

**Spokane River DO TMDL Advisory Group Meeting
Minutes
October 1, 2015**

In Attendance: Dave Knight, Ecology; Karin Baldwin, Ecology; Galen Buterbaugh, Lake Spokane Association; Dale Arnold, City of Spokane; Ben Brattebo, Spokane County; BiJay Adams, Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District; Amanda Parrish, Lands Council; Meghan Lunney, Avista; Dave Moss, Spokane County; Jeff Donovan, City of Spokane; Doug Krapas, Inland Empire Paper; Tom Agnew, Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District; Diana Washington, Ecology; John Beacham, City of Post Falls; Jerry White, Spokane Riverkeeper; Lisa Dally Wilson, SRSP; Jim Ross, Ecology; Adriane Borgias, Ecology, Erik Johnson, Stevens County Conservation District; Doug Greenland, City of Spokane; Bud Leber, Kaiser, Chris Donley, WDFW; Ken Windram, HARSB; Jim Bellaty, Ecology.

Spokane River Forum Staff: Andy Dunau, Cami Haveman

Welcome and Introductions

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

Materials handed out can be found on spokaneriver.net/dotmdl web site.

Updates

EAP Proposals, FY 2016: Karin reviewed FY 2016 proposals selected for action by the Environmental Assessment Program (EAP). Proposals being developed include Groundwater Sampling at Coulee Creek, Deep & Coulee Straight to Implementation Project, Little Spokane DO/pH TMDL, and Lake Spokane Measuring Improvement Literature Search. Jim Ross asked that people contact him with suggestions for materials to be considered for literature search.

EAP Proposals, FY 2017: By October 7, the eastern regional office may submit three proposals for FY 2017 (which starts July 1, 2016). They include Methodology to Assess Sediment Loads, a Suncrest Sediment Nutrient Study, and Spokane River at Nine Mile Groundwater Study. Andy was asked to post the FY 2017 summary proposals as part of the meeting materials.

Participants were asked to give feedback on proposals by October 7th. When asked for feedback on prioritizing proposals, Jerry White was most interested in the assessment of sediment loads because non-point contributions require more research; and Tom Agnew was most interested in the Suncrest Study to better understand septic contributions in that area. The group asked for more time in future years to suggest proposals and give feedback.

Biennial Report: The report was published toward the end of September and 25 print copies were requested. Group agreed that those wanting a print copy should request from Karin and she will provide one. Otherwise, members can download from the web when it becomes available on the Ecology site. Andy will inform the group when it's available and provide a link.

Suncrest Study: Current study work is going through internal quality assurance reviews. The report will be an “Open File Report,” meaning that any new data collected will supercede this and become the final product. Results to share are expected in December. In addition, a Stevens County Conservation District grant was funded, which will enable USGS to continue their groundwater monitoring efforts.

Lake Spokane Water Quality Attainment Plan 2014 Annual Report: Avista’s report is on the FERC website and SRF provided a link to it via the SRF DO TMDL web site. Ecology’s comments can be found in Appendix F. Meghan Lunney provided a PowerPoint presentation showing initial monitoring for 2015. Unusual timing of spring runoff and low flows due to drought conditions affected water quality conditions, e.g.—earlier presence of blue green algae. The presentation is posted in the October 1 meeting materials on the web site.

Funding Cycle Open: Ecology’s Water Quality Program annual funding cycle closes Friday, October 16th at 5 pm. Karin asked those who would like help with the application to contact her.

Spokane Low Flow Conditions

As noted above, Meghan Lunney gave a presentation noting effects of low flow conditions in Lake Spokane. Galen Buterbaugh provided further information on the presence of blue green algae in Suncrest Park, Willow Bay, the Tum Tum Boat Launch and Nine Mile. Galen commented that blue green algae is regularly present, but only surfaces under particular conditions. This year, it surfaced much earlier than usual. Toxicity was detected on occasion, which is when extra precautions for people and animals (particularly dogs) are recommended. Galen provided a Power Point (available on the web site) showing microscope views of blue green algae present and which were of the toxic variety.

Chris Donley with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife provided observations on fisheries. Statewide, there were unprecedented low flows and temperatures. These factors drove various closures. Hoot owl restrictions throughout eastern Washington were put into effect to try and protect fisheries, with those on the Spokane River being lifted in mid-September.

Specific to the Spokane River, elevated water temperatures occurred so quickly that juveniles may not have been able to respond in time to thermal cues. This may have resulted in reducing successful migration to cold water areas made possible by the aquifer/river interchange. Abundance estimates will be used to try and determine short and long term effects.

Jerry White built on this information by sharing temperature data collected by Spokane Riverkeeper. Interestingly, when Avista reduced flows at Post Falls Dam to 500 cfs, temperatures went lower in gaining river reaches from the aquifer. Reports from fishing guides were that adult fish in cold water refuges seemed quite healthy.

