

Animas Watershed Partnership

Steering Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 2, 2015

1 pm to 3 pm

Harris Water Engineering

Meeting Notes

Attendees: Ann Oliver, Carrie Lile, Gary Thrash, Aaron Kimple, Melissa May, Emma Lee Deyo, Chuck Wanner, Dave Tomko, Conn Fraser, Helen Root, Pam Starr

Consent Agenda - Approve of: Invoices presented by email (Ann's invoices for the Florida River Project and the Watershed Planning project) were approved.

Financials –

The Bureau of Reclamation Grant

Cash balance: \$ -2012.52

grant funds remaining: \$62,813.91.

NPS 319 grant:

Cash balance: \$950.40

grant funds remaining: \$26,560.96.

2015 SWCD grant funds:

Cash balance: \$7,440.00.

Healthy Rivers grant:

grant funds remaining: \$15,000

Trout Unlimited donation was previously accounted for in the BoR grant. A correction was made and those funds were accounted for in the AWP donations account.

2015 SWCD Grant funding is for water quality sampling on the Florida River and Salt Creek. Ann would like to start sampling with help from Jon Scott with approval by the Steering Committee. Ann does not have time to get the project started. Jon would bill Ann as a subcontractor, then Ann would bill under the Bureau of Reclamation grant. The BoR grant budget included \$2000 as match for the water testing. Melissa moved to approve Jon as project coordinator pending determination of its legality within the BoR grant contract. Chuck seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Colorado Healthy Rivers fund grant is \$15K and goes toward riparian fencing and monitoring upstream on the Florida River from the Fassbender property. The CO NPS new grant funding would be an amendment to the original NPS grant. The CO NPS grant funding amount is not clear yet due to accounting issues at the CDPHE. The projected amount was \$23k and would go toward the fencing downstream of the Fassbender property. The Healthy River fund requires \$5000 match from the new NPS grant, but could be matched through the Bureau of Rec grant.

Current Business

Updates:

- Florida Water Quality and Habitat Improvement Project Phase 2
CO Healthy Rivers and amendment to the NPS grant are funding sources. The Scope of work is done and we have received the Notice to Proceed. We are just waiting on contract with Fassbender.
- Lower Animas Watershed Based Planning. Aaron met with Mark to go over the polygons and make sure everything was in line and that the subwatersheds that were defined still worked. For the most part the polygons and subwatershed worked with

some minor adjustments. The mapping looks good: there is a pretty good representation of the ditches along the Animas, have 12 samples within the Animas, and have the subwatersheds broken out. The next step is to make sure the polygons are represented well, then presenting the data sampled upstream and downstream, looking at land use. There is a data meeting next week on Wednesday, 8th, at Aaron's office in the Smiley building.

- CO and NM Soil Health Workshops. About 56 people attended the Durango workshop. American Ag Credit contributed plates and cups for the workshop. Farmington: 40 people attended including staff. 17 turned in evaluations. 16 of 17 were 5 out of 5 very satisfied. Gary Thrash reported that Daniel Fulmer, a small farmer offered the use of soil test equipment. Gary thought he would acquire some equipment to loan out to landowners. Total soil samples submitted were approximately 40. All presentations are up on SJWG website. The Durango workshop included participants from the Animas Valley, Mancos Valley and from the La Plata Valley. Gary and Ann requested a copy of participants list from Melissa.
- Colorado Data Sharing Network. Lynn Padgett is trying to get a training together. The training has been stalled. Ann will ask again for dates for the training and will include SJWG in the communication.
- Outreach Plan. Jon received the comments from the Steering Committee. He left a mostly completed draft of the outreach plan. Ann will send the draft with changes that Jon made from recommendations made during the retreat.
- Vista Renewal. The AWP will have a new VISTA: Rachael Hoffman. She is coming from Illinois and went to school at Stephens Point with a degree in environmental studies. She is starting on April 27th. Conn offered to help with outreach. Ann will email information to Conn.

