

Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group May 15, 2007

Group Memory

Snake River Conference Room, Pocatello Regional Office
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Pocatello Regional Office hosted a meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 2007 in the Snake River Conference Room at the Regional Offices located at 444 Hospital Way, Suite 300 in Pocatello, Idaho.

Meeting participants included the following voting members of the Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group: Kim Gower (JR Simplot Company), Brad Higginson (Caribou-Targhee National Forest), M. Keene Hueftle (Southeast Idaho Environmental Network), Kevin Koester (Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District), Hannah Sanger (Portneuf Greenway Foundation), Candon Tanaka (Shoshone-Bannock Tribes),

The following non-voting members were also in attendance: Greg Mladenka (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality [DEQ]), Andrew Ray (DEQ), Sue Skinner (US Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]), and Lynn Van Every (DEQ).

Members who were absent from the meeting included: Larry Ghan (alternate, Bannock County Commission), Wilder Hatch (Caribou County Soil Conservation District), Jim Mende (Idaho Fish and Game), John Sigler (City of Pocatello), Roger Thompson (Southeast Idaho Flyfishers), Elliot Traher (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Louis Wasniewski (alternate, Caribou-Targhee National Forest), and Lin Whitworth (Bannock County Commission).

Wendy Green Lowe of P2 Solutions facilitated the discussion. This "group memory" documents discussion and decisions that occurred.

Parking Lot

Wendy Lowe introduced the "parking lot" - a flip chart for recording ideas that are not related to the topic presently under discussion. She suggested that the group use a parking lot to make sure that good ideas are not forgotten. Over the course of the meeting, the following ideas were recorded in the parking lot:

- Communication
- Public awareness of meetings
- Invite John Carter (Western Watersheds Project) to present on livestock impacts on watersheds.

Review and Approval of Previous Group Memory

Corrections were noted to the April 17, 2007 Group Memory. Changes will be made and the final Group Memory will be posted on the Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group's website.

Review and Approval of the Working Charter

No changes were made to the Working Charter. Candon Tanaka reported that the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Water Resources Commission has not named a new member yet.

The Working Charter is a working document and changes will be made as appropriate at future meetings.

Why are We Here?

Participants were invited to share with others their reasons for participating in the Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group. The following explanations were recorded on flip chart paper:

Sue Skinner - She hopes to serve as a resource for the Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group regarding the Clean Water Act, the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process, and the EPA. In addition, she lives in the watershed and she sees her participation as an opportunity to help the watershed.

Kim Gower - She serves on behalf of Simplot - and appreciates the opportunity to be involved in the watershed.

Kevin Koester - He represents the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District and the agricultural community. He has been involved in the TMDL for the Portneuf for many years.

Lynn Van Every - He is responsible for managing the surface water resources for DEQ. He is responsible for making sure that the watershed is able to achieve designated beneficial uses. He has both professional and personal interests in seeing the group be successful.

Greg Mladenka - He is very familiar with the Portneuf and the overall watershed. He is also a user of the watershed. He echoed Lynn Van Every's statements regarding DEQ's role in attaining beneficial uses in the watershed.

Candon Tanaka - He wants to make sure the TMDL process results in water that is of high enough quality to meet the needs of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

Hannah Sanger - She represents the Portneuf Greenway Foundation and serves to protect recreational aspects of the watershed, including all forms of recreation. She wants to make sure that recreation is enjoyable for all who use the watershed. She is also an educator.

Brad Higginson - He represents the Forest Service - which is responsible for managing the land in much of the watershed. He is interested in knowing what can be done to maintain and improve the water quality through management of the adjacent land.

Keene Hueftle - He would like to see the stream and riparian habitats be managed to achieve natural and healthy conditions. He is also interested in the human and cultural aspects of watershed management.

Andy Ray - His job is to support the TMDL process. He is also a resource user and he is concerned about the health and future of the watershed.

It was agreed that it might be nice to hear similar thoughts from other Watershed Advisory Group members (who were not in attendance) at a future meeting.

Review of Load Estimates and Targets from the Existing TMDL

Lynn Van Every reviewed information that had been presented at the last meeting regarding the estimated annual loads for the current TMDL and the calculated annual loads for suspended sediments and total phosphorus presented for 2004, 2005, and 2006. Estimated annual loads are based on historic sampling data. Calculated loads for the three years are based on turbidity readings. Readings are taken every ten minutes. The readings are averaged by the day, and then by the year.

Based on historic flow records, the DEQ includes 2004 as a low-water year, 2005 an average water year, and 2006 a high water year. For that reason, the three illustrate a range of pollutant loading under three runoff scenarios. Typically, pollutant loading is a function of watershed discharge .

In response to questions, it was explained that three separate agencies, ISU researchers, and the City of Pocatello are involved in sampling and the watershed is extensively sampled compared with other watersheds across the state. Interested individuals are welcome to participate in sampling efforts.

Another question addressed was where the heavy sediment load experienced in 2006 ended up. The response was that it most likely went into canals downstream.

Another question focused on whether there is any correlation between sediment loading and the acreage of lands in the Crop Reserve Program. The response was that the 2001 TMDL briefly discussed possible correlations between the CRP program and sediment loads in the Portneuf subbasin.

