is a need for long term monitoring of temperature and dissolved oxygen.

Riparian vegetation helps to keep the reservoir cool in the summer. Down-cutting reduces shading of the reservoir and streams which is important for keeping temperatures low. Temperature gauges are needed at Slug Creek, Angus Creek and Upper Bridge.

Please contact Greg Mladenka for Quality Analysis Criteria and long term data on selenium and sediment sampling.

**5-Year Review – Update** *Melissa Thompson, DEQ*

Melissa presented a breakdown of the 5-year review for Blackfoot Watershed. Please see slides on

the DEQ website for specific information,

[http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/blackfoot\\_river\\_wag/index.cfm](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/blackfoot_river_wag/index.cfm).

More information is needed on specific steps agencies have taken towards implementing their plans.

Sue Skinner of the EPA thought it was important to understand how the land is used and who owns the land which may help in instituting best management practices as well as sharing information between all those entities which affect the Blackfoot watershed.

Justin Krajewski expressed reservations about micromanagement of implementation plans.

Bacteria monitoring was discussed, specifically the affect of cattle and elk on E-coli levels in streams. Some streams within the Blackfoot watershed exceeded state standards for E-coli, see slides for specific information.

### **Mercury Monitoring in the Blackfoot Watershed** *Josh Schultz, DEQ*

Josh presented in information on mercury monitoring that has been done in the Blackfoot Watershed. Sampling for mercury in water is difficult, but fish sampling is less difficult and can be verified with tissue samples saved and frozen in the lab.

Idaho does not have many mercury emitting industries, but is surrounded by states that do, including Nevada, Utah, Washington and Wyoming so there is a greater push for monitoring.

Coal fired power plants produce the most mercury emissions due to the great volume in which coal is burned, although coal has relatively little mercury. Mercury is converted in nature to methyl mercury, which is the most toxic form for wildlife and humans.

Fish standards in Idaho are 300 ng/g (ppb) and .3mp/Kg (ppm). Fish samples taken below Government Dam were originally high, 200 to 240 ng/g, but upon re-sampling turned out to be relatively low at 40 ng/g. Fish who reside higher on the food chain usually have higher mercury levels, with lake trout being one of the highest. Mercury many also accumulate in water bodies due to seasonal changes.

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality has been commended for its timely positive response to mercury monitoring. Mercury has become a more important issue and monitoring will increase the understanding of mercury's impact.

Mercury monitoring is also helpful for consumption advisories for the public so they understand how many fish can be eaten per week and what species of fish to avoid or limit.

### **Upper Blackfoot Watershed Analysis** *Louis Wasniewski, Caibou-Targhee National Forest*

US Forest Service completed its watershed analysis and used a process which incorporated several key issues, including historic references, current conditions and future trends for the Blackfoot Watershed. They looked at the whole picture of a complex watershed in order to create their implementation plan.

Most compelling were the historic references, including photographs and information from people who grew up around the streams and creeks of the area. Riparian vegetation has decreased markedly and the combination of plants and animals has changed over the years. Louis felt that much of the vegetation was out of balance and that an effort needs to be made to bring it back into balance in cooperation with private, state & local interests and the US Forest Service.

Many things impact the watershed's water quality including: Mining, recreation, barriers, dams, diversion screening and ditches. Mary Kauffman has studied mining's impact on the watershed, with particular attention to selenium and phosphorus. The US Forest Service hopes to improve trends with a review of best management practices (bmps), adaptive management and the creation of more quantitative objectives.

### **Riparian Improvement Project on the Blackfoot River** *Melissa Thompson, DEQ*

Melissa described many projects that were seeking funding to improve riparian vegetation by building cattle guards, water crossings and riparian fencing along endangered areas of the Blackfoot watershed.

Funding for the projects will come from a combination of 319 grants, DEQ grants and the Bureau of Land Management.

Grants will be submitted in May and will be approved by August. There is greater competition for funding and funds may be harder to obtain. Money will not be received until 2010, although the BLM would like to start on riparian fencing this year. It is hoped that the DEQ will be able to fund a portion of the fencing by May 2009.

Monitoring will be established to check the health of the improved areas with photo points and water chemistry, for which the 319 grant would pay.

Further restriction and closures may be needed to improve the health of the targeted areas.

### **Plan for Next Meeting** *Melissa Thompson, DEQ*

No specific time was established for the next meeting. They will be organized as needed, with 3 or 4 weeks notice given. As more information from summer monitoring becomes available, a new meeting will be scheduled.

Power Point presentations will be available online at:

[http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/blackfoot\\_river\\_wag/index.cfm](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/about/regions/blackfoot_river_wag/index.cfm),

Please call IDEQ at (208) 236-6160 if you need a copy of the attendance log.