

Animas Watershed Partnership

Steering Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 7, 2015

1 pm to 3 pm

Southern Ute Environmental Programs Division Office

Meeting Notes

I) **Introductions** (5 min)- Welcome Rachel Hoffman, Americorps/VISTA, Ann, Rachel, Pete, Dave, Buck, Gary, Carrie, Emma, Melissa, Pam, Paul.

II) **Consent Agenda** - Approve of: (5 min)

April Meeting Notes. Kevin Hall commented on the April meeting notes. He did not attend the meeting, but was provided a copy of the notes so he could comment on them. Kevin provided some clarifications and comments to the April minutes. Ann responded with the email she has provided earlier. Ann proposed following changes to the meeting notes: There was a discussion about whether or not the AWP should comment on the public discussion about where the City of Durango should relocate the new wastewater treatment plant. 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. Because the treatment plant was found to be the largest single loading source of nitrates and phosphorus (during July 2010 sampling of all inflows from Baker's Bridge to the Colorado/New Mexico state line) (with a reference to the study) 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 could be enforced in the future. Kevin Hall agreed to those changes. Another meeting note change was to correct the spelling of SJWG Vista's name: correct spelling is Conn. The AWP agreed by consensus that the notes will be amended and Ann will distribute the revised notes.

Invoices: Ann provided an MSI invoice for Animas/Florida River project. Melissa moved to approve payment of the invoice. Dave seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

III) Financials:

Healthy Rivers:	Cash Balance: -4000;	Grant Balance: 15000.
	Expenses: 4000	
Bureau of Rec:	Cash Balance: 188.50	Grant Balance: 51374.36
	Expenses: 44,253.14	
NPS:	Cash Balance: 399.15	Grant Balance: 26560.96
	Expenses: 133234.89	
SWCD 2015	Cash Balance: 6900.34	Grant Balance: 0
	Expenses: 1099.66	

The balance in the BoR grant is due to a hotel registration receipt that was submitted to the BoR for reimbursement. The SJRCD credit card was never charged for the amount on the registration receipt. The Soil Health Workshop's actual expenses were less than what was budgeted. The grant ends in September. Ann will ask for an extension.

Current Business

IV) Updates:

Florida Water Quality and Habitat Improvement Project Phase 2 (Ann) The project is nearly complete. The monitoring report needs to be finished. Some administrative dollars under phase 1 will be spent in the future. Phase 2 has begun using Healthy Rivers funding. The project will take place on the property north of the Fassbender property. That property is owned by Durango Commercial

Development. Earlier in the year, CDPHE Non-Point Source offered approximately 36K to extend the project. That proposed funding was then written into other grants as match. But after implementation of the CDPHE's new accounting system, it was discovered that the extra funds are not available. Ann can account for the match that was written into other grants. But no funds are available for fencing projects down river from the Fassbender property. Ann will look into other sources of funding.

CO and NM Soil Health Workshops Surveys (Rachel provided a handout that showed metrics of the survey). "

Durango Workshop feedback: How did people hear about the workshop: the majority of answers were "other. Satisfaction was varied. Follow up questions included: what plants should be used to prevent erosion, what to do next, is more information available about the analysis and how to read the results.

Farmington Workshop feedback: satisfaction was higher than Durango. Both groups were interested in more feedback about irrigation. The Farmington Workshop participants learned about the workshop through the NM State Extension Office 4-H newsletter.

The question was raised about plans to hold a soil health workshop in the future. Currently, there are no plans for a future workshop, but it would provide a benefit to the watershed. Budgeted total cost of workshop: \$6000 with approximately half reserved for sampling costs and a stipend for speakers. Real costs were approximately \$4500, no stipend for the speakers was required.

Gary will loan out compaction and moisture probe equipment. The AWP agreed to plan future events.

Colorado Data Sharing Network (Ann). Ann has scheduled a data upload and download training with CDSN, Monday, June 15 with the location to be determined. Lynn Padgett will give the training in person. Training will take a full day for up and download training. Ann will distribute more details as they become available.

Animas River Stakeholders Group Mtg report (Rachel and Buck). The EPA risk assessment tested sedimentation. They tested core samples of the sediment, water benthic communities and fish. Zinc was found to be the highest level in sediments. The testing was performed down to Baker's Bridge. Lead, Manganese and other metals tapered off downstream but Zinc continued to stay at higher levels. The benthic communities in the Animas and Cement Creek are almost all impaired based on the data and site locations. Data shows increasing levels, but they are still very impaired. Toxicity tests showed that cutthroat trout were most affected. The data showed greater amounts of fish, but fewer juveniles and less biomass. Data from near Howardsville showed less fish but higher biomass. Water testing at Sunnyside at Mayflower area will be starting soon. Gauge analysis showed that the lowest flows were in June, July, August; highest flows were in September October April, but they were receiving 25% less water than previously. Copper is lower in most areas, but the feeling was that it was due to receiving less water, not because there is less copper in the area. EPA testing and River Watch testing has shown increased level of zinc loading upstream of Cement Creek. The thinking is that ground water is infiltrating the tailings ponds and then the ground water is leaching the metal out of the waste piles into the rivers; the zinc loading it is not surface runoff. The 2013 data for the reach above Bakers Bridge showed the river is considered impaired for zinc and close to impaired for cadmium, aluminum and iron. EPA is more involved and is considering recommending Superfund site status. EPA sampled down to Purple Cliffs, but presented data only to Baker's Bridge. Rachel will email her notes from the Animas River Stakeholders Group's meeting. The EPS's BERA report is also available. Ann will email the EPA's report.

