

**Spokane River DO TMDL Advisory Group Meeting**  
**Minutes**  
**August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**In Attendance:** Dave Knight, Ecology; Karin Baldwin, Ecology; Adriane Borgias, Ecology; Don Keil, City of Coeur d'Alene; Llyn Doremus, Ecology; Dale Arnold, City of Spokane; BiJay Adams, Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District; Steve Llewellyn, Lands Council; Greg Lahti, WSDOT Ben Brattebo, Spokane County; John Beacham; City of Post Falls; Speed Fitzhugh, Avista; Tom Agnew, Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District; Lynn Schmidt, City of Spokane; Tom Herron, IDEQ; Doug Krapas, Inland Empire Paper; Rob Lindsay, Spokane County; Charlie Kessler, Stevens County Conservation District.

**On Phone:** Laurie Mann and Claire Schary, EPA; Lisa Dally Wilson, SRSP

**Spokane River Forum Staff:** Andy Dunau, Tonilee Hanson

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting, each of who introduced themselves.

Agenda changes included:

- Tom Herron rather than Dan Redline providing Idaho permit update.
- Karin providing information on changes to Spokane County Shoreline Master Program rather than presentation from John Pederson.
- Hangman and Little Spokane permitted discharge updates presentation from Diana Washington was rescheduled for next meeting.

PowerPoint presentations can be found on [spokaneriver.net/dotmdl](http://spokaneriver.net/dotmdl) web site.

### **Septic Systems**

#### Lake Spokane Study

Llyn Doremus provided an overview of a “Nutrient Transport in Groundwater to Lake Spokane” study that USGS is conducting in partnership with Ecology. The goal is to sample groundwater and plants along Lake Spokane’s shoreline, around the Suncrest area, influenced by onsite septic systems, and areas without septic systems. Specifics of the approach are detailed in her PowerPoint presentation. Discussion included the following clarifications:

- The study will include analysis of plants on land and in the water.
- Sampling results will be able to largely differentiate the contribution of nitrogen from septics vs areas without septics vs nutrients in the river or lake.

- Phase I of the study is designed to see if nutrients from septic systems are leaching into groundwater and entering Lake Spokane. If an association is found, then Phase II will look specifically at how many nutrients are entering the lake.
- They will need to work with homeowners to get permission to sample on their property.
- Sampling began in August and will continue into the spring of 2015 when the lake level is low. A final report is expected in December 2015.
- If the results provide valuable insights, there would be (assuming funding is available) interest in conducting the same type of work along other densely populated areas such as Nine Mile, Tum Tum, and the Westshore Road area.

### Spokane County Shoreline Master Program

Karin provided information on the updated language Spokane County is proposing to tighten regulations that, except for unique circumstances, don't allow installation of septic tanks within 200 feet of the Spokane River and other shorelines in Spokane County. The proposed language was distributed to the group. The Dept of Ecology is taking public comments on the new regulations until September 17th. Contact Sarah Hunt at Ecology or John Pederson at Spokane County for more information.

Per Ecology news release, "Onsite wastewater treatment systems contribute nutrients like phosphorus to groundwater which in turn feeds rivers and lakes. Too many nutrients can cause harmful algae blooms. The new standards proposed will result in reduced nutrients released to groundwater."

The changes were the outcome of Spokane Riverkeeper, Futurewise, Lands Council, and Trout Unlimited appealing the county's shoreline master plan revisions in 2013.

### **Idaho Permit Update**

Tom Herron reported that the NPDES permits are awaiting EPA action. IDEQ had to redo the water quality certifications due to changes in Idaho's anti-degradation policy. This work is complete.

### **Spokane River Biennium DO TMDL Report**

Karin Baldwin presented a PowerPoint summarizing aspects of the draft Spokane River Biennium DO TMDL Report. This report is being provided to the advisory committee for review and comment by Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. Comments should be sent to Karin at [kbald461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:kbald461@ecy.wa.gov).

The Forum will distribute an electronic version to those from the meeting and other advisory committee members who request it. There are a couple of outstanding pieces, e.g.—data from Post Falls, that are still being collected.

The audience for the report will be the general public. This report is mostly a narrative that accounts for activities done by several entities to address both point and nonpoint sources that must be reduced to meet the DO TMDL. As water quality data being collected becomes more robust, future reports will include a greater emphasis on summarizing this data.

Karin's PowerPoint also includes graphs showing amount of investments being made and where these investments are being directed. There was also discussion on accounting for improvements in nonpoint source activities, where the investments were being made, and regulatory ability to meet the reductions projected in the DO TMDL.

### **Nonpoint Source Workgroup Update**

Karin reported that the nonpoint source workgroup met on June 11<sup>th</sup>. As this was the first time they had met in quite some time, the meeting was mostly about setting ground rules for discussion, establishing priorities and doing some general updates.

