

DEQ Updates:

Tom Herron from DEQ introduced the topic of DEQ Updates by identifying that the field season has been very busy including Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Program monitoring, Fernan and Pend Oreille Lake Monitoring as well as Lake Management Plan monitoring of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The Lake Coeur d'Alene Tributaries TMDL for temperature has been submitted to EPA for approval, and water quality certification drafts for Spokane River NPDES Permits for waste water treatment facilities have been prepared and are being reviewed by EPA. Also, water quality certification drafts for draft South Fork Coeur d'Alene River for waste water treatments facilities including Page, Mullan, and Smelerviller are in development. Craig Nelson has accepted the position of Watershed Coordinator for the Region, and Jeremy Jenkins has transferred from the BURP Crew Lead to the Lake Management Plan Technician. Negotiated Rule Making initiated to evaluate local and regional fish consumption information to determine whether Idaho's statewide criteria are protective of designated uses and, if the current criteria are not protective, to determine appropriate new criteria. The first negotiated rulemaking meeting is set for October 4, 2012 with conference call or video conferencing linked from the CdA DEQ Regional Office Large Conference Room on October 4th at 8:00 AM MST. Technical review of two 319 project applications is complete. There are two projects proposed from the Panhandle Region this year. The preferred date for this review is October 24th and that meeting will held be at the Department of Health and Welfare, 1120 Ironwood Drive, lower level in the Admin Conference room.

Integrated Report:

Robert Steed from DEQ spoke to the group about the 2012 Integrated Report on the status of Idaho water bodies and the list of impaired waters. The report is nearing completion and will be out for public comment soon. The Coeur d'Alene Region has worked through the majority of listed waters by developing needed TMDLs, or delisting waters that fully support beneficial uses. The remaining waters are a combination of low flow streams, waters remanded to rule making for TMDL development, waters that have remediation completed or in process and need to be reevaluated. These are the more difficult waters that require more data, or present other challenges. In this report prioritization for TMDL development is recommended by the Department. Ultimately EPA approves the Integrated Report after the final version is submitted by the State DEQ Water Quality Program Office.

DEQ is planning to develop Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP) for various types of data collection utilized in water body status assessments. This would likely apply to data submitted from agencies and groups outside of DEQ. These plans would identify quality control for data quality objectives for use in assessing water quality. The Kalispell Tribe submitted temperature data from the Priest Lake watershed that met quality assurance requirements and has been used for assessments in the 2012 Integrated Report. Elevated stream temperature is the most pervasive pollutant in the region.

TMDLs:

The Lake Coeur d'Alene Tributaries TMDL has come together well and has been submitted for EPA approval. This TMDL is supported by a newly developed Watershed

Advisory Group (WAG) that has been very active and is engaged in implementation activities focused on Wolf Lodge Creek, which has been identified as the highest priority tributary for improving water quality due to its fisheries value to the Lake. EPA and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe will engage in consultation on this TMDL. Approval is expected after consultation.

The Fernan Lake TMDL is in development. This TMDL will focus on nutrient reduction to improve water quality and reduce the severity and frequency of blue-green algal blooms. A new bathymetric map has been developed to facilitate this loading assessment and allocation. The Fernan Lake Conservation and Recreation Association, an association of lake and valley residents, has been interested and engaged in TMDL development.

Kristin Larson from DEQ described the Schweitzer Road – Run off/Sediment Reduction Project. This has been a cooperative project with the City of Sandpoint and the Bonner County Highway District to evaluate sediment load reduction by using road salt as deicer instead of salted sand. This study dove-tailed with the previous evaluation of 4th of July Creek. Base flow, rain on snow, and snow-melt runoff conditions were evaluated to show that there was minimal change in conductivity. Overall the project has been very successful in reducing sediment loading, improving safety, and reducing cost. Dilution by runoff keeps sodium ions low in Sand Creek and subsequently in Lake Pend Oreille. Monitoring of riparian vegetation will be ongoing by the conservation district to evaluate salinity impacts. The Forest Service has a timber harvest treatment on the Schweitzer TMDL reach and was an important incentive to this project to evaluate sediment reduction.