New Business

Questions/Topics for San Juan Watershed Group Panel April 13th at Farmington Civic Center. SJWG is planning a panel on Liquid Water waste. Jim Vincent from NMED, Don Moats (septic system installer and owns a pumping company), Don Becker (home builder and installer) will be giving presentations, plus there will be a focused discussion with the panel with featured questions from watershed groups and public.

Conn was asked to petition questions from the watershed groups that might be asked of the panel of experts.

Dave and Konn provided summary of SJWG MST sampling presentation in February. There are human source bacteria present in the rivers with a lot more of it in the San Juan River. One of the theories that the SJWG came up with based on the results of the MST study were that there are three possible sources from the septic systems: ground water migration with high levels of bacteria in it going into the rivers, failing systems, illegal dumping of septage.

Dave found an article in the Farmington Daily Times 2010 that reports most septic permits in the county are invalid.

Konn is setting up a meeting for Jim Vincent with the City of Farmington City Manager and San Juan County Manager. Other people attending the meeting will be Paul Montoia, Shana Reeves (Director of Communications), David Sypher (public works director).

Some recommendations for ways to increase the panel discussion participation were to have a map of the area and allow attendees to write questions/notes on a sticky note to attach to the map.

Incentives through Public Water Suppliers through the Source Water Protection planning process may be available for landowners to get their septic systems fixed.

Suggestions for questions to ask panel include: examples of septic system failures and how it works, horror stories of worst case scenarios, how is the e.coli getting to the river, what are the weak links in the regulatory system, describe how the systems are supposed to work and what homeowners are doing to make them fail. Other question ideas should be emailed to Konn.

Volunteer Willow Planting project. The project will be at Fassbender property inside the fencing. Trout Unlimited and Chelsea Steck, (who is trying to organize a VISTA alum group for the weekend before Earth Day) might be interested in helping with project. Ann will keep everyone posted. Gary has a Waterjet Stinger – available to help with planting the trees.

Spring Forum Ideas. The Spring Forum is scheduled on June 4 in Durango.

Greg Brand, who works in environmental health at San Juan Basin Health was interested in MST data findings. Ann would like to invite him to present at the Spring Forum. Ann would like someone from county to present on permitting for septic or waste water.

San Juan Basin Health could talk about changes to treatment systems and discharge permits. Another idea is an existing records inspection: this is what was reported and how this is how it lines up with what SJWG found in the river study.

There was a discussion about weighing in on the discussion about where the City of Durango should relocate the new waste water treatment plant. The City has a formal extension until 2018 or 2023 from the state to bring the plant up to regulation. The Tribe could, in spite of the extension, sue the state if the plant is out of compliance.

The AWP's position could be that we hope the City will choose an alternative that considers growth and allows the highest level of treatment.

A feasibility study was done and location recommendations included Cundiff Park and the area behind Mercury.

Because the treatment plant was found to be the largest source of nitrates and phosphorus to the Animas River, the suggestion was made to remind the City of these results and that being proactive will provide a big benefit to the river and avoid regulations that will be enforced in the future.

Dave spoke with Dan Schwartz, Farmington Daily Times, who has been writing the articles about the human sewage in the river. Dan wants to do a public records request of corrective action notices or notices of violations. Dave gave Dan suggestions on where and how to get that information.

There was another discussion about the AWP commenting on renewal of discharge plans. A Farmington Daily Times article states that there will be a permit review on Navajo Lake State Park Pine Site and ?. They are seeking a renewal on ground water discharge plans. Discharge plans are renewed every five years and there is public comment period. The Ground Water Quality Bureau might be the agency to contact to get on list to be notified for requesting comments on renewals.

Paul suggested considering comments on how a drought or water use reduction plan similar to California might affect waste water treatment plants and what kind of proactive stance needs to be taken.

Next Meetings:

May 7, 2015 AWP Steering Committee Meeting Farmington

June 4, 2015 Spring Forum Durango