

Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force MEETING SUMMARY

Facilitated by Chris Page and Kara Whitman
November, 17, 2014 | 1:00pm-4:30pm
Spokane County Water Resource Center
1004 N. Freya Street | Spokane, WA 99202

Attendees

Voting Members and Alternatives (Denotes Voting Member)*

BiJay Adams – Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District
Dale Arnold*, Lynn Schmidt – City of Spokane
Galen Buterbaugh* – Lake Spokane Association
Doug Krapas* – Inland Empire Paper
Dave McBride* – Washington Department of Health
Mike LaScuola*, Sandy Phillips – Spokane Regional Health District
Bud Leber*, Edgar Scott – Kaiser Aluminum
Jerry White* – RiverKeeper
Dave Moss*, Rob Lindsay, Mike Hermanson, Ben Brattebo – Spokane County

Advisors

Adrian Borgias, Jim Bellaty – Washington Department of Ecology
Tom Eaton – EPA

Stakeholders, Technical Advisor, and Public

John Beacham – City of Post Falls
Dave Dilks – LimnoTech
Kris Holm – City of Coeur d'Alene (on phone)
Don Keil – City of Coeur d'Alene
Paul Klatt – JUB Engineering (on phone)
Greg Lahti – Washington Department of Transportation
Adam McClymont – Ch2m Hill
Lisa Dally Wilson – Dally Environmental

Introductions and Agenda Review

Facilitator Chris Page welcomed everyone to the meeting and went over the agenda. No changes were made to the agenda. The group reviewed the October 22, 2014 Task Force meeting summary notes.

DECISION: The October 22, 2014 meeting summary was approved: motioned and seconded; consensus achieved.

Implications of Thurston County Court Ruling

Dave Moss explained that a decision was made on the appeal of Spokane County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit (Case 11-184). The court has not made their decision public in writing. Spokane County and the Department of Ecology are evaluating the option to appeal this decision.

Question: What is the timeframe for the appeal? Answer: 30 days from a written ruling.

TTWG Report and Technical Topics

Presentation (Dave Dilks, LimnoTech) – Dave presented results of the synoptic sampling and lab analysis to date. All the synoptic data from Gravity and AXYS has been received by LimnoTech. All results are in draft form at this point. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) lab data is due back at the end of November, at which point the mass balance calculations and interpretation can be completed in time for the January Toxics Workshop.

Outliers in the data occurred at the Trent Bridge Station (411 pico-grams per liter (pg/l) value is suspect); and the Hangman Creek location (2450 pg/l value is suspect). Flow and load data will together to determine if these values are outliers or not. LimnoTech will also check these outliers against weather anomalies during the sampling period. The high volume samples have not been analyzed yet.

The discharge data is fairly consistent, with the exception of a few outliers. As expected, the concentrations of PCBs increase as the sample locations move downstream. At the first few sampling sites, there is not much difference between the sample and the blank concentrations. The data from AXYS labs is available, broken out by congener, and analysis will be ready for the workshop in January. Raw, blank-corrected data will be available in early December. This data may be made available to Dr. Lisa Rodenburg prior to the workshop.

Blank contamination includes lab blanks, trip blanks and field blanks. 10-20 pg/l and 20-30 pg/l were the most common range in lab blanks. There appears to be a slightly higher blank contamination in bottle (trip) blanks than in the lab (water) blanks. Field blank (site contamination from water and air exposure) concentrations are around 40pg/l. These blanks will be used to correct the field data based on the congener data in the blanks and the samples. The QAPP method is to compare the measured concentration of each congener between the field sample and lab blank, then any measurements less than three times the blank concentration are set to zero. Congener values near the level of the blank are excluded to reduce the likelihood of reporting false positives. However, this method does not address the issue of false negatives, and this adds a bias towards lower reported concentrations.

Logic says that “field sample minus blank” equals the environmental signal, or the actual congener concentration. This is an alternate way to calculate concentrations. This method counteracts the low reporting bias that occurs when using the previous method that excludes near-level blanks. This could have a bias towards higher reported concentrations due to the variability in blank contamination.

One alternative method of correction that LimnoTech is evaluating is to compare the measured concentration of each congener between the field blank and lab blank, then subtract the larger value from the field sample value. The Alternative method would get rid of both the biases described above. Dave explained that the QAPP method will always be reported, but the alternative method may be more appropriate for the mass balance assessment.

