

North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed Advisory Group

Draft Meeting Notes

March 28, 2013

1:00 – 3:00 pm

US Forest Service Bldg., Smelterville, ID

Next meeting: TBD

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: Kajsa Stromberg, Sandra Raskell, Bob Bevins, Bob Clark, Dan Guy, Ed Lider, Leslee Stanley, Bob Steed, Carol Lapan, Jenny Gray, Wade Jerome, Ingrid Madsen, Larry Yergler, Bill Rust, Fred Brackebusch, Jim Best, Ray Kimball, Jeremy Brandt, Bob Flagor, Jann Higdem

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

Updates and Planning

Larry Runkle noted that the Beaver Creek projects are looking good this spring.

DEQ's 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Management grants will be accepting applications from April 8-Aug 1, 2013. Kajsa distributed a flyer with details.

Recreation: Larry Yergler reported that Shoshone County will be hosting a meeting April 18th focused on river recreation issues. He said he would send an announcement to Kajsa for distribution to the group.

Kajsa distributed several draft designs for a large "Respect the River" banner to hang somewhere highly visible for river visitors. She said there would likely be some funding support for projects like this from Avista/IDFG this year. The goal is to get the banner up before Memorial Day Weekend. The Silver Bridge near Albert's Landing was mentioned as the most likely location for the banner. The bridge is managed by the County and we'll need to look into permissions, safety, etc. for that site. Jann Higdem suggested two local businesses to solicit bids from for these types of projects.

Kajsa said an MOU has been drafted to establish the Respect the River fund. The MOU is still in development.

Beaver Creek WAG Project Planning: Kajsa said that the Beaver Creek Watershed Assessment final report is complete!!

Copies of the watershed assessment document on CD were distributed to the WAG and more are available. Hard copies can be made available to WAG members upon request. The report will also be posted on the WAG website.

An excerpt from the report was printed and distributed to the group. It included the report summary, selected maps and figures, the conclusions and recommendations chapter, and summary table and map.

Jeremy Brandt with IDL said he thought it would be feasible to approach the private timber companies with land in the Beaver Creek headwaters to share the results of the watershed assessment and discuss possible projects for water quality improvements.

Ed Lider gave a short presentation about a project planning idea that would include surveying cross-sections of the Beaver Creek mainstem, evaluating stream types, and developing a set of recommended practices for each stream type.

There was some discussion about whether this is necessary, how much it might cost, and how it might be implemented. Bill Rust referred to the work planned in Wolf Lodge Creek and questioned what is really necessary in Beaver Creek. Bob Flagor said the information would probably be helpful for ISWCC engineer Bill Lillibridge in his work this summer. Ray Kimball, engineer, said he thought the information would be needed in order to take the next steps for stream design. Ingrid Madsen, landowner, said the information would be needed for projects like the one she's planning.

As a next step, Ed may bring in a more specific cost estimate and task list to the next meeting.

Draft Temperature TMDLs: Kajsa gave a short presentation about the temperature assessments and TMDLs. The WAG had already been notified of a 30-day public comment period for the draft North Fork Coeur d'Alene Temperature TMDLs. Members could find the draft document on the DEQ website, WAG website, or in mailings with CDs.

Fred Brackebusch said he would like to have his previous comments rolled over into this comment period. He also said it didn't look like the WAG's comments had been incorporated into the draft. Several WAG members echoed that comment.

Larry Yergler, speaking on behalf of the Shoshone County Commissioners, requested an extension of the public comment period. DEQ agreed that a 30-day extension could be granted. He also requested an evening public meeting and asked about the effects of the TMDLs on economics and local communities. (Note: A letter containing these requests was received by DEQ on Mar. 29)

Most comments during the meeting addressed concerns about Idaho's water quality standards and the fact that streams with very little human activity commonly exceed the standards. Most commenters seemed to believe that there are not really temperature impairments in the NFCDA Subbasin.

Kajsa explained that there's only so much that can be done within the legal and policy frameworks of the agency and state water quality standards.

Kajsa and Bob Steed explained some of the difficulties in developing and applying numeric temperature criteria. The Potential Natural Vegetation (PNV) techniques used in these TMDLs are the best tools currently available. The approach enables us to estimate natural background conditions and set goals that meet natural background provisions in the water quality standards. Meeting the conditions of these TMDLs ensures that the stream temperatures meet water quality standards even if the actual water temperature exceeds the numeric criteria.

Water quality standards are set by the Idaho legislature and are often developed by DEQ through a public rulemaking process. For Clean Water Act purposes, the standards must be approved by EPA. If EPA does not approve the standards, EPA can establish standards for Idaho. These processes, along with the technical difficulties of finding the right numeric targets, make it difficult to make significant changes to the temperature standards.

Several WAG members asked questions about the effects of the TMDLs on land management, businesses, and local people. Kajsa and Bob described that the TMDLs are most important during permitting of point sources of pollution (NPDES permits issued by EPA) and TMDLs must be met in those permits. TMDLs are also relevant during federal land management activities, such as those by the US Forest Service, but the shade targets are already addressed by the INFISH buffers and Forest Practices Act rules. For most private landowners, the TMDLs address nonpoint source pollution and are voluntary.

Jann Higdrem inquired about an environmental impact statement for the document. DEQ is not required to complete an EIS for this kind of TMDL document. Jann also asked about "best available technology" and whether the expense of implementing the TMDLs would be worth it.

Kajsa encouraged the WAG members to write down their concerns and ideas and to submit those during this comment period.

As a next step, the WAG discussed follow-up monitoring in streams likely to meet the TMDL targets to develop proposals for delisting. Graham Creek has been identified as a candidate stream since its shade conditions are already good. There was a handout to go along with this idea and a monitoring plan is being drafted.