

Lower Fox Basin Partner Team Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2007

1-4 p.m.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

2661 Scott Tower Drive, New Franken, WI

Attending: Kendra Axness (UWEX), Rob McLennan (WDNR), Ron VanderLoop (Brown Co. Cons Alliance), Bill Hafs (Brown Co LCD), Bud Harris (UWGB), Trisha Cooper (UWGB), John Kennedy (GBMSD), Mike Liebman (Foth), Janet Smith (USFWS - ret), Rick Stoll (WDNR), Michael Finney (Oneida Tribe of Indians), Chris Shaw (C. Appleton), Renee Lertzmann (Biodiversity Project), Gary Van Vreede (USFWS)

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Pat Robinson and Chuck Larscheid were both unable to attend. Bill Hafs asked for a few minutes on the agenda, and Renee Lertzmann agreed to share some information about her work.

Update on the Lower Fox Basin TMDL – Rob McLennan, WDNR

TMDL = Total Maximum Daily Load. (more info available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/wqs/303d/>) Rob mentioned that Nicole Richmond, the WDNR's TMDL Coordinator for the Lower Fox River, couldn't attend the Partners meeting because she was in Washington, D.C. to participate in a USEPA meeting. The Lower Fox TMDL is being watched at the national level because many of the things happening here are innovative. Rob is the WDNR point of contact in the Northeast Region for the Lower Fox TMDL.

TMDLs are developed for water bodies that are on the "impaired waters list" – also known as the 303(d) list. Impaired waters are designated as such because they either violate state standards (e.g., for dissolved oxygen, temperature, etc.) or do not meet their designated ecological uses. USEPA is requiring states to develop TMDLs within a certain timeline. By doing one TMDL for the Lower Fox Basin, WDNR will get credit for all of the impaired waters in the basin. The WDNR is establishing a TMDL for the Lower Fox Basin before establishing TMDLs for the Upper Fox or Wolf Basins. This makes sense because with the Lower Fox TMDL completed, the WDNR can set targets for the upper watersheds that will be in line with the needs of the lower watershed.

The process to develop the Lower Fox TMDL is divided into phases: Phase 1 is the cost-effectiveness study; Phase 2 is the TMDL Scope of Work and Engaging Stakeholders; Phase 3 is TMDL development; and Phase 4 is TMDL implementation. The goal is to have TMDL development completed by spring 2009, as well as an implementation plan. The cost-effectiveness study, stakeholder meetings, and social indicators survey are all being done to increase the implementability of the TMDL.

Rob noted that the cost-effectiveness study didn't account for loads from (or BMP implementation in) urban areas. Also, the stakeholder meeting with municipal stormwater managers was postponed by WDNR because the Stormwater and TMDL program staff in the department are still figuring out how these two programs will work together. There is also a question about how the data from urban stormwater computer models (i.e., SLAMM) works with the data from agricultural runoff models (i.e., SWAT). Urban stormwater modeling at the basin level needs to be refined. The partners agreed that the urban component is important and any gaps should be addressed as soon as possible.

The first public meeting for the TMDL is scheduled for January 23, 2008. The social indicators survey is still in progress. A few members of the TMDL Outreach Group met with the Green Bay Press-Gazette Editorial Board on December 10th and it's expected that a future "Perspectives" page of the paper will focus on the TMDL. Kendra is working on revising the UW-Extension Lower Fox Basin web page to incorporate information regarding the TMDL.

There was a bit of discussion about getting the word out about the TMDL to local groups. Individualized presentations can be given to various groups with an interest in this topic. Partners agreed that the presentation Rob gave could be shortened to 20 or 30 minutes and delivered to organizations such as the Brown County Conservation Alliance. Newsletters of these groups could also be a way to let local stakeholders know about the public meeting date.

Preliminary Findings of the Lower Fox Basin TMDL Stakeholder Meetings – Trisha Adams-Cooper, UWGB

Trisha is a graduate student at UWGB, who is working with Professor Denise Scheberle. The stakeholder meetings (except for the urban stormwater meeting) were completed on November 14th. Meetings were held with the agricultural stakeholders: agency staff, operators of large farms (CAFOs), crop consultants, and local producers without permits (small farms). A total of 9 stakeholder meetings were conducted. The small farmers were difficult to reach so Trisha conducted phone interviews instead of a stakeholder meeting. A report summarizing the findings will be available within the next few weeks.

Themes that emerged from the discussions were the need to connect with and engage local producers (small farmers) throughout the TMDL development process and the need to address equity issues (i.e., the perception by farmers that city-dwellers aren't doing their part, and vice-versa). The group discussed ag policy and how that affects the TMDL. Cost-share programs have many challenges, for example they can penalize those farmers that choose to implement BMPs on their own because they want to do the right thing for the environment.

There was discussion about the importance of stakeholder participation in the TMDL. Since a formal "Citizens Advisory Committee" cannot be established, perhaps the TMDL Outreach Group could work through an existing group to serve in this role.

Cat Island Chain Update – Chuck Larscheid

Postponed to a later meeting.

Statewide Estuary Needs Assessment: Results and Next Steps – Pat Robinson, UW-Extension

Postponed to a later meeting.

Impacts, Benefits and Challenges of Animal Waste Management Ordinance Enforcement – Bill Hafs, Brown Co.

Bill shared a handout that he'd used at a conference presentation earlier in December. The handout summarized information about the history, impacts, and challenges of the Brown County Animal Waste Management Ordinance. The numbers show that as time goes on more farms are either permitted or nearing the point of needing a permit. The number of animal units in Brown County has stayed fairly steady over time at 92,000 animal units – which shows that small farmers are leaving while large farmers are putting animals on smaller areas of land. The handout included a map which showed the number of farms with county or WPDES permits and delineated a 1-mile radius around those. The map demonstrates that there are a lot of farms with potential land-spreading activities in a relatively small area (there is more manure being generated than what ag fields within the county can accommodate).

Ph.D. Research Project – Renee Lertzmann, Biodiversity Project

Renee described her project, which involves interviewing ten Green Bay residents each three times to understand how the natural environment has shaped their lives and how they feel about environmental issues, especially related to the Great Lakes. She is interested in the psycho-social aspects of environmental issues and is studying under a professor at Cardiff University in Wales (UK). She is using rather new, qualitative research methods. She hopes to share her findings with the partners when she has finished her research (within the next 1 to 2 years). The information will likely be useful for shaping future communications efforts related to Great Lakes and water quality issues.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

New Publication Available: "Wisconsin's Municipal Storm Water Collaboratives"

<http://runoffinfo.uwex.edu/pdf/swgroups9-07.pdf>

Fox Wolf Watershed Alliance Stormwater Conference <http://www.fwwa.org/>

April 8-9, 2008, Liberty Hall, Kimberly, WI

The next meeting of the Lower Fox Partners will be scheduled via e-mail.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kendra Amess.