

Policy Working Group

Meeting Notes

Meeting 1: August 4, 2015, Springfield, IL

Summary

Sector implementation has included:

- Several watershed meetings held by the Sierra Club.
- MWRD is studying and/or establishing P removal at 3 plants. N will be reduced as well.
- Watershed Protection Utility feasibility meetings w/ multiple sectors.
- MWRD is working with the University on denitrification research.
- Numerous cover crop related events, videos and Junior College plots
- SWCD hosting Water Testing Open Houses.
- Ag collaborating with several partners. Set up N-WATCH.
- 11 Ag roadshow meetings in June; 12 this fall. 1,100 attendees; 93,000 tele town calls.
- University photo contest and videos.

Workgroup status:

- NMC quantifying nutrient loading to facilitate Adaptive Management. Now generating maps to help identify gaps.
- AWQPF to engage absentee landowners and youth. AWQPF Tech Subgroup formed to look at BMP implementation.
- Urban Stormwater Working Group to focus on Stormwater Utilities, training, closing gap in S. IL, incorporate urban NPS reductions into adaptive management program, funding and legislative needs for support and action and a marketing tagline. This group is seeking additional members. They sought approval for a recognition program and it was suggested that they draft recommendations to bring to the PWG.
- Nutrient Science Advisory Committee (NSAC) selection panel meeting scheduled for Aug 20. Opportunity for sectors to contribute funding. Retain the selection panel to decide how fund to be distributed. Members of the selection panel (part of the PWG) wanted a longer timeline to review applicants. PWG would like to meet with the NSAC early on to share ideas and concerns. They want to share unpublished material they may have with NSAC. Finally, they want more information on how the fund is to be used.
- The PWG considered forming a Point Source Working Group. No objections.
 - Who to be on it? IWRC to send our query to PWG for participants.

Baseline Year for Adaptive Management

- Sectors have been working on nutrient removal for some time. How do we find the right year?
- At least as far back as 2011.
- AWQPF Tech Subgroup to report to PWG on what data are avail.
- IL is appropriate in its use of the term “adaptive management”.

Implementation Benchmarks

- Should discuss them.
- Agreed to form a Workgroup.

Next Steps

- Establish a Point Source Working Group. IWRC to collect names and give to Illinois EPA to coordinate.
- The Baseline Year for Adaptive Management should be at least as far back as 2011. The AWQPF Tech Subgroup should look at the data and make a recommendation on the most appropriate year.
- Establish a Benchmarks Working Group. IWRC to collect names and identify a chair.
- IWRC to adjust NSAC selection process to give selection panel more time.

In Attendance:

Members

Marica Willhite, Illinois EPA
Warren Goetsch, IDOA
Dick Lyons, Association of Drainage Districts
Kevin Culver, Aqua America
Ted Meckes, CWLP
Kerry Goodrich, USDA-NRCS
Randy Stein, BNWRD
Liz Hobart, Growmark
Rick Manner, UCSD
Albert Ettinger, Mississippi River Collaborative and Sierra Club
Greg Mclsaccs, University of Illinois
Bill Bodine, Illinois Farm Bureau
Eric Schoeny, City of Aurora
Cindy Skrukud, Sierra Club
Kay Anderson, American Bottoms
Brenda Carter, IERG
Albert Cox, MWRDGC
Kim Knowles, Prairie Rivers Network
Thomas Granato, MWRDGC
Jennifer Tirey, Illinois Pork Producers

Other Attendees

Brian Miller, IWRC
Eliana Brown, IWRC
Katie Hollenbeck, IWRC
Amy Walkenbach, Illinois EPA
Gregg Good, Illinois EPA
Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA
Abel Haile, Illinois EPA
Carol Hays, Prairie Rivers Network
Steve Chard, IDOA

Development of NLRS document (Brian Miller)

Brian Miller: Input went into NLRS and the first draft went out in 2014 for public comments. July 21st the final draft came out.

