

Water Resources Coordinating Council

Thursday March 19, 2015
9:00-11:30AM

Meeting Notes

Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Northey at 9:03 AM. A total of 39 persons were in attendance. The following member agencies had representatives present:

Governor's Office, IDALS, Iowa DNR, Iowa HSEMD, ISU College of Agriculture, University of Iowa- College of Public Health, UNI College of Humanities, Arts & Sciences, IEDA, University of Iowa-IIHR, USGS Iowa Water Center, USDA-NRCS, USDA-FSA, EPA Region 7, National Weather Service, and USACE- Rock Island District.

WRCC Member Agency Updates

Iowa HSEMD: Des Moines and Burlington have been approved for the state's Flood Mitigation program. Given the amount of sales tax credit currently available, it is uncertain if any other applicants will be able to participate. HSEMD is working with those communities on planning and implementation. The agency is also in the process of submitting an application to HUD under the Disaster Resiliency Competition. The Phase I application will be submitted in April and the final application is due in December.

Iowa DNR: Adam Schneiders provided an update on progress in the point source component of the NRS.

ISU College of Agriculture: John Lawrence reported that ISU is in the process of deploying a survey to farmers on their understanding of the NRS and attitudes toward implementing practices and conservation in general. He also reported that the WRCC Measures Subcommittee will meet at 2 PM in the Wallace Building on Monday, April 13, and that speakers from Maryland who have worked on the Chesapeake Bay initiative will discuss their measures with the group.

EPA Region 7: Jeff Robichaud reported that Karl Brooks, Region 7 Administrator, has been promoted to a position in EPA Headquarters in Washington DC. He also reported that the Hypoxia Task Force will meet in Columbus, OH from May 19-21.

University of Iowa, College of Public Health: No report.

FSA: No report.

UNI: No report.

USACE, Rock Island Office: Working with Des Moines and Dubuque on flood scenarios to get updated information. They are also evaluating their bridge sensors.

IEDA: Nichole Hansen reported that CDBG Water and Sewer awards will be announced later this spring, and that there will be \$6-7 million awarded to communities. More than \$20 million in requests for funding were submitted. There will also be about \$1.5 million awarded under the Community Facilities and Services program, which may include some Green Infrastructure projects. The CDBG Disaster grants awarded in 2009 and 2011 are being wrapped up and closed out. Tim Whipple reported that IEDA is monitoring a bill in the Legislature that would clarify use of sales tax revenues in certain districts that may conflict with uses for flood mitigation funding that have already been pledged.

National Weather Service: Jeff Zogg reported that the week of March 23rd is Severe Weather Awareness Week, and that the statewide tornado drill will be on March 25th at 10 AM. Long-term forecasts indicate the possibility of a dry year, especially in the Des Moines river basin and in the northern part of the state.

University of Iowa-IIHR: Larry Weber reported that IIHR is collaborating with other international researchers on hydrology, participating in a case study in Denmark.

USGS-Iowa Water Science Center: Kevin Richards provided information to the Council on upcoming stakeholder meetings, and an update on the status of water quality monitoring sensors USGS has in Iowa. There are 14 sites total that are currently monitoring or capable of monitoring total N. USGS is also participating in a study of turbidity and TSS on the Missouri River near Nebraska City.

USDA-NRCS: Marty Adkins reported that the state and national CIG application cycles are open, and the state CIG requests are due May 15. The State Technical Committee has recommended participation by sites in Buena Vista County in a reformed version of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI). At the field level, a priority sign-up for conservation planning is underway, and RCPP projects funded earlier in 2015 are finalizing development of contracts and work plans.

Nutrient Load Estimating Workgroup Update

Roger Bruner, Iowa DNR, provided an update on the work of the Nutrient Load Estimating workgroup and on the status of DNR's Ambient Monitoring program. The DNR-led interagency team is working on a standardized way of producing nutrient load data reports. Nutrient load flow data is available for 2012 and 2013, but the data is not widely available yet, and the 2014 numbers still need to be aggregated and reviewed for accuracy. Bruner indicated that the group is working to compile all available data in Iowa on water quality monitoring sites and distributed a template for submitting information to that effort. Some of the member agencies provided feedback on sites they are supporting, and an effort will be made to distribute the reporting template to collect information from members. It was also suggested to look at partners in WQI Demonstration projects, such as the Iowa Soybean Association, that might also be doing water quality monitoring and could add to the network of available data on water quality. A suggestion was also made to use the WRCC website to provide a link or portal to data once it is compiled.

Regional Permit 33 Update

Dan Hayes with the USACE, Rock Island District, informed the WRCC that the Regional Permit 33 update is completed and ready for the Governor to sign. The Iowa DNR will meet to forward the completed permit to the Environmental Protection Commission to be certified and signed.

Long Term Recovery Task Force Update

Pat Hall, Iowa HSEMD, gave a presentation on the completion of the state's Long-Term Recovery Task Force and the key recommendations in the Long-Term Recovery Plan. The plan will be finalized later in March and forwarded to FEMA.

WPAC Update

Jennifer Terry presented an update on WPAC activities. The WPAC held a strategic planning session on January 27 and has established three task forces to formalize priority recommendations for the WRCC. The WPAC met on March 5 and will meet again on June 12 to continue this process and to forward input on the NRS Annual Progress Report to the WRCC and IDALS.

Other Topics

Osterberg commented on the lack of an end date in the NRS given that the Hypoxia Task Force has now identified a 20 year goal. He stated that the public is not confident about whether progress is being made on nutrient reductions and suggested increased/improved monitoring. It was pointed out that while some of the strategies in other states contain some interim time-based goals, the NRS and the recommendations of the Hypoxia Task Force clearly state that implementation of the NRS is subject to availability of financial and technical resources. Larry Weber suggested additional real time monitoring would enhance public confidence and certainty. Sean McMahon (Iowa Ag Water Alliance) stated that he believed that water quality monitoring is a part of the WQI priority watershed projects, which now cover all nine priority watersheds. Jen Terry, Iowa Environmental Council, stated that there is a parallel discussion about enhanced water quality monitoring occurring in work groups of the Watershed Planning Advisory Council as well, and that the increased discussion of water quality monitoring among WRCC members is appreciated.

Brett Lorenzen indicated that Minnesota has 5, 10, and 20 year benchmarks to measure progress which he believes helps secure sustained funding. Bob Bernard requested measurable goals be reported back to the public. Larry Weber requested that a report be created which will tell us what other states are doing in terms of setting timelines and benchmarks for the nutrient reduction strategies. Secretary Northey indicated that a report (perhaps an EPA summary) would be created and a presentation of the information added to the July WRCC meeting agenda.

Public Comments

Bob Bernard, Iowa Environmental Council and Trout Unlimited, commented in support of making more water quality data available and on the need for timelines in the Iowa NRS, including measurable goals relating to reduction of nutrients.

Brett Lorenzen, Trout Unlimited, commented on the information distributed by IDALS in the state cost-share report about the percentage of funding used for terraces. He remarked that the presence of tile intakes with those projects makes nutrient runoff worse than in the absence of terrace work. Lorenzen asked if the data presented could be refined to delineate terraces with and without tile intakes, and suggested that practices within the NRS be prioritized using some sort of index, like the CPPE used in siting and funding buffers.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 AM. The next meeting will be held at 9:00 AM on Friday, May 15th.