

Portneuf River WAG Meeting 21 November 2006 Minutes

Attendees: John Sigler, Bud Smalley, Amy Jenkins, Sue Skinner, Andy Ray, Greg Mladenka, Keene Hueftle, Mark Dietrich

Greg and Andy recommended a few change to the minutes from the previous WAC meeting held on 8-15-06. The group discussed Jessica DelMonte's presentation during the previous meeting in an attempt to clarify statements included in the minutes. Greg indicated that changes would be provided to Janet Merzlock.

The group discussed sending a letter to Simplot expressing thanks for donations during the previous meeting; Simplot provided the burgers for the cookout Attendees agreed that would be an appropriate gesture THAT should be done soon.

Mark brought copies of the riparian brochure and stated that there were some problems associated with printing. Most notably the watershed map on the back of the brochure was washed out and hard to read. Mark asked the group if the brochures were of sufficient quality to distribute because of the printing problems and the attendees recommended distributing the brochures.

Sue brought out the recently completed Portneuf River Watershed placemats displaying the watershed and water quality and quantity facts illustrated by Linda Wolfe. Mark indicated that there has been quite a demand for the placemats in the past and anticipates that the new placemats will be equally popular and effective as outreach materials.

Keene asked the attendees how each of their organizations were disseminating information about the river. He asked whether attendees would be interested in seeing Wayne Minshall's historic film about the Portneuf River entitled "A Changing River". Andy agreed to look into getting a copy of the movie for the next meeting.

Greg talked briefly about House Bill 145 and how it might affect the Portneuf WAG. In short, HB145 clearly states that a WAG is a requisite part of the TMDL process and furthermore HB 145 clearly defined the role of WAGs in the TMDL process. Moreover, HB 145 recommends what public and private interest groups should serve on the WAG. Greg indicated the DEQ and the WAG would work cooperatively to revise the Portneuf TMDL.

Greg provided a brief update on the American Falls TMDL. He stated that IDEQ was expecting a response from USEPA at any time. Greg, Mark, and Sue provided some insight on the TMDL process for the American Falls Reservoir and indicated that an outside facilitator would be extremely valuable; the facilitator for American Falls kept the discussions focused on the TMDL. He also indicated that there was some dissension among participants even at the time of submittal. As required by HB 145, DEQ requested that formal letters of dissension be drafted to articulate the concerns of stakeholders; these letters were included with the TMDL at the time of submittal.

Based on the experiences in American Falls, the Portneuf WAG meeting attendees felt it was imperative to have a facilitator to assist throughout the revision process for the Portneuf TMDL. Kathy Gneiting acted as the facilitator in American Falls, and the attendees decided that if funds were available, that someone should contact Kathy to see if she might be interested in participating.

Greg returned to the topic of the Portneuf TMDL and discussed the interest groups recommended in HB 145. Those included: agriculture, mining, point source dischargers, forest products, local government, livestock, water-based agriculture, Native American tribes, environmental interests, and land management agencies. Although individuals have been selected or recommended for most of these interest groups, an individual representing forest products is yet to be identified. Mark recommended that formal letters be sent to request individual participation in the WAG and ensure that the recruiting effort is made and documented.

Keene also asked whether the public would be encouraged to attend the WAG meetings and Mark indicated that DEQ would need to do a better job at advertising meeting times and locations in order to encourage public participation.

Greg provided a brief presentation on the TMDL revision process. He stressed that the DEQ had considerably more information on the mainstem Portneuf River and many of its tributaries than was available in the original TMDL. Greg provided several milestones and indicated the deliverables for each. These included a draft of the TMDL revision for the WAG to review in May 2007, a draft for public comment in July 2007, and a completed version for submittal in November 2007.

Sue asked whether the BMPs described in the Portneuf TMDL implementation plans were working and will these be incorporated into the Portneuf TMDL revision. Were the BMPs being implemented as described in the implementation plans? Did we have some implementation activities that show improving water quality or at least stopping further degradation (the small tributaries). How do we show results and successes of the last TMDL implementation plan in measurable fashion as Congress is asking throughout all the Federal Programs for results. Mark said that we should not expect responses to implementation to be immediate. Mark added that there was a need to develop long-term goals for the implementation activities and encouraged stakeholders to coordinate activities with other agencies and compile a list to prioritize implementation projects in the most impaired regions of the watershed. The group also discussed how to address stakeholder concerns such as whether the established limits/loads were achievable, when should stakeholders expect improvements in river water quality, and how much money is necessary to implement BMPs that can improve riverine conditions. Greg suggested the implementation plan would be a good mechanism to look at these issues.

The next meeting was scheduled for 19 December 2006. Greg and Andy indicated that they would have examples of how loads would be calculated using the data from two of the continuous monitoring stations and corresponding monthly sampling data at the next meeting.

Bud Smalley talked about his vision for restoring functions and desired fish communities to the Portneuf River through a combination of land and water acquisition. He indicated that he now owns the Caribou Conservancy and is currently selling charter memberships. His goal is to raise \$35 million to acquire water and land in the Portneuf River from Chesterfield Reservoir to Pocatello. Bud asked that interested individuals contact him directly for more specific information about his vision.