Release of NLRS update (Marcia Willhite)

Marcia Willhite: “Thank you for your support for the strategy draft. We had a public comment period and received approximately 1,000 comments. 840 were similar letters from Sierra Club and 84 were similar letters from the Department of Agriculture. Comments were divided into categories: some were incorporated in the document, some were general observations, some were comments directed to IEPA, and some were general discussion”.

Implementation actions and initiatives by Sector

- ***Environmental Group – Cindy Skrukud***

Cindy Skrukud: “I just have a brief verbal report on what has been worked on since we started meeting. Sierra Club has volunteer groups. In April we were in Oak Park and in May we were in Moline. The final policy came out and we did a segment with Mike Nowalk on a radio show. We are working with watershed groups who are interested in implementing policy in their watersheds including the Fox River Watershed and we are meeting with the Agriculture Sector and using the strategy as basis for what we should implement in our watersheds. DuPage, Hickory Run, Salt Creek and Des Plaines work groups have also been working with Sierra Club volunteers. Sierra Club is encouraging people to step up and voice their opinion about cleaning up waterways and improving nutrient removal capabilities. Sierra Club continues to do Clean Water Act NPDES permit reviews and will object to permits where we think it is not effective”.

- ***Point Source – Thomas Granato***

Thomas Granato: “I would like to convey a sense of progress and activities that have been made. Efforts were made to enhance phosphorus removal on the point source side. Goals were 25% reduction by 2025 with a total of 40% reduction of phosphorus. Point source contributes 48% phosphorus and 16% nitrogen. In undertaking voluntary acceptance of limits, it is not one size fits all is not reasonable or necessary for all facilities. The point source sector will address local water quality impairments where they are identified where nutrients are the stressor. We have watershed workgroups in DuPage, Hickory Run, Salt Creek and Des Plaines. For MWRDGC activities, Enhanced Biological Phosphorus Removal (EBPR) challenges and lessons are some of the major limiting factors we have found, such as insufficient carbon for EBPR, spikes in influent P, back mixing of DO, and managing high flow conditions. Strategies to address limiting factors include infrastructure reconfiguration, modification of airlifts, installation of baffles, source control, and high strength wastes. Nitrogen reduction through EBPR implementation is a goal. We can achieve nitrogen reduction goals while we are trying to achieve phosphorus reduction goals. Point sources are moving ahead on voluntary basis and significant progress is underway through

watershed planning groups between point and non-point source sectors. EBPR shows promise to achieve P and N reduction goals, but requires optimization depending on plant configuration to create cooperative and supportive environment.

Jennifer Tirey: "Can you elaborate on Fulton County Research?"

Thomas Granato: "Some is reclaimed land and some is natural land and we lease the land out and the money is used to fund research. Fields are used as control while others examine BMPs such as tile drainage, etc. Some other research may include innovative cover crop and intercropping strategies or restoration of riparian buffer zones. This can help cover part or all of the cost. Some don't want to implement these strategies into a privately owned field due to potential losses that may occur. We can provide monitoring on acres that we own".

- ***Agriculture – Jennifer Tirey***

Jennifer Tirey: "For the Illinois Council on BMPs, cover crop training initiative for KIC (Keep it for the Crop) is located across the state. These cover crop specialists work with soil and water districts to have meetings with smaller producers to troubleshoot problems and ask questions. We've had 33 cover crop events, 1700 attendees, and 20 events scheduled. These events get people thinking about cover crop use and herbicide use. We've also developed a 4-series cover crop video, have community cover crop plots to help teach cover crop startups and junior colleges. Demonstration projects help demonstrate tile drainage, etc. to see and share results. We also host water quality testing open house events for farmers to bring in water for confidential testing. Collaboration is occurring with Trees Forever and we have implemented riparian buffers. We also have the N-Watch Sentinel Site Program. In addition, Lake Springfield Nutrient Management Project has worked with organizations to reduce nitrate loads. We also have Roadshow Meetings, 11 in the state in June. This is a way to make connections. There have been over 100 attendees at each meeting with new faces. We also have Tele Town Calls talking about importance of the Strategy. We found that 90% have tried nutrient management practices, over 90% tried no-till or strip-till practices, 80% use nitrification inhibitor".

