

Water Resources Coordinating Council
Wednesday January 22, 2014 @ Greater Des Moines Partnership
Meeting Minutes

WRCC Members/Designees Present:

Bill Northey, Jim Gillespie, Jake Hansen, John Benson, John Lawrence, Scott Marler, Larry Weber, Marty Adkins, Karen Flournoy, Diane Karnish, Tim Hall, Adam Schnieders, Roger Bruner

Public Attendance:

Shawn Richmond, Jamie Benning, Matt Lechtenberg, Ben Gleason, Rick Robinson, Jeneane Moody, Jerry Neppel, Steve Falck, Jennifer Terry, John Crotty, Gary Edwards, Todd Suthpin, Linda Kinman, Greg Sindt

Welcome & Introductions: Welcome and introductions made. Meeting convened at 9:04 AM.

Nutrient Reduction Strategy Updates:

DSC (Jim and Bill)

- Discussed status of one-time funding.
- Bill discussed surveys and outreach.
- Bill discussed funding from last year and this year's budget
 - o Up to \$6.65 million for WQI from \$4.4 million
 - o Also \$1 million for Urban conservation
 - o Neither currently in Governor's budget.

Question by Weber- How are we evaluating coverage and effectiveness of cover crops?

Matt L: Discussed DSC follow-up survey to participants and specific questions included.

Jim stated that we are also working with NRCS to measure the number of acres of cover crops through CSP and private coverage (non-subsidized)

Question by Weber- Cost-share was for 1st time only? Will we be able to tell if they continued use of the crops?

Bill- Yes. We are also measuring how seeding was applied- when and how much and what kind.

- Mentioned Power Farming Show workshops Jan 28 through 30th
- Getting people together to share ideas at field days also: farmer to farmer for what works.

Point source update- DNR (Schnieders)

- Summary handout provided
- Mentioned December 3rd Meeting
- 11 permits issued with three more in process with nutrient reduction provisions
- Discussions on nutrient trading credits continue

Question from Robinson on timeline for NRS permits

A: Permits were issued Fall 2013. Two year feasibility study with weekly influent/effluent monitoring Alternatives and costs are evaluated and permit holder commits to implement reduction equipment or practice.

Question from Bill on nutrient trading.

A: Point sources are interested in trading because trades may be cheaper than installing and O & M on equipment/facility upgrades.

- Iowa League of Cities is interested in this and is looking at national trends
- Cities will have to weigh credit price vs. removal costs

ISU Update (Lawrence)

1. Nutrient Reduction Center- Website went live last week with abstracts of 10 funded projects.
 - Same site as before, just a new page:
 - <http://www.nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu/center>
 - Level funding of \$1.5M in regents and governor's budgets for next year.
 - There will be a reception on March 3rd at the IA Water Conference to review Univ. projects
2. Introduced Jamie Benning
 - She discussed ILF and cover crop working group/composition of that group. John also discussed Hypoxia TF MOU with states, EPA, and land grant universities. Adkins mentioned USDA cover crop workshop in Omaha Feb. 18-19
 - Will be webcast on Feb. 18th at 8 sites in Iowa
 - Bill- lots of interest in cover crop workshops, and also inputs (seeds, etc.) and potential for local sourcing.

WQI Update- Matt L.

- Distributed Legislative report and reviewed contents. Emphasis on outreach efforts and forthcoming RFA which will be more open-ended.

Measures Subcommittee Report- Lawrence

Distributed report (see handout)

- Important omission from January 8 meeting was discussion on a timeline. 20 years was closest consensus, but lots of discussion on what it should be. Some want it much shorter.
- Logic model approach was reviewed within the handout. Discussion of who is responsible for implementation and what partners should be engaged.
- Discussion included types of metrics available (Human, Land, Water)
- Permanent vs. Annual practices
- Point vs. Nonpoint
- Recommended technical committee to be identified to better refine measures.

Question from Weber- Who will be responsible for this? It is a lot of work.

A: Agree, and it can't be done just once. Has to be ongoing for entirety of measurement window.

Issue- Which measures are necessary? How many are needed and effective.

Weber- Asked to discuss timeline. Is the timeline discussion realistic? Thoughts from Committee?

- What are timelines to review? 10 years? 20 years? 50 years?