It was noted that the revised TMDL should reflect what is known about the history of the watershed.

It was noted that some things have changed and the target loads may need to be revised accordingly. For example, adjustments in suspended sediment targets may be needed to maintain the quality of fish habitat.

It was noted that it might be good for the Watershed Advisory Group to have a better understanding of the connectivity between surface and ground water. John Wellham of the Idaho Geological Survey is a noted expert in this subject. Participants will consider this suggestion at a future meeting.

EPA's Expectations

Lynn Van Every reported that Friends of the Earth sued the EPA for approving a TMDL in the Eastern U.S. (the Anacostia River) that did not set daily targets. The basis for that lawsuit was that the particular TMDL established annual target loads. The Clean Water Act mandates daily targets. The outcome is that TMDLs should now express daily targets.

Andy Ray passed out a set of graphs which illustrated the fact that there are large fluctuations in the daily loads in the Portneuf subbasin over the course of the year. Average daily loads in the spring time are much higher than other times of the year because the melting snow-pack adds a large volume of runoff to streamflows.

The Watershed Advisory Group agreed that fluctuations in watersheds between low flow and high flow make it impractical and/or inappropriate to express targets as daily loads.

Andy Ray also provided copies of two separate handouts which illustrate the correlations between 1) turbidity and total phosphorus loads and 2) turbidity and total suspended solids in the mainstream Portneuf and the Marsh Creek sites.

Lynn Van Every suggested that the Watershed Advisory Group might want to consider the most reasonable period for target loads and measuring loads, while making sure to include daily loads for presentation in the revised TMDL. It was agreed that the revised TMDL could portray daily targets but the text can present a deeper, more informed analysis.

Lynn Van Every suggested that the Watershed Advisory Group members might want to consider how they would like to see loads expressed in the revised TMDL.

How Loads Should be Estimated in Light of the EPA's Expectations

Andy Ray reported that optical turbidity is measured using a new technology that is widely used and accepted. As the relationship between turbidity and total phosphorus and the relationship between turbidity and total suspended solids is well documented, it might be possible to use turbidity measurements to document sediment and phosphorus loads. The DEQ is working with researchers at Idaho State University to use the turbidity record to estimate daily loads using daily summary statistics that integrate all 10-minute readings taken over the course of a day.

Brad Higginson stressed that the Forest Service is interested in establishment of target loads for the tributaries as well.

Preferences for Communication

Wendy Lowe asked if reliance on the project website provides an adequate mechanism for communicating with Watershed Advisory Group members. All reported that it does; there is no need for relying on the post office to send hard copies of documentation.

In addition, it was agreed that reminder emails would be a good mechanism for reminding people of upcoming meetings. It was agreed that DEQ staff will send a reminder one week in advance of scheduled meetings; another reminder will be sent one day ahead.

It was also noted that Watershed Advisory Group meetings are public meetings. DEQ will look into putting public notices in the newspaper before each meeting.

In response to a question, it was noted that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) does not have representation on the Watershed Advisory Group. Membership has been approved by the Department of

Environmental Quality. Brad Higginson will contact Dan Kotansky to find out if BLM might be interested in appointing a non-voting member.

Parking Lot

Before adjourning the meeting, the group revisited the items in the parking lot. The first two had been dealt with in a satisfactory manner during discussions. The group agreed to discuss the third idea (see below) at a future meeting.

- Invite John Carter (Western Watersheds Project) to present on livestock impacts on watersheds

Announcements

Sue Skinner reported that a seminar will be held on June 20. Presenters will include Amy Jenkins, who will report on the preliminary results from agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) monitoring. Details of the Portneuf River Symposium will be emailed to WAG participants.

Documents Relevant to the May 15, 2007 Meeting

Two documents were provided to participants during the meeting. Both can be found on the project website located at:

http://www.deq.state.id.us/about/regions/portneuf_river_tribs_wag/index.cfm

The two documents are:

- Turbidity and total suspended solids (TSS) and turbidity and total phosphorus (TP) relationships for all mainstem Portneuf River and Marsh Creek sites
- Total suspended solids load summary presenting loads as a function of day of year, month, quarter, and by runoff period.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group will be on June 19, 2007 in the Snake River Conference Room at the Regional Offices located at 444 Hospital Way, Suite 300 in Pocatello, Idaho. The objectives for the meeting will include:

- Review results of beneficial use reconnaissance program collections
- Discuss interpretation of beneficial use reconnaissance program assessment results
- Discuss and agree on pollutants for inclusion in the TMDL

Next Steps

The following next steps will be completed:

- 1) Wendy Lowe will prepare the draft Group Memory for review and approval at the next meeting.
- 2) Andy Ray will post the Group Memory on the project website along with copies of handouts provided at the meeting.
- 3) DEQ will provide meeting reminders via email one week and one day before each meeting.
- 4) The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes will determine who should serve on the Portneuf Watershed Advisory Group on their behalf.
- 5) Sue Skinner will provide information about the upcoming seminar to all Watershed Advisory Group members.
- 6) The Watershed Advisory Group will consider the possibility of inviting John Wellham (Idaho Geological Survey) and/or John Carter (Western Watersheds Project) during a future meeting.

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