- ***University – Eliana Brown***

Eliana Brown: "Great success in the "Water is..." photo contest with 40 entries from all over Illinois. We are also incorporating a youth photo contest. The Science of the Strategy video series is another component being implemented".

Status of NLRS Implementation Workgroups, Forums, and Councils

- ***Nutrient Monitoring Council – Gregg Good***

First meeting: May 13, 2015

Next meeting: Sept. 16, 2015

Gregg Good: "The Nutrient Monitoring Council Charges: 1. Develop a nutrient monitoring program and find a 5 year running average of nutrients leaving the state and identify trends in loading over time. 2.

Develop a prioritized list of nutrient monitoring program activities and funding. 3. Develop local water quality outcomes on a smaller priority watershed scale.

We have 8 Superstation Networks in conjunction with USGS that may satisfy some charges. Four stations are already in place: Danville, Florence, Green River, and Rock River. The other four should be in place the next month or so. This is in conjunction with a 6 year agreement with USGS”.

- ***Ag Water Quality Partnership Forum (AWQPF) – Warren Goetsch***

First meeting: May 22, 2015

Next meeting: Sep. 22, 2015

AWQPF Tech Subgroup meeting: Aug. 26, 2015

Warren Goetsch: “AWQPF Committee Charge is aiming to steer and coordinate outreach and education efforts to help farmers address nutrient loss and select the most appropriate BMPs, track BMP implementation, coordinate cost sharing and targeting, and develop other tools as needed.

Accomplishments and conclusions include outreach and education efforts currently conducted by the agriculture communicator group have been successful and will continue independently of the AWQPF. Gaps in education efforts include youth audiences, and female farmers and landowners. Next steps will be agriculture communication partners including FFA students etc. The AWQPF felt that NRCS technical committee is the appropriate venue to address targeting and coordination of all activities. IEPA will query appropriate agencies on cost share deadlines and decision thresholds and the results will be presented at the next meeting”.

- ***Urban Stormwater Working Group – Amy Walkenbach***

First meeting: July 20, 2015

Amy Walkenbach: “Disappointed at the turnout of the urban stormwater working group. How can we reach out to more people? We need to explore funding and coordinate outreach. For funding we would like to report to Policy Working Group for funding and legislative needs for support and action. Developing an education and outreach strategy and exploring opportunities is also another step. A tagline or logo for stormwater would be good. There might be a geographic gap in the southern region. How do we deliver training modules for MS4s and other entities? There are both inadequacies in data and sampling locations in southern IL”.

Brian Miller: “How do we want to address these? We could put the rest on the agenda or tackle one or two quickly. They are proposing the opportunity to develop some sort or recognition program”.

Marcia Willhite: “It seems to work well if a workgroup develops a recommendation and brings recommendation to other work group”.

Albert Ettinger: “1st legislation is a good thing and I’d like to see it. 2nd for a recognition, that’s fine. 3rd component, I don’t get it.”

Amy Walkenbach: “We are looking for guidance on how we can incorporate urban stormwater into more of our programs.”

Marcia Willhite: “NGOs and governmental organizations.”

Brian Miller: “Where is the vehicle for urban BMPS?”

Cindy Skrukud: “Contribution from urban runoff is small, so I would say that if Policy Working Group said to work on all components, it would be helpful.”

Jennifer Tirey: “Is awards really what you need to focus on? Did you get a well-rounded turnout?”

Amy Walkenbach: “Question is on enabling legislation: why it hasn’t passed before? If these are projects, we would bring in more people. We had each sector represented.”

Jennifer Tirey: “Awards take a lot more work. Communication is key.”

Brian Miller: “What is the Urban Stormwater Working Group continues to make progress and comes back?”

Cindy Skrukud: “Discussed the need for stormwater utilities and plans. We had problems moving forward in legislature, but the policy working group backing it, it would be easier.”

Brian Miller: “We will put on the agenda for future meeting.”