Responses:

- Adkins: Developing the timeline is important because funding partners will be asked for resources and need to be prepared. What kind of needs are there (monitoring? Implementation?)
- Richmond- Indicators need to be in place in order to determine a realistic timeline. Different indicators will drive different implementation schedules. Logistics of putting in projects could mean lots of time.
- Kinman: Mentioned using milestones on an annual/ bi-annual basis, regardless of timelines. Some things will happen right away, others will take longer.

- Bill: We are so early into the process that the timeline is daunting. The funding needs are so great relative to impacts that even a 20 year window represents a great challenge. Divergent opinions on interest in participation are out there.
- Bill also reviewed hypoxia TF process and funding history at the federal level. Progress is being made but funding did not come through federally. We are struggling to come up with any of it at the state level also.
- Kinman: Question- if we don't have resources, then NRS is infeasible?
- Bill- disagrees with that statement but agrees that we have to have measures to determine if it is successful. The measures subcommittee is being asked to establish what kind of measures determine success. Are we only looking at water as the ultimate measurement? If so, 20 years on that is unrealistic. The absence of a timeline does not mean we don't think we will be successful.
- Crotty: Timeframe needs to be in place to effectively budget for resources. Echoes concern about credibility of strategy without timeline, regardless of duration.
- Schnieders: Point source programs have some tracking in place. Permits have timelines incorporated. Different parts move at different speeds. Hard measures of N & P reduction vs. "making significant progress" are completely different.
 - o Gave example in Ohio of a \$26 million project on a lake. 15 years just to do that one area with comprehensive approach.
 - o Went back to Sioux City example and potential for P recovery
 - o Still trying to determine extent of the problem in Iowa- we really don't have a decent baseline to measure from.
- Adkins: Echoes that we don't know what we are looking at and where it currently sits. Thinks we need to flesh out methodology, players, and resources needed to measure success. Need to devote resources for monitoring and measurement and need to alert lawmakers that this is forthcoming and it could be a large ask. We need to lock down methodology and narrow down measurable before we ask for funding.
- Kinman: States need to approach this strategically. Include interim measurements in addition to larger overall goal.
- Bill: Committee report is good but challenge is getting measures condensed into a larger overall goal. Recommend establishment of subset of measures committee to prioritize measurements and inputs/resources needed.
- Weber: Mentioned committee report that WRCC will provide update at 3 years. This is coming up and will be a critical challenge.
- Bill: Measureables are out there. The challenge is to pick the right ones.
- Edwards: Timeline will vary by types of practices. We can't measure reductions in permanent structures until those structures are built. Thus getting them built is important. We need to make sure the timeline is reasonable.
- Schnieders: Point sources have measures through permitting. Question of how nonpoint is measuring comes up.
- Terry: Use a goal as a rallying cry and not as a barrier.
- Don't sell farmers short. They very well may take a timeline as a call to action. Messaging is important.
- Lawrence: Use this discussion as a starting point to build a progress report and to let people know what we intend to use to measure success
- Robinson: NRS mentioned timeline based on resources available. We seem to be getting away from that and not accounting for lack of resources relative to needs.
- Bill: Sensitivity toward interim progress shortcomings providing impetus for immediate regulation. If we miss a step are we immediately deemed to fail.

- Kinman: We are not discussing water utilities and impacts on them for violating drinking water standards. What about their nitrate removal costs?
 - o Bill: How do we know who is violating now and why?
 - o LK- DNR should be able to show using trend data.
 - o Bill- Lots of variation over time and by circumstance.

- Lawrence: Is WPAC willing to discuss partners and their roles in this process? Answer is yes- it will be discussed today and reported back in March.

WPAC Update

Today is first meeting since September 30th. We will discuss report to Legislature, MOU with IDALS, and more discussion on Nutrient Trading.

Part of WPAC goal is to coordinate with WRCC on suggested legislation. Would like to see next steps from WRCC on potential legislation.

Bill- Encourage WPAC to do this. Partners have additional staff to contribute.

Next meeting will be in March. Date and location to be determined.

Weber updated on IA Geological Survey Bureau and contract arrangement between DNR and Univ. of Iowa. Intent is to move data/research components into a university setting while retaining regulatory functions within DNR. Data function at U of I will be useful to WRCC and WPAC.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM.