

SOUTHWEST BASIN ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2011

BAG Members Present: Jim Moyer, Henry Hamanishi, LaVelle Braun, Herb Malany
Attendees: Barry Burnell, Pete Wagner, Julia Achabal, Dave Pisarski, Jerry West, Leslie Freeman

Meeting was called to order by Chairman, Jim Moyer at 9:13 a.m.

In lieu of meeting minutes, the list of §319 projects, likely to be funded, for FY 2011 was presented and reviewed.

This meeting was called at the request of our State §319 program office. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss/brainstorm how the program has operated over the last few years and the future direction and delivery of the 319 program.

Housekeeping Notes:

- As a result of legislative appropriations, there will likely be changes to BAG meetings.
- A new Local Government representative will need to be selected for the BAG.

Pete Wagner was given the floor.

Agency Budget etc.:

- 5% reduction for most agencies.
- DEQ will lose 3 positions (that are currently vacant).
- Craig's position is in the queue to be filled.
- Pete would like to see a stronger connection between the BAG and TMDLs being done with other WAGs.
- There is an online tool for communicating about the business of BAGs and WAGs. These BAG web pages have links to TMDLs, meeting notices, minutes and other pertinent information.

Comment: Jim added that the DEQ Advisory Board meets on larger issues i.e. rules, appeals etc. He would like to have these details brought to the attention of the BAG.

♦ **Action:** Jim Moyer sent an e-mail 3-25-2011 to all BAG members regarding the DEQ / BAG web pages with link provided.

Discussion Topics from BAG members:

- TMDL five year review monitoring is important and how do we get it?
- There is a movement from cities to use WWTP water for irrigation. The city of Meridian is giving this considerable thought.

*Reuse can be very expensive i.e. city of Nampa

Dave Pisarski took the floor to open a casual discussion.

*Dave will have a similar meeting with each BAG before June 8th to try and gather and gather information and suggestion from them

He provided some comments and observations of his own. Highlights of the day's discussion included the following items.

Monitoring – times are tough and it is time to look at processes. Beginning in 2012 DEQ will cap at 10% the amount of 319 funds that can be used on a project for administrative and monitoring costs. The sponsoring agency will be expected to cover more of those costs as part of their match commitment to the project.

Roles of WAGs, BAGs – are they still serving functions they were set up to do? Do we need to reevaluate?

319 Update:

500 announcements went out for the start of the 2012 funding cycle.

The grant will shrink this year. EPA suggests 5% reduction ~\$100,000.

The electronic application is doing well.

FY 2011- 46 total applications with 12 projects being recommended for funding.

Question: Is the BAG satisfied with how money is being allocated? Are we targeting the highest water quality concerns/issues?

Comment: If we don't do project selections as we are currently doing (equal statewide distribution) it would be seen as unfair and bring trouble.

Comment: We need to prove a measureable effect. Pre project and follow up monitoring. We need post project monitoring of some kind.

Comment: There is a struggle to not spend too much money on monitoring because water quality monitoring will eat up program dollars. We can use alternative measurements to water quality data i.e. an evaluation of sediment ponds could include counting loads captured.

Bag meetings across that state have brought this feedback:

- Information on project funding status is not revealed soon enough.
- Want more information from DEQ on whether projects are being implemented on time and within budget.
- Maybe the money shouldn't all go to BMPs, but also to fund innovative approaches and techniques and education.
- Maybe DEQ should standardize BAG operations for consistency.

Examples:

- Scoring criteria for evaluating and ranking projects.

- Improve or extend DEQ participation in local level planning for projects in development.
- Required monitoring protocol.
- Projects not funded could be rolled to the next year and be given a higher funding priority.

The State Revolving Loan Fund grant payback dollars could be a substantial source of funds for §319 projects.

- The Teton Creek Project is the first DEQ has funded using SRF.

§319 program support for next year and beyond:

- Lost 0.5 full time equivalent (fte) in Pocatello Regional Office (RO)
- Lost 1.0 fte in Lewiston RO
- Lost 0.5 fte in Boise RO
- 9 total positions in the State, down from 11.

Messages from Barry Burnell, Water Quality Administrator.

- Less monitoring will be funded using §319 dollars.
 - All projects must include a monitoring component, but it must be accounted for in the “administrative” budget category which is not to exceed 10% of the §319 funds.
 - The local entity should invest in the monitoring as a commitment on their part to be more invested in the project.
- Educational components should be de-emphasized.
Question: What do projects look like now?
Answer: A 2 year review of projects showed most educational costs were less than 10% and the highest was just short of 20%.
- Beginning with 2011 projects funded requests for advance funds will be allowed one-time only, and only with the first invoice – not to exceed 10% of the 319 funding amount.
- For 2011, funded projects will use electronic invoicing.
- There will be more scrutiny of matching funds/partners on applications.
- Don’t expect EPA to roll expiring/unspent federal grant funds back to DEQ as has been done in years past.
- EPA asks DEQ to emphasize bioengineered approaches in our selection process.
- BURP crews could do some limited water quality monitoring on projects but the 319 program will need to work with the surface water program to see if it is a viable option.
- We need to plant seeds with other designated management agencies to find opportunities for efficiencies and leveraging resources.

General BAG member comments:

- There is not much money other than 319 for NPS projects.
- TMDL Implementation Plans should be the highest priority.

- There is a great deal of leveraging already going on, but not a lot of funds to be distributed.
- The 319 grant program should still focus on putting projects on the ground.
- If Barry has ideas and moves to override the BAG recommendations, then the BAG needs a list of priorities for the 319 program from Barry.
 - Guidelines or project constraints (due to things that have happened in the past) to be considered for future project selection.
- Tell us what the rules are so we can let the people know.
- Standardize costs for some things to limit padding budget categories.
- Concerned that §319 is limiting monitoring dollars.
- Encouraged by talk of sharing data and looking at ways to innovate to evaluate water quality.

South Fork Salmon PNV TMDL – Leslie

Leslie recapitulated Herb's comments and they will be incorporated in the TMDL.

The next BAG meeting is left to be scheduled.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:05.