- ***Nutrient Science Advisory Committee (NSAC) – Brian Miller***

Brian Miller: “NSAC’s charge is to determine numeric criteria for nutrients most appropriate. Policy Working Group nominated potential candidates: 18 nominations. They will meet every 2 months with a mix of public and executive session meetings and calls. This follows EPA Science Advisory Board selection criteria and procedures. Is there enough compensation to get high quality candidates? We are giving \$500 per meeting plus travel expenses. There is opportunity by sectors to contribute to fund that offers honorariums for writing assignments and between meeting activities and travel for outside experts.”

Marcia Willhite: “On comments on documents and the draft, do people have questions on charge of the science advisory and what are they expected to achieve?”

Kay Anderson: “What is interaction between science advisory board and policy work groups?”

Marcia Willhite: “Charge to committee is to look at all available science to develop nutrient limits. For participation, when National Academy of Science stands up to panel, public session is where panel is taking in information and science advisory is expected to update working group prior to releasing

information. Or in other words, what information do you need to perform work? We were thinking 5-7 scientists with a scientist from USEPA Region 5.”

Kay Anderson: “Scientists will write a standard or produce scientific input to a standard.”

Marcia Willhite: “They will recommend a standard and process to develop standard. NSAC may determine a watershed specific standard instead of statewide standard. I hope that they write a final report and show that we are concerned about implementation of a number in addition to what the numbers actually are. What is the implementation plan for using that standard? They don’t go to rule making unless they have that standard implementation defined and that is what I would want Illinois to do.”

Albert Ettinger: “How is the contribution going to work?”

Marcia Willhite: “I would imagine that disbursements would be made from a common fund.”

Brian Miller: “If a nominee got elected and if a group wanted to donate, then it would be unequal if it was targeted. There should be no tracking between the donor and recipient.”

Kim Knowles: “The nominating committee will disband once a science advisory committee is formed? You might want to retain them to assist with disbursements.”

Thomas Granato: “You can’t know what funds will be available. Some may require additional funding other than food and honorarium. Will we cut them loose before we know the level of support that we need?”

Kay Anderson: “Will the 5-7 scientist numbers be discussed or is it from the Agency?”

Marcia Willhite: “The 5-7 scientist numbers comes from Agency criteria for selection. The advisory board will not be collecting anything, only using what is currently in existence right now, literature, data, etc.”

Kay Anderson: “Considering a range, for nutrients etc., may be more valuable than a single number between the Science Advisory Board and Policy Working Group.”

- ***Point Source Working Group***

- Should we establish this group?

Marcia Willhite: “Implementing a point-source working group formed by policy working group. Let Eliana know if you’d like to be on this working group.”

Establishing a Baseline Year for Adaptive Management

Marcia Willhite: “What should be our baseline in the year for showing progress? Options? 2001? 2011? 2015? 2017?”

Kim Anderson: “This would measure actions taken?”

Marcia Willhite: “Yes. Are there key events that happened in the past that we would want to take credit for in the strategy?”

Kim Anderson: “You want to show movement above the baseline, so don’t make the baseline later or larger!”

Rick Manner: “I recommend we go somewhat back in time.”

Jennifer Tirey: “I would just like to see what has been done so that we can make an informed decision.”

Brian Miller: “So strike 2015 and 2017?”

Warren Goetsch: “Well the hypoxic zone has been the largest ever, so that wouldn’t look good if the hypoxic zone has actually gotten worse.”

Kay Anderson: “An additional comment IL is using the terminology adaptive management as appropriate.”

Implementation Benchmarks

Marcia Willhite: “Perhaps we should have actual numeric benchmarks on ultimate implementation goal?”

Brian Miller: “Would you want to tackle the benchmarks as a small group thinking through options?”

Volunteers for Benchmark Working Group

Jennifer Tirey
Cindy Skrukrud
Eric Schoeny
KC Johnson
Kim Knowles
Kerry Goodrich
Dick Lyons
Lauren Lurkins
Albert Cox

The group discussed future PWG meetings.