

Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Facilitated by Chris Page & Aubri Denevan

May 28, 2014 | 9:00am – 12:30pm

Spokane County Water Resource Center

1004 N. Freya Street | Spokane, WA 99202

Attendees

Voting Members and Alternates

Tom Agnew*, BiJay Adams – Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District

Galen Buterbaugh* – Lake Spokane Association

Doug Krapas* – Inland Empire

David Moss*, Rob Lindsay – Spokane County

Bart Mihailovich* – RiverKeeper

Mike Petersen* (*on phone*) – Lands Council

Mike LaScuola*, Sandy Phillips – Spokane Regional Health District

Dale Arnold*, Lynn Schmidt, Elizabeth Schoedel, Ashley Marshall, Jeff Donovan – City of Spokane

**Denotes Voting Member*

Advisors

Jim Bellatty, Arianne Fernandez, Holly Davies (*on phone*) – WA Dept. of Ecology

Tom Eaton – EPA

Bryce Robberts, Bruce Howard - Avista

Public

John Beacham – Post Falls

Lisa Dally Wilson – Dally Environmental

Cathy Whiting (*on phone*) – LimnoTech

Kris Holm (*on phone*) – City of Coeur d'Alene

Introductions: Get Started & Review Agenda

Facilitator Chris Page (Ruckelshaus Center) welcomed everyone to the meeting. No changes were made to the agenda.

Technical Track Work Group (TTWG) Update

Dave Moss gave an update on the TTWG work. The Confidence Interval sampling has gone well. AXYS, the lab, has the samples. The second lab will analyze the conventional water quality parameters (conventionals). The TTWG requests the Task Force authorize the TTWG to finalize the lab specifications, issue the call for bids, and prepare a list of laboratories for Task Force consideration at its June meeting. There was a recommendation that the subset of the TTWG members continue working toward the lab contract to analyze the conventionals.

DECISION: The Task Force approved the TTWG sub group's contracting authority for the second lab.

The TTWG requested permission to create criteria to select the two or three top sampling contractor proposals and bring the results to the June meeting. The top firms will be asked to do a presentation. A decision will be made for the sampling contractor at the June meeting using a process similar to that used for the technical advisor.

DECISION: The Task Force authorized the TTWG to narrow down the number of sampling contractors to 2-3 and invite them to interview at the June meeting.

DECISION: The Task Force decided to move the June meeting from the 25th to the 18th.

The Administrative & Contracting Entity (ACE) will also need Task Force approval to execute a contract with the sampling contractor. That decision has been pushed to the June meeting. The Task Force will also select the second lab at the June meeting.

DECISION: The Task Force authorizes the TTWG screen lab bids, summarize them, and provide a recommendation for the second lab to analyze the conventionals.

Arianne Fernandez gave an update on the Ecology Confidence Interval sampling effort. They are now finished. She recommends in the future doing the sampling in a four-person team and potentially adding a fifth person for safety reasons. The river current was really strong, so the boat wouldn't have worked. There was also an issue with shipping internationally to Canada that delayed the lab analysis slightly. The last day they did a site in 40 minutes. The laboratory analysis could take up to six weeks. That's a fairly tight timeframe for evaluating the results and proceeding with the sampling. Those results will inform the sampling procedures in August. They only collected one 4-liter sample; the rest of the samples are 2.36 liters. (There was so much sampling going on across the state during this time that there was a temporary 2.36-liter bottle shortage.)

Continuous Low-level Aquatic Monitor (CLAM) sampler – A small work group will meet next week (June 5) to discuss that higher-volume sampling method, which can provide more reliable detection of PCBs but lacks precision (in terms of quantifying the volume of water sampled). There was a request to have LimnoTech on that call. Cathy Whiting from LimnoTech will attend that meeting.

Summary of the timeline – The plan is to issue the bid request for the conventional testing lab on May 30 and have the proposals back by June 10. Interviews and selection of the sampling contractor will occur at the June 18 Task Force meeting, with the goal of having a contract in place by June 27. The Water Resource Center is available on June 18 until 3pm that day.

Avista Presentation

Bruce Howard gave a presentation on Avista's transformer change out program. Were there any authorities outside of the Toxics Substances Control Act that require the removal of PCBs in

transformers? None that Bruce is aware of. The oil in hydropower facilities was replaced with oil that is non-detect for PCBs. Avista is testing wood poles so they can be replaced. They are removing PCB-containing transformers and coordinating with smart upgrades.

They came up with a six-year program from 2011 – 2016. The presentation (posted online) showed the number of transformers Avista plans to remove each year. It might run into 2017. Of 12,000 transformers left in 2011, to date they've removed approximately 8,000 in the Spokane River watershed. There's one transformer left (in a sub-station) that has more than 500 ppm. It is planned for change-out this summer. The new transformers have other benefits; they are more energy efficient. Transformers are all different sizes and ranges.

Questions

Q: Jim Bellatty asked if they could calculate the amount of PCBs removed.

A: Yes, they can but it's a lot of work. It will still be an estimate, but they could take that analysis from the data they have and come up with the total number of PCBs removed.

Q: What does Avista do with the contaminated transformers or the oil?

A: They either incinerate the oil or send it to a plant in Oregon to de-chlorinate the PCBs. The de-chlorination removes PCBs down to 1 ppm. Avista reports all oil spills to Ecology.

The program has cost about \$6.5 million a year (\$20 million total so far). Over the next 20 years, Avista will replace all their 1980/81 transformers as well. Most equipment is non-detects for PCBs, but Avista wants the more efficient equipment on the ground.

ACTION ITEM: Bruce Howard will look at pulling the data together to see how many PCBs have been removed to date.