Monitoring Group

The monitoring group is being convened November 3rd, 10:00 a.m., Ecology Offices. This is a technical workgroup that will look at monitoring as it relates to getting ready for the ten-year assessment. Having good boundary data, identifying additional data sources, collection of data, and validating model performance are examples of what the group will work on. As with other work groups, they will report out discussions, consensus and recommendations to the full advisory committee.

Doug Krapas asked how this relates to use of the current CE-QUAL model to consider activating a tool to be incorporated into a permit cycle. Diana Washington reiterated the process for doing this with the current model and encouraged early review and discussion with the designated permit manager before getting too deeply involved in model runs.

Bob Cusimano, who came back to Ecology part time, will be assisting Ecology on modeling issues to support the ten year assessment. Over time outcomes of the EAP literature review, discussions around protecting designated uses, and other considerations will be folded into workgroup conversations. Interim outcomes will be incorporated into biennial reports. TMDL compliance and permitting decisions, however, are outside the scope of this group.

Water Quality Survey Results

Andy Dunau shared some of the results from a public opinion poll regarding water quality that the Spokane River Forum commissioned. The telephone poll was conducted in May, 2015 and includes summary reports for Kootenai County, ID and Lincoln, Stevens and Spokane counties in Washington. Reports are available on-line. Survey results have a 95% statistical chance of coming within +/- 6.94 percentage points of results that would have been obtained if the entire population were polled.

Results showed the public on both sides of the border strongly support Spokane River protection and cleanup; generally have a good to excellent opinion of water quality; and half think water quality will get better by 2025. Specific knowledge of contaminants of concern and pollution sources is, however, generally low.

A specific area of concern is that in both WA and ID, 80% of respondents reported that there were no Spokane River cleanup efforts being conducted. They also, as a majority, support regulation to protect the Spokane River, be it banning products or restricting activity. The committee noted that without informing people of the cost of certain actions, actual support for regulation is less known.

The survey also provided information on ways to message and most common ways of receiving information. The committee considered possible opportunities for a "joint editorial" between interests to better tell the story that millions of dollars are being invested in cleanup. There was also discussion about needs and opportunities to work collaborative across water quality issues and committees on general water quality messaging.

Non-point Source Activities

All of the nonpoint source projects identified on the fiscal year 2016 draft offer list were funded:

- Spokane CD / SRF - Implementation and BMP tracking/online mapping tool
- Stevens County CD – Lake Spokane implementation and monitoring
- City of Spokane – Spokane Gorge planting
- The Lands Council – Hangman riparian work and stormwater education

The Spokane Conservation District grant will support project information being collected in data base form, then mapped, and made available online by the end of June 2016.

The nonpoint source work group met in September. Meeting notes are on the SRF DO TMDL web site. Locally, the group is in the process of developing “interim targets,” formerly called measurable progress. From the original draft, the targets are simplified and narrowed down, making them more realistic and useful for the 10-year assessment—which is 6 years away.

Inputs are now called activities, and reflect on the ground actions to achieve the targets.

Interim Targets are the intermediate goals toward meeting the TMDL allocations or a 30% reduction in phosphorus. What’s being tracked are:

- Type & # of BMPs installed
- Increase in public’s WQ knowledge and perception
- Increase in # of areas with contiguous BMPs

In August, EPA approved Ecology’s nonpoint source pollution plan, which is a requirement to receive Section 319 federal Clean Water Act funding. The plan is to be updated every five years. This plan lays out a process over the next year to develop recommended BMPs for agriculture.

Identifying the right balance between enforcement and incentives for producers to adopt BMPs continues to be an on-going challenge. Ecology’s preference is use technical and financial assistance before considering enforcement to reduce nonpoint sources of pollution.

NRCS Proposal: A proposal valued at ten million dollars will be submitted to NRCS November 10, 2015. (However, the proposal will have the option of being scaled down to increase the likelihood of success.) The invitation to submit a full proposal was an outcome of being selected from a preproposal competition that occurred over the summer. Practices called for in the proposal will directly support reductions in sediment loads and other nonpoint source pollution issues effecting Hangman Creek and other tributaries to the Spokane River.

The project includes several partners with Spokane Conservation District serving as the lead entity. All partners must provide a 1 to 1 match to support project funding. Elaine Snouwaert from Ecology has been working with several partners on both the technical parts of the proposal and identifying matching resources.

The geographic focus of the project consists of the Spokane River Watershed upstream of Long Lake Dam and includes the entire contributing area that drains to Coeur d'Alene Lake and Lake Spokane. Examples of BMPs the grant would support include direct seeding and mulch till, stream bank restoration and livestock improvement projects, wetland and upland conservation easements, and a buffer program that will compensate land owners for the value of lost productivity.

Next Meeting Date

Andy was asked to schedule the next meeting date for January, 2016. The meeting was then adjourned.