Florida River nutrient and E.coli sampling (Ann) Jon Scott is getting everything organized for sampling. Buck helped secure the Animas site to sample on. The hope is to be up and running, do E.coli and nutrient sampling at sites on the Florida and one site on Animas by mid May. Melissa will supply sampling poles.

Lower Animas Watershed Based Plan (Dave). SJWG had a meeting with MSI last month; MSI wanted to do more evaluation. A meeting was set up for the 12th. MSI has been taking care of technical evaluations and Melissa has been sifting through the old SJWG Watershed plan and other documents to learn what information would be useful for writing the current Watershed Plan. A goal of the plan might

be to write the next 5 grant applications. A confusing part of data is the hydrology and what are the sources of the nutrients. Another topic of discussion at the last data meeting with MSI was concentrations vs. loads. Melissa presented graphs that show the TMDLs for stateline down to Estes Arroyo in Aztec and the variations in e.coli and phosphorus loads. For the most part, the graphs show that it is exceeding the loads at Bondad and frequently the Florida is carrying more load for e.coli and total phosphorus. A suggestion was made to Melissa that cattle operations might be a major contributor. The data showed increases in loads during major storm events. Melissa also discovered that there is more acreage of agriculture in the Florida drainage than in the rest of the Animas River Valley combined. The MSI meeting on Tuesday will be to discuss data collected and analyzed in relationship to the Animas Watershed Plan.

New Business (60 min)

VI) Summary and discussion of 2014 TU Five Rivers bug study (Buck) Buck read conclusions from the bug study. Some shifts in community composition have occurred or are occurring. 2014 data suggested taxa and EPT richness has increased. Interpreting the data is problematic, more consistent sampling is needed. Buck is going to propose to the 5 Rivers Board that they commission additional sampling again in 2016. Taxa richness was consistently higher in the fall season. The data also showed a significant increase in macrophyte, bugs and larvae on aquatic moss. The study did not show a significant deterioration of bug life in Animas.

Ann distributed a report of the River Watch nutrient data that showed a pattern of a steady increase for nitrogen between 2003 and 2013 at 32nd street. The graph for Trimble does not show the same steady increase.

Septic Systems – Rachel has been working on getting reports on the discharges from the treatment plants: Hermosa Sanitation District, City of Durango, South Durango Sanitation District.

SJWG – Dave reported on the SJWG meeting about septic systems. The NM waste program does admit E.coli can migrate with ground water in sandy soil because the filter matrix isn't there. And they admit that there is rampant illegal dumping of septage in New Mexico.

The SJWG met with the City of Farmington and San Juan County to form a committee for outreach and education of the public on the care and feeding of your septic system, what happens to the septage, and encouraging people to go to treatment plants.

Monday's meeting will be why treatment plants that discharge directly into the river are better. New Mexico NMED, City of Farmington Waste Water Treatment Plant Operator will talk about their requirements. Then they will answer the question of why the public is advised not to drink river water, but it's okay to drink treated river water.

The SJWG will be taking a tour of the Farmington Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Ann asked one of the presenters at the Septic System Forum about how Colorado compares to New Mexico. The response was that the regulations in Colorado were looser than New Mexico with respect to septic systems.

VII) Future projects/Grants: Regional Conservation Partnership Projects Grant (Ann) This a grant opportunity through the USDA. The general idea is that all work will be filtered through the NRCS office and EQIP. Part of the funding goes to the NRCS technical assistance funds.

VIII) La Plata County Water Commission (Buck) The La Plata Board of County Commissioners set up a Water Advisory commission to answer 5 questions: #1: Should La Plata County be concerned about water resources because of a: lack of water supplies, b: lack of water infrastructure, c: inefficiencies in the current water systems. #2: Concerning proof of central water systems, should La Plata County be minimally amended to conform to state statutes or amended to require more than the minimum required by state statute. #3: Should La Plata County operate water docks. #4: Should La Plata County purchase water from Animas La Plata project and how should the purchases water be used, #5 Will a county wide hydrological study tell the community something we don't already know and will it be the best use of La Plata County's limited fiscal resources. The commission has met every month for the past 15 months.

They have developed a 5 policy bulletin to answer the questions. The bulletin is available on the La Plata County website. The Commission will end in August this year. A summary of some findings included: of the approximately 8600 drinking water wells in La Plata County, approximately one third are toxic or non producing. There are many small water systems with less than 100 taps where there is no infrastructure regulations and many use irrigation pipes. Buck showed a map highlighting water critical (over appropriated) areas in La Plata County.

IX) Partner Announcements, other, etc. The State of New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission is doing a regional water plan for the San Juan Basin that will emphasize infrastructure more than water quality or quantity. The next meeting is June 3rd.

San Juan Recovery Program is having their annual meeting, Wednesday, to give updates about endangered fish in the San Juan River. Carrie will send an agenda.

Next Meetings:

June 4, 2015 Spring Forum, Durango

July 16, 2015 Ann will send out an email to poll the date that works best.