Example of How to Do Blank Correction

If the lab blank is 2, the field blank is 4 and the field sample is 9 then:

QAPP Method: 9 is greater than 3 times the lab blank (3x2), therefore the blank corrected value is 9

Alternative Method: 9 minus the larger of the two blanks (2, 4), therefore the blank corrected value is 5.

Both these methods should be discussed at the workshop in January.

There are three decisions to make when doing blank correction:

- Correct with field and/or lab blanks? This varies among agencies.
- Exclude samples near level of blank?
- Additional corrections? Task Force members explained there are no additional corrections to be included.

Question: Will there be a difference in conclusions based on either methods of blank correction? Answer: what is important is that whatever method is used, the rationale is clearly explained.

Question: is there any way to see if the 1668 method is doing a good job, or if it is over-predicting the values?

Answer: As the QA/QC is completed, we will get a better picture of the performance of method 1668 in this case.

Question: Why did we stop sampling at 9-Mile? Answer: This study is looking for major sources of PCBs. There are no new sources from the lake, and no major controllable sources into the lake.

Question: How are the J (estimated concentration) and the NJ (approximate concentration) values being handled? How about U and UJ (non-detected values)?

ACTION ITEM: Dave Dilks to identify how J and NJ are being handled and send information to the Task Force.
ACTION ITEM: SVL Analytical in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho is holding the archive samples. SVL will dispose of the archive samples once there is no need for samples to be re-run, while continuing to maintain the outlier samples.

January Toxics Workshop

Chris Page reviewed the different workshop sessions, changes and additions, and asked for feedback. The workshop will be held at CenterPlace (2426 N Discovery Pl. Spokane Valley, WA) on January 13th and 14th, 2015. Lunch will be provided each day of the workshop to the attendees; however attendees will need to register and identify meal specifications no later than the end of December 2014.

Dr. Lisa Rodenburg will present during lunch on the first day and will cover Positive Matrix Factorization (PMF) and fish tissue sampling from her Columbia River Study. Fish can be used to identify sources of PCBs with congener footprints.

The group discussed how to include Fish Sampling (tissue) data as a method of source identification. Tom Eaton explained that there is a new round of fish tissue data available for discussion. This data was collected in 2012, and published in 2014. There was discussion of whether this information will have an impact on the Task Force path forward. The use of fish tissue study data and its link to source identification is to be included in the "where to from here" session. Dave Serdar (EPA) should be at the meeting to aide in the fish tissue discussion.

Other minor changes to and comments regarding the Workshop include:

- Moving "blank and field blank contamination discussion" to session 3 (Mass Balance) session
- Add questions/discussion to the roundtable questions to address:
 - Based on what has been learned from the Aug. 2014 sampling event: how, when, and where should sampling be conducted to quantify stormwater loadings?
 - Desire for regional dataset that is useable and comparable across a region of multiple agencies. Coordination of regional protocols for data valuation. Delaware River Basin protocol for sampling, data valuation, storage etc.
- Increase day two of the workshop to a full day to ensure adequate discussion of all topics.
- Need to check with our traveling guests.
- Lunch with fish sampling discussion could tee up planning for a larger fish tissue session. This could include the Department of Ecology (Ecology) Environmental Assessment Program (EAP) study on carp.
- Registration date and registration link needs to be solidified (should include dietary preferences, total count of attendees for food ordering).

ACTION ITEM: Bud Leber to make final changes to the session overviews to be sent to workshop guests.
(COMPLETE)

ACTION ITEM: Chris Page to make alterations to the agenda (extending day two of the session, changes to session questions etc). (COMPLETE)

ACTION ITEM: The Task Force will plan a future session to discuss fish tissue data source identification and other related questions and EAP carp study and Little Spokane River Study. (Tentatively for spring 2015).

Task Force Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Chris Page explained the process for the revision of the MOA. The Task Force will be extending invitations for new signatories. A running track-changes version of the MOA has been posted to the Task Force website (<http://srrttf.org/?p=3725>). The Work Group will address comments and make revisions to bring back to the Task Force for approval, and then the revised MOA will be sent for legal review. Each stakeholder group was asked to identify representatives to serve on the MOA Work Group.

Process for inviting new signatories: When the MOA Work Group convenes; the Task Force could decide to invite EPA and Idaho NPDES permittees. It may not make sense to have the work group make changes first and then send those to the new participants/new signatories.

