

North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed Advisory Group

Draft Meeting Notes

March 22, 2012

1:00 – 3:00 pm

US Forest Service Bldg., Smelterville, ID

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 26 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the US Forest Service Building in Smelterville, ID.

Please visit the WAG Website:

<http://www.deq.idaho.gov/north-fork-cda-river-subbasin-wag>

Contact Kajsa Stromberg with any questions:

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

Participants: Roy Faler, Ed Lider, Bill Rust, Larry Runkle, Fred Brackebusch, George Hemphill, Dale Helbig, KK Prussian, Sandy Schlepp, Jon Cantamessa, Bob Bevins, Bob Clark, Larry Yergler, 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.

Introductions, review agenda, & distribute previous meeting notes

- The meeting notes for February's WAG meeting were not available during the meeting. Kajsa said she would send them out right away.
- 2012 DEQ BURP monitoring sites were discussed. DEQ is soliciting input and suggestions for summer monitoring activities on north Idaho streams. Kajsa's been recommending new sampling focused on the few unassessed waters remaining in the NFCDA Subbasin. WAG members suggested also identifying streams with restoration and likely to have now attained water quality standards, similar to Yellowdog Creek. These included: *Steamboat Creek (nr mouth), Cub Cr, Calamity Cr, Buckskin/Spruce/other streams in the upper NFCDA headwaters area*. Kajsa agreed these were great suggestions and the WAG will discuss this again in April. Ed Lider also suggested that BURP crews could supplement PIBO sampling events by electrofishing those sites.
- IPNF Forest Plan – The public comment period has been extended through May 7.

- River Recreation & Kingston Baptist Church – Dale Helbig from the Kingston Baptist Church attended the meeting to discuss the church’s proposal to organize a “rest area” for river floaters during summer 2012 on private land upstream of Albert’s Landing. He said they’d like to provide port-a-potties, garbage disposal, and recycling, and would have the location staffed by volunteers. He said they’d like to work with other interested people to carry out the project. *WAG members were unanimously supportive* of the idea and encouraged Dale and other church members to come to future meetings and contact WAG members to coordinate plans.

Moose Drool Watershed Restoration Project

KK Prussian, USFS Project Lead, attended the meeting to answer questions about the Moose Drool Watershed Restoration Project Proposal. The WAG also reviewed the draft letter of support and made final revisions.

Most of the questions and discussion were related to monitoring, models, and evaluation of project success. Several WAG members questioned the validity of models used to estimate sediment loading and encouraged field monitoring. Several sentences were added to the draft letter of support to request monitoring and to offer WAG support and participation in monitoring and evaluation.

The *WAG members present unanimously agreed to the letter of support* as revised during the meeting. Bob Burke (IDL) and Mike Mihelich (KEA) were not able to attend the meeting and had contacted Kajsa separately to give their support.

Temperature Criteria & Demonstrating Compliance

Kajsa gave a PowerPoint presentation with discussion to address the WAG’s remaining questions about temperature assessments and temperature TMDLs:

- What’s the deal with the temperature water quality criteria when they’re almost always exceeded?
- How can we demonstrate compliance with water quality standards for temperature?

A copy of the presentation will be posted to the WAG website. Kajsa emphasized the concepts of natural background conditions. There are not likely to be revised standards soon and it’s impossible to make numeric standards “perfect” for complex natural systems. We just need to do the best we can with what we have, strive to be as reasonable as possible, and to focus on implementation.

WAG members’ questions and concerns included:

- Why don’t the criteria account for variability in temperature over space and time? What if there are colder areas for a fish to escape into? Fish aren’t likely to remain in one hot spot if they can move out of there.
- Are there biological criteria that would be feasible instead of the current numeric criteria? That way we could use the fisheries data showing healthy populations as evidence of full support.
- Are there really studies that relate shade loss to temperature increases?
 - Kajsa will make some available
- Can we get more temperature monitoring over a length of stream?

Kajsa suggested the WAG provide suggestions for waters likely to attain standards. These could be streams like:

- Graham Creek
- Cataract and West Elk Creeks
- Deer Creek and tribs to the Upper NFCDA

Graham Creek was used as an example with a handout from the draft TMDL to demonstrate how closely Graham Creek is meeting shade and solar loading targets.

Kajsa also suggested the WAG work together on a TMDL Implementation Monitoring Plan to demonstrate progress and attainment.

The WAG unanimously supported using Graham Creek as a pilot project to demonstrate natural background conditions and supported the development of a TMDL Implementation Monitoring Plan.