

DRAFT Meeting Minutes - Nonpoint Source Liaison Workgroup Meeting
June 19, 2008
PA Fish and Boat Commission Headquarters

Welcome and Introduction – Glenn Rider, PA DEP Division of Watershed Protection

Glenn welcomed all to the meeting. Introductions followed. Two highlights that Glenn mentioned were:

- (1) the NPS Management Program Plan Update is currently in the final stages of approval by DEP, and
- (2) the completed FY2007 NPS Annual Report is available on the DEP website www.dep.state.pa.us under Nonpoint Source Management.

EPA Region III – Fred Suffian, Nonpoint Source Program Coordinator

Fred gave a PowerPoint presentation on EPA's Healthy Waters Initiative. There is a widening gap between TMDL/303(d) waters and de-listed waters in Region III and nationally.

The costs of Restoration are high.

Healthy Waters Initiative Goal: Accelerate the Pace of Watershed Restoration

There are 135 Watershed Plans in EPA Region III. More resources are necessary to get the job done.

How is this different in EPA? There is a re-focusing of EPA Staff. Elevate attention to both "protection" and "restoration."

Want to make this a more Data Driven process with Tangible Results.

Progress to Date: EPA and State NPS Programs are defining better measures of progress. Early Headlines include the development of Flow-related TMDLs for 'Developed' and 'Developing Lands'.

A Healthy Waters Priority Logic Model is being developed.

There are many collaborative opportunities for EPA and State NPS Programs.

West Branch Susquehanna River AMD Assessment – Tom Clark, Susquehanna River Basin Commission

See www.srbc.net for more information on SRBC Watershed Restoration efforts.

The West Branch AMD Assessment will be a roadmap for future restoration activities.

A West Branch Susquehanna River Task Force has been formed and is setting a direction for restoration activities.

A Phased Approach is being used.

Existing Water Quality data is being used. Model and Final Report are being developed.

TMDL development is being coordinated in the process.

There are some issues with collected data which presents some challenges to analyzing data.

The West Branch Remediation Strategy is divided up into distinct Management Units to help focus restoration. Acidity, Iron and Aluminum loadings are known for these Management Units.

Major Finds: 11 of the 34 Management Units (10% or 700 square miles of West Branch Susquehanna River) include approximately 80% of the AMD and AML loadings.

The West Branch Headwaters Restoration would treat the entire upper reaches of the watershed. There is a high potential to restore wild brook trout populations in many headwaters areas.

Restoration Suggestions: Include Restoration of Priority I and II Health and Safety problems; Assess areas of the watershed with no existing data.

Pa Grazing Initiative (Project Grass) – Carl Rohr, Pa DEP Division of Watershed Protection

Project Grass began in 1980 as an NRCS initiative in southwestern Pa. Since the mid-1990s the NRCS has been funding F/T Grazing Specialists serving the entire state. Both Section 319 NPS Program and DEP Growing Greener funding have supported this work statewide. The USDA-NRCS is also a strong supporter of cost-share funds through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Intensively managed pasture systems can be very successful and offer many benefits, including economic, environmental, energy-conservation, nutrient management and improved livestock health, to the farmer.

Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) – Mary Bender, State Conservation Commission

Pa.'s REAP is a state tax credit program encouraging investment in BMPs, equipment purchases, and conservation and nutrient management planning.

Up to \$150,000 in credits can be issued per agricultural operation.

Tax credits can be used for up to 15 years, or sold to another taxpayer.

Between 25% and 75% of the total project costs or purchases are eligible.

2008 is the second year for the REAP program in Pa. There was \$10 million available in 2007. See www.agriculture.state.pa.us/REAP for program details.

Riparian Forest Buffer Agreement – Derrick McDonald, Pa. DEP Division of Watershed Protection

This is a model ordinance for easements for private property owners.

DEP has worked with Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA) to develop the agreement which is available through the PALTA website <http://conserveland.org/>.

Conservation easements are being used by 46 Pa.-based Land Trusts, 55 counties with Farmland Preservation programs.

The RFB agreement is focused on the single purpose of protecting riparian buffers and protecting land along waterways.

Pilot Projects:

Little Conestoga River – Exelon Corp. and PEC, local watershed group, Lancaster County Conservancy are partners.

Perry County Conservation District – This is a countywide project with Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, Central Pa. Conservancy, focusing on several farms in the county.

Little Juniata River watershed – PFBC, Southern Alleghenies Conservancy are partners. The PFBC will hold the easements.

DEP (Growing Greener) funds cannot be used to purchase easements.

Lessons learned:

Stewardship is a big issue; Conservation and easement education are important; The process takes a lot of time; People are conservation minded in general; Small incentives can go a long way.

Bear Run Watershed Renaissance Initiative (WRI) – Tom Clark, Susquehanna River Basin Commission

Bear Run is a 20 square mile watershed in the West Branch Susquehanna River Sub-basin in Indiana County, with near pristine and AMD-impacted reaches. Native brook trout are found in some areas. There are a lot of low-BTU value coal refuse piles in the area. Some deep mine AMD discharges exist.

The Indiana County Conservation District completed a Restoration Plan in 2005.

Of the 29 documented AMD sources, 8 contribute approximately three-quarters of the AMD loading to Bear Run. The primary recommendation is to treat all 8 of the AMD and AML sources.

A Multi-phased approach has been developed; Phase I is starting now. Funding is from a Growing Greener project. Pre-construction monitoring (fish shocking) is being completed. Funding for Phase II and Phases IV through VIII will come through the Growing Greener WRI process.

Sources of funding include the County Environmental Initiative (CEI), Growing Greener and Office of Surface Mining (OSM). The project was provided funds to start a TRUST for the materials for a limestone doser.

Overall Long-Term Goals:

Restore entire Bear Run to a native brook trout fishery; Improve existing water quality; Wildlife habitat improvements to State Game Lands 174; Produce saleable iron oxide by-product at Phase I and II sites; Use this as a model for other WRI sites.

There is a 5-year timeframe to complete WRI-funded projects.

Challenges:

Question: How will the project receive their next round of Funding after they complete a Phase of the project?

One real problem is with low BTU coal refuse pile removal and the hot AMD discharges from these piles. Can refuse pile removal and transportation to Co-Gen plants be subsidized to help clean up these areas?

Wrap Up – Glenn Rider, Pa DEP

Glen asked Mike Lovegreen and John Bencoter to share their experiences. Mike traveled to Europe to share watershed restoration on the local level lessons, and John participated in the Penn State University Agriculture and Environment: Achieving Balance video production. The decision was made to hold the October 30, 2008 meeting at the same location as today's meeting. Meeting rooms have been reserved. The meeting concluded at 2p.m. and was adjourned.

Next meeting: October 30, 2008 at 10a.m., Pa. Fish and Boat Commission headquarters.