DECISION: The following members were approved by the Task Force to participate in the MOA Work Group:

Idaho Permittees:	Don Keil
Washington Permittees:	Elizabeth Schoedel
NGO/Environmental Groups:	Jerry White (touch base with Mike Petersen)
Environmental Protection Agency:	Tom Eaton
Washington Department of Ecology:	Adriane Borgias
Idaho Dep. of Environmental Quality:	Dan Redline
Health Agencies:	Mike LaScuola (touch base with Dave McBride)
Tribes:	Letters have been sent from Ecology to Spokane, Colville, Coeur d'Alene, and Spokane tribes (sent Friday 11/14/14)

The process for inviting potential new signatories is outlined in the current MOA page 11. This consists of a letter of invitation to potential new signatories and a consensus vote of existing members.

The Task Force wants to ensure that the Spokane Tribe is involved in the process early on if they wish to participate. A Gantt chart will help guide the work flow of the MOA Work Group.

Ecology has a statutory responsibility to engage the Tribes early in decisions that may involve them. Letters were sent to the four tribes. The exact wording was to invite the each Tribe to “consider formalizing its relationship with the Task Force,” and to “have a seat at the table during the focus group discussions of the proposed revisions.” That formal relationship could take any number of forms, including but not necessarily resulting in membership in the Task Force.

The Work Group activities would result in a “recommendation to the Task Force” which would be the decision point for the consensus vote.

ACTION ITEM: MOA Work Group will convene and begin the process of making revisions. In the meantime, Adriane Borgias and Maia Bellon (Ecology) will continue to reach out to the Spokane Tribe, and follow-up calls will be made to the other invited tribes.

DECISION: The MOA Work Group was formed.

ACTION ITEM: Kris Holm to look for original letter of invitation that was sent to Task Force members in 2011 and send to Chris Page. (COMPLETE)

ACTION ITEM: Ruckelshaus Center to send out a doodle poll to set some initial meetings of the MOA Work Group. (COMPLETE)

ACTION ITEM: Ruckelshaus Center to provide guidance for the MOA Work Group through a Gantt chart for the MOA Work Group.

ACTION ITEM: Kara Whitman to send a doodle poll to the MOA Work Group to schedule meetings. (COMPLETE)

ACTION ITEM: MOA Work Group to make recommendations to the Task Force on 1) changes to the MOA, 2) membership in the SRRITF and new invitees, and 3) the invitee letter.

ACTION ITEM: Ruckelshaus Center to send email to MOA signatory invitees.

Events Outreach and Funding

Updates and Announcements

Ecology EAP: Project submittals are needed soon. Past projects covered by EAP at the request of the Task Force: Carp study, groundwater study, and evaluation of the PCB listing on Little Spokane River. The Task Force should identify the types of studies needed to address data gaps and develop projects they would like to request from EAP for the next funding cycle. Projects that answer specific questions are best. Suggestions include: Data mining project; or sampling and analysis (specific or regional). Potential EAP projects can be identified and discussed at the next Technical Track Work Group meeting to be brought to the January Task Force meeting for review.

Doug Krapas gave an update on the Toxics Substances Control Act (TSCA) coalition activities. The TSCA coalition held a meeting. The coalition is an ad hoc group that is working to develop strategies to move TSCA reform along including trying to develop concepts and ideas to send to legislature.

Chris Page updated the group on the work of the Public Information Officers (PIOs). The PIOs have that each Task Force member send their top three actions in progress or completed to reduce PCBs and other toxins.

ACTION ITEM: Task Force members to send Chris Page top three actions to reduce PCBs and other toxins.

Chris Page explained that The William D. Ruckelshaus Center is conducting interviews to evaluate the process and results of the first phase of our involvement with the Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force (SRRTTF). The evaluation will be used by the Center to evaluate their impact and continue to improve their collaborative processes. The evaluation can also be used by the SRRTTF and Ruckelshaus Center project team to inform the design and implementation of upcoming work on the project. To encourage Task Force members to be as frank as possible, the interviews will be confidential. This means we will share a list of who was interviewed and key themes that emerged, but names will not be associated with any of the statements.

ACTION ITEM: Chris Page and Kara Whitman to set up and facilitate 30-minute check in calls with Task Force members in December 2014 and January 2015.

ACTION ITEM: Chris Page to add the City of Spokane's product testing and Ecology's product testing to the December Agenda. (COMPLETE)

The Next SRRTTF Task Force meeting is December 17th, 2014 at the Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District Office from 9 am to 12:30pm

The next Technical Track Work Group Meeting is December 3rd, 2014 from 10am-12pm at the Department of Ecology.
