**Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force**
Facilitated by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Chris Page and Kara Whitman)
Wednesday November 29th, 2017 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District |22510 E. Mission Ave |Liberty Lake, WA
Meeting Documents: http://srrttf.org/?p=8569

**Attendees:**

*Voting Members and Alternatives (*Denotes Voting Members)*

Tom Agnew*, BiJay Adams –Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District
Chris Donnelly* (phone) –WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
Don Keil* –City of Coeur d'Alene
Doug Krapas*, David Newton (phone)– Inland Empire Paper
Mike LaScuola*, Vikki Barthels –Spokane Regional Health District
Bud Leber*, Brent Downey –Kaiser Aluminum
Rob Lindsay* –Spokane County
Dave McBride* (phone) –WA Department of Health
Cadie Olsen*, Jeff Donovan, Adrianne Pearson, Angela Tagnani –City of Spokane
Mike Petersen* –Lands Council
Jerry White* (phone) –Riverkeeper
Mike Zager –Kootenai Environmental Alliance

*Advisors*

Karin Baldwin, Adriane Borgias, Brandee Era-Miller (phone), Bill Fees, Jim Ross, Debbie Seargent, (phone), Jeremy Schmidt –WA Department of Ecology (Ecology)
Lucy Edmondson (phone), Brian Nickel (phone) –Environmental Protection Agency

*Interested Parties*

John Beacham, Monica Ott –City of Post Falls
Kevin Booth –Avista
Lisa Dally Wilson –Dally Environmental
Dave Dilks (phone) –LimnoTech
Ken Windram –Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board

**Introductions and Agenda Review:**
After a round of introductions, no changes were made to the agenda. The Task Force discussed protocol for meeting seating arrangements. The group agreed to the following seating protocol: each Task Force roster entity has a seat at the table, once all rosterees have seats, then it is ok for 2nd/3rd from roster organization to join the table. Guest participants on the agenda are welcome at the table.

**Meeting notes review:**
October 25, 2017 notes: correct spelling of Tekoa (not Tekoe); add the project management sheet as appendix.
November 8, 2017 note edits: (Page two) rephrase a sentence; change affiliation for Brent Downey to Kaiser; correct acronym (HWTRP – Hazardous Waste Toxics Reduction Program).

**DECISION:** The October 25th, 2017 Task Force meeting notes were approved with the minor spelling edit.

**ACTION ITEM:** Kara Whitman to edit and post 10/25/17 meeting notes to Task Force website. (COMPLETE)

**DECISION:** The Task Force approved 11/8/17 TTWG/SRRTTF meeting notes with edits discussed at the meeting.

**ACTION ITEM:** Kara Whitman to edit and post 11/8/17 meeting notes to Task Force website. (COMPLETE)

**Task Force Collaboration:**
Chris Page highlighted selected Task Force ground rules (from the Memorandum of Agreement) focusing on transparency, public communication, and trust. He recapped recent incidents perceived as violating the MOA ground rule asking members to refrain from publicly characterizing the positions of other Task Force members.

*NOTE: The following discussion points reflect statements and opinions (around Task Force collaboration and MOA ground rules) of individuals, not of the entire Task Force.*

- Entities need to be able to operate within their own missions. Tangential issues are not necessarily directly connected to the Task Force mission.
- Collaboration is challenging. Entities don't always check in with each other when they do things—we need to mentally check-in to make sure actions do not impact the overall collaboration.
- Recent articles in the papers are silent on processes such as the Task Force, and other positive things happening in the community (upgrades to treatment facilities, education and outreach activities). These articles focused on the dischargers as the problem, and not on the larger issue and other positive things happening in the community. Would like to see more of a balance with public outreach.
- Need to promote respect and trust. Many collaborative process clarify that you can't "play it both ways" by asking participants to commit to the stipulation that if you choose to join a collaborative process that you will not engage in litigation. It's ok to disagree, but litigation is different than disagreement.
- It feels like some folks are not speaking up and sharing their thoughts. There are a lot of things going on: uncertainty, fear, etc. We need to explore the disagreement. Moving forward