

Spokane DO TMDL Nonpoint Source Workgroup Meeting

Sept. 24, 2014 1-3 pm

Dept. of Ecology Building, Spokane

Participants:

Ben Brattebo, Spokane County

Andy Dunau, Spokane River Forum

Charlie Kessler, Stevens Co Conservation District

Dave Knight, Ecology

Rick Noll, Spokane Conservation District

Amanda Parrish, The Lands Council

Jim Ross, Ecology

Lynn Schmidt, City of Spokane

Jule Schultz, Spokane Riverkeeper

Elaine Snouwaert, Ecology

Karin Baldwin, Ecology

Todd Norton, WSU

Community outreach & public attitude research

Todd Norton is an Associate Professor with WSU's Edward R Murrow College of Communication. Todd's focus is on strategic communication for contentious environmental issues using place-based outreach and participation in public information campaigns.

1. Preliminary public engagement – gain a working understanding of the personal, social, contextual and societal variables that may impact outreach efforts, enhance knowledge, or change behavior. This involves surveys, interviews, public meeting, etc. to help identify common issues, and if the loudest opinion voiced is held by the majority of people. This step may reveal there are completely different interest groups an education program needs to reach. This information is needed to track public attitude changes over time.
2. Data collection through a standardized survey – develop the survey based on information learned from step #1. The survey results are analyzed for response frequency and any correlations with variables.
3. Data collection through interviews – using information in steps 1 & 2 identify key stakeholders to interview, perhaps again, to gain understanding on factors and barriers to the desired change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior.
4. Test message and its effectiveness – conduct experiments to evaluate how effective the education campaign is at producing the desired change in knowledge or education.

For more information, see handout attached to the email with these notes.

Quantifying Nutrient Reductions from Implementing Nonpoint Source BMPs:

The goal is to choose a tool or model that workgroup members can use to estimate phosphorus reductions from each implementation project. The reduction estimates would then be reported to Ecology and tracked to help determine progress made toward achieving the TMDL allocations. The proposed process to choose a model is:

- gather information about the possible tools or models
- choose a subset of tools or models to explore in depth

- decide on a tool or model to use

We began compiling a list of possible models during this meeting. EPA requires federal grant recipients to report phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment reductions achieved with their funding, so EPA has a list of common and publicly available models on their website. Karin distributed the list of models (see attachment to the email with these notes); however, only information about models with a low to medium level of effort were included because Karin made an assumption that groups would be less likely to use more complex models.

Another method that may be used to estimate phosphorus reductions at the project level may be a mass balance equation similar to that proposed in the Lower Boise River water quality trading framework: http://www.deq.idaho.gov/media/489512-boise_river_lower_effluent_report.pdf. The equation includes multipliers to account for distance to the point source (or in our case the load allocation), BMP effectiveness, etc.

The group is invited to contribute information about other models they may know about. Jim Ross mentioned it may be possible to establish an attenuation model as well. The group will look over the information handed out and will discuss it at the next meeting.

Measurable Progress:

The Department of Ecology worked with the Spokane River Toxics Task Force to define measurable progress toward reducing toxics. At the last Spokane DO TMDL Advisory Group meeting, members of the group asked what conditions would be considered measurable progress for nonpoint source implementation.

The measurable progress definition has three components:

- inputs – organizing activities (i.e. seeking grants, collaboration among workgroup members, etc.)
- outputs – activities & work products (QAPPs, implementation of BMPs, tracking database, etc.)
- outcomes – monitoring data showing progress toward obtaining allocations or water quality standards.

Over time, progress made on these components changes. For example at the beginning more work is done on inputs, but after many years there are more outputs and there is progress toward achieving outcomes. For information about this concept from EPA, visit:

<http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/datait/watershedcentral/design6.cfm>

Karin asked the group to consider what conditions, other than estimates of phosphorus reduction, would demonstrate progress toward meeting the tributary allocations in the TMDL. In other words, what factors should indicate progress toward reducing nonpoint sources of phosphorus? For example, is it a:

- Percent change in public attitude toward nonpoint source implementation?
- Number of completed projects on each tributary by a certain date? (i.e. miles of streambank stabilized, acres enrolled in direct seed, etc.)
- Number of Nonpoint Phosphorus Plan recommended studies completed?

At the next meeting, the group will begin identifying benchmarks that demonstrate progress toward meeting the load allocations.

Biennial Report Update:

Ecology received several comments indicating the report needs more information on how implementation is going. Karin distributed a handout asking questions that will help gather information to make the biennial report more robust (see attachment to the email with these notes). Responses other than a 'yes' or 'no', are due by Friday, October 10.

Karin stated she would ask if Ecology headquarters has any phosphorus reduction data reported from grant recipients, or if she needs to get that from the conservation districts and The Lands Council.

Funding Proposals:

- The deadline to submit proposals for Ecology's Water Quality funding is November 7th. Proposals for stormwater projects are included in this opportunity as well.
- Proposals for the Extension Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program (<http://westrme.wsu.edu/grants-program/>) are due by Nov. 17. This program is for educational programs that address risk management objectives such as production risk or legal risk due to environmental regulations. To determine if your idea may be eligible, you can contact Shannon Neibergs or Jo Ann Warner with WSU Extension in Spokane.

The Lands Council and Stevens County Conservation District mentioned putting in proposals for Ecology's funding.

Tracking Database:

Karin will send out the Excel spreadsheet in October to update activities performed this year. Information on location, BMP(s), and the entity working on the project are required. If you have information on phosphorus reduction, please include that as well. The group thought it would be reasonable to have a 3-week timeframe to complete the information and send it back to Karin.

Next Steps:

- The workgroup will review information about tools & models to estimate phosphorus reduction to prepare for the next meeting.
- Karin will check with Ecology headquarters regarding reporting phosphorus reductions using models other than STEPL.
- The workgroup will consider and prepare to propose measurable progress benchmarks.
- By Oct. 10th, the workgroup will send responses about nonpoint source implementation progress to Karin.
- Ben will send Karin information from the County on the estimated phosphorus reduction by decommissioning septic systems and connecting people to the sewer system.
- Karin will send out the implementation tracking database in October. Workgroup members will update the database and send it back to Karin within three weeks.
- The next meeting will be held early in December.