There was general consensus among the NPS workgroup that:

- Data from year to year is highly variable and is flow dependent.
- Trends, therefore, must be ascertained by comparing data over multiple years and at different flows.
- It is possible to track level of effort in terms of projects and BMPs implemented, projected outcomes, etc.
- Ascertaining the specific contribution of a project to meeting water quality criteria at the mouth of the tributary is not currently feasible.
- There is a desire to collect empirical evidence to track outcomes, e.g. changes in algae and macro invertebrates.
- The regulatory environment is voluntary rather than mandatory for many of the BMPs and projects landowners are being asked to implement.

With this in mind, the workgroup will focus on:

- Reviewing available models to better estimate pH reduction from various actions.
- Review studies on attitudes and ways to affect behavioral change with landowners. Included in this are methods to increase collaborative efforts for educational outreach.
- Continue to improve tracking and monitoring of efforts.

The section 319 grant funding cycle administered by Ecology opens in September, 2014. Organizations interested in submitting projects for high priority areas identified by the workgroup and/or the Spokane River Watershed NPS reduction plan completed in December, 2011 are encouraged to apply.

The SRSP asked if the NPS workgroup can cast activities in terms of measurable progress. As part of Spokane River Toxics Task Force (SRTTF) activities, Ecology

developed a concept paper to define measurable progress. While the NPS workgroup is working on input and outputs as described in the definition, and all agree on the end target, the group has not decided on a statement of measurable progress, e.g.—the specific steps to be taken and measured to get to the goal.

Part of the issue is that NPS activities are largely voluntary on the part of landowners. Without mandatory and enforceable required actions, as is the case with NPDES permits, there is a greater degree of uncertainty in the steps that will be taken to ultimately achieve the goal. This is further complicated by the science that can not clearly correlate the contribution of each project or BMP to phosphorus reductions sought downstream.

EPA confirmed that the difficulties and uncertainties in achieving NPS reductions is a national dilemma. The multi-state nature of effort to reduce loading in the Chesapeake Bay was again mentioned as something that can be possibly learned from. The keynote speaker for the SRF Conference on November 19<sup>th</sup> will speak to this particular multi-state effort as part of activities being taken in Lancaster, PA.

The workgroup is also looking to leverage activities for future NRCS applications related to forestry, wetland reserves and other factors influencing sediment loading.

Lisa Dally Wilson commented on a recently released interagency report entitled “Recommendations for Improving Water Quality Assessment and Total Maximum Daily Load Programs in Washington State.” The report references a federal GAO report that concluded few TMDLs had helped water bodies attain water quality standards,” and that “long-established TMDLs often do not contain features that would help water bodies attain water quality standards.” The state reports says “GAO attributes most of these failures to incomplete or poorly conceived 303(d) listing decisions and TMDLs, and lack of implementation of nonpoint source controls.” Lisa will provide Andy the web link to the report and he will disseminate.

## **Reports**

### Little Spokane River TMDL

In 2012, a TMDL for fecal coliform bacteria, temperature, and turbidity was approved by EPA. Ecology staff expects to have a draft TMDL prepared for DO and pH impairments in 2015. The TMDL will outline activities needed to bring the Little Spokane River into compliance with the State’s water quality standards and achieve the phosphorus allocation assigned to the mouth of the river by the Spokane River DO TMDL. The TMDL will likely require reductions in the amount of nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) reaching the river.

## Lake Spokane Water Quality Attainment Plan

Speed Fitzhugh summarized some of Avista's activities that are required as part of their 401 water quality certification that was received as part of their FERC Spokane River Project license.

- Carp have been tagged and their movements and other factors are being tracked to determine if removal will positively affect achieving DO TMDL goals, e.g.—a biomass assessment to determine amount of phosphorus removal possible through reduction. In addition, Ecology will be testing 45 carp for PCBs.
- Nutrient monitoring at various stations continues and Ecology is using this data as part of its Environmental Assessment Program (EAP) work to determine progress in meeting DO TMDL water quality criteria.
- Working with landowners on bulkhead removal, setbacks to provide buffers and installation of native vegetation continues.
- Planted 300 native trees on Avista properties around the lake, and plan on planting another 300 trees.
- There is some interest in evaluating a floating wetland project in Suncrest as a means to break up waves and thus reduce phosphorus.

### **Spokane River Forum Conference Update**

Andy shared information about the Spokane River Forum Conference. The Coeur d'Alene Lake "Our Gem" symposium will be November 18, and the conference November 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. There are a number of sessions directly related to Advisory Committee interests, e.g.—NPS removal and best practices, green solutions like floating wetlands, low impact development, a keynote on green infrastructure development and multi-state collaborative, modeling being done by WSU and UI, celebrating successful Spokane River efforts, shifting regulatory landscapes, and the latest on PCBs.

### **Adjournment**

Andy will send out Doodle Poll to pick meeting date. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.