Kajsa Stromberg from DEQ described the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Temperature TMDL and identified that it was submitted to the DEQ state office in May for review and submittal to EPA. The state office chose to reformat the TMDL into a different template to expand the introduction into 4 additional chapters to fit new document priorities. This effort remains in process and it is uncertain when the TMDL will now be submitted to EPA for approval. Habitat projects on the North Fork CdA River and Beaver Creek have been completed with good results. The cost share was 75% Office of Species Conservation and 25% land owner and agency cost share with additional match from the Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District. The North Fork Watershed Advisory Group has prioritized recreation management through development of a Recreation Plan for the lower 30 miles of the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River. The Forest Service plan covers most of the remaining watershed. Included in the Forest Service plan is a River Ranger position that has worked well to educate users and to facilitate recycling and trash management. Also included are upcoming river cleanup days supported by the Upper North Fork Fly Casters. The group has applied to the FS RAC for additional funding to support the Recreation Management Plan. Kajsa also described the Moose Drool FS timber management project on the little North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River. It is a restoration project geared toward improving water quality, reducing forest fuels, and improving stand quality in this watershed. There has been an increased interest to describe water quality restoration projects that have been successful in delisting water

bodies that were previously impaired by sediment. Yellow Dog Creek has been identified as a success project on Forest land. EPA has provided a grant for monitoring and to cross-link BURP/PIBO data for use in determining water quality status. Monitoring has shown that sediment reduction goals have been met following restoration activities that included channel stabilization and habitat improvement projects. Evaluation of Beaver Creek shows that this water remains impaired by coarse sediment. All streams that were listed in the '90s that are now success stories received extensive restoration and remediation.

Robert Steed reviewed the process for identifying prospective Priest Lake WAG members and that the BAG would ultimately review applications and make recommendations to the DEQ Director for ultimate appointment to the WAG. Applications are being sent out and the BAG will receive materials on interested WAG members prior to the BAG meeting on October 24th.

Bob also described blue-green algal blooms that have occurred on Fernan and Hayden Lakes that required issuance of joint Panhandle Health District/DEQ advisories of potential toxic bloom conditions. The advisories were issued in a timely manner, posted by interested volunteers from the community, and lifted after bloom conditions resolved to safe levels. The Hayden Lake bloom was described as potentially more severe in that it was dominated by a type of blue-green algae known as anabaena that can potentially produce a neurogenic toxin, Antitoxin A. The suggestion was made by the BAG to include testing toxins, even if the turn-around time is extended to exceed the response time for issuing warnings/advisories. The point was made by staff that we have to function within the realm of advisories without being able to accurately monitor toxicity. Bob went on to describe monitoring related to a proposal by the Washington Dept. of Ecology to augment Spokane River flows by injecting surface waters from Lake Pend Oreille into the Rathdrum Prairie aquifer. There is uncertainty as to the impact to water quality in the lake, or the aquifer. The proposal continues to be evaluated by IDWR, and no determination has been made on the proposal.

Kajsa presented an overview of the recently completed Short Creek –Riley Creek §319 project grant to remove culvert barriers and replace with a bridge to improve fish passage. Eighteen miles of road was decommissioned and riparian plantings were done to improve channel stability, shading, and habitat quality. The project was located in the headwaters of Teepee Creek and also included log cross veins, large woody debris placement. Forest Service protocol for monitoring followed including longitudinal profile and cross sections. The presentation included graphical representation of pool and riffle cross sectional changes and changes in habitat units. Changes included increased pools from 54% to 64%; stability remained constant at over 92% and large woody debris increased from 30% to 88%. There were also improvements in substrate particle size distribution. Vegetation planting success was good including white pine and willow species. Overall the impact of road removal was lessened by in-channel work. Grade control structures included natural and artificial structures with variable success of artificial structures.

Glen Rothrock described the St. Joe water quality improvement and erosion control project in cooperation with Arista Utilities Corp. utilizing funds from settlement agreements as part of the FERC license for the Post Falls Hydroelectric Project. River reaches targeted in the settlement include the lower 9 miles of the St. Maries River, the St. Joe River from St. Joe City to the mouth. Mass failure of upper banks has been a problem related to changing water elevations related to seasonal changes in pool elevation to facilitate power production. Rock 8 inches in diameter and less were used to pack erosion notches and to reslope banks. Willow bundles were incorporated into the project with rock. In demonstration projects on the Coeur d'Alene River it has been difficult to distinguish between restoration banks and naturally vegetated stable banks after several years of growth utilizing the NRCS restoration design. The §319 project on the Coeur d'Alene River at Medimont is a mile stretch that is beginning after EPA released grant funding. This reach is managed by IDFG. Permits have not yet been obtained and design approval is in process. Projects on the St. Joe and Coeur d'Alene Rivers are expected to begin on Nov 1. This will be a Fall/Winter project that will utilize a barge mounted crane. The same contractor will conduct both projects.

The next meeting was set for October 24th, 2012 to review and rank proposed §319 grants for the 2013 grant cycle. Those rankings will be represented by BAGs statewide in a meeting in December.

Vince Rinaldi motioned to adjourn; Robert Rider seconded the motion, the motion passed. Meeting adjourned.