An Introduction to Washington's Water Quality Assessment (WQA)

Keith Seiders gave a presentation on the WQA program. The PCB bio-concentration factor that's used for this assessment done from the 1980's testing of species. They spike the bio-organ with a known quantity of PCB in order to test the uptake of PCBs in the organism. A fish bio-concentrates PCBs when it sucks water through its gills.

The federal Clean Water Act gives states the authority to develop their own water quality standards. A lot of states do defer to EPA's criteria, but they can choose to deviate. As long as states have sound science they can adopt their own criteria.

The science has progressed, but the rules haven't yet.

Questions

Q: How often does water quality assessment occur?

A: States are required to assess their waters every two years and determine if they meet water quality standards. Ecology is in the midst of an assessment that will be submitted to EPA in 2014. (EPA called for data in 2011, any data since then will be included in the next assessment report.)

Q: Is the use of fish tissue to determine water quality impairments is a WA state or federal method?

A: The state chose to use fish tissue and EPA approved that process. Bruce believes that other states also use fish tissue but perhaps not in the same way. He's not sure which states are using fish tissue, but he knows a few are.

Q: About the human health quality equation that assumes individuals consume two quarts of drinking water per day – where did that assumption come from?

A: The origin of that was during the national toxics rule creation. Bruce recommends looking at the criteria documents linked under EPA's website.

Q: Is there any evidence of the timeline for the bioaccumulation in fish? How long before fish tissue reflects PCBs in the water body?

A: Ecology is seeing some reduction of PCBs in fish in the areas where cleanup work has already been done. Ecology is going to monitor on an 8-10 year basis. In other places where PCBs in the river are lower, they do see a lower level in the fish tissue.

City of Spokane Integrated Plan Letter of Support

At the last Task Force meeting, the City of Spokane asked if the Task Force would approve and sign a letter expressing support of the integrated plan. There was a suggestion to follow up the letter with a presentation, press release, or other higher-visibility event. Dale Arnold suggested using Maureen Feist to help with the press release in the name of the Task Force.

Tom Eaton said that EPA just got the plan and are reviewing it now. As far as they can tell, this is an innovative approach. This is more of an issue for Ecology, which didn't have discretion to fund it on the first ask. He thinks it's a good plan, but noted that it could be seen as odd to have EPA and Ecology listed on a letter to the governor and to the director of Ecology.

The city is looking for support in implementing the plan – not asking for new money, but for a partnership to explore other fiscal mechanisms (e.g. debt forgiveness). The letter is not intended to say the Task Force is supporting the funding ask but rather the plan itself. Several members would be supportive of the letter, if it said something like "we are looking for alternative support for this effort."

Q: "We are not only seeking funding for this, but also for funding for the Task Force" – would that be okay?

A: Jim said Ecology has received letters from the mayor and city council supporting the plan. He suggests taking out the financial part.

There was agreement to taking out the specific request for funding so there isn't any crossover between funding sources. Tom Eaton pointed out that financing is integral to the plan. He anticipates that EPA would work with Ecology to try to figure out how to be a partner in this. He does think that they would support that because of the potential for the plan to serve as a national model for what a city could do. To him the right balance for a Task Force letter is to support the plan and innovative funding to implement it.

Elizabeth Schoedel asked if they changed the word "commit" to "explore" would EPA be okay with that. Tom said yes.

ACTION ITEM: Change wording to "support the plan and explore" the financial partnership in the first sentence and remove the word "commit." (Complete)

ACTION ITEM: Paragraph 5 change to city of Spokane "integrated clean water plan" (Complete)

ACTION ITEM: Change the first sentence of the second paragraph to convey the planning. (Complete)

ACTION ITEM: Aubri Denevan to place the edited text on the SRRTTF letterhead. (Complete)

DECISION: Chris Page, with approval from the Ruckelshaus Center leadership, will submit this on behalf of the Task Force. (Complete)

DECISION: Send the letter to with edits made in the meeting. See the newly revised version. (Complete)

Facilitation Scope & Budget

Chris Page passed out the revised scope and budget proposed by the Ruckelshaus Center (the Center). He talked about the changes in this year's scope. The Center has started to advertise for an intern. ACE recommends the Task Force approve the Center's scope for next year including 12 Task Force meetings and 12 Work Group meetings. The overhead costs will not be waived this year. This contract will run from July 14 – July 15.

DECISION: The Task Force gave approval to ACE to move forward with the Ruckelshaus Center contract for FY 15.

Spokane River Stewardship Partners (SRSP) & Quantifying the PCBs Removal To-Date

Lisa Dally Wilson informed the group that SRSP will be pulling together their PCB removal data. Lisa asked when the Measurable Progress definition would be finalized. Jim Bellatty informed the group that this will need to be pushed back a little bit. They talked about compiling all of the efforts done to date and housing that documentation on the website. All projects can be listed on the website.

ACTION ITEM: Chris Page will touch base with Adriane about the timeline for finalizing the definition of Measurable Progress once she's back in the office. (Complete)

Funding Work Group – Dave Moss announced that the \$350K contract is in place between ACE and Ecology. A brief summary for funding: the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System entities have each contributed \$100K for administrative costs, and another \$100K is in the bank. Doug Krapas would

also like to quantify the in-kind contributions from entities on the Task Force and in the room. It will be important to have this value to leverage future funding. It was estimated that in the ballpark of \$1 million in-kind dollars to date.

Outreach Calendar – The Ruckelshaus Center intern could help with the implementation of a communication/outreach strategy. There may be a low-hanging fruit in “how to wash your paint brushes.” There are a number of summer festivals and fairs coming up that might have opportunities to inform the public.

Public Comment

No comments.

The next SRRTF Task Force meeting is June 18, 2014 at Spokane County Water Resource Center
The next Tech Track Work Group meeting is June 4, 2014 from 10am – 12pm at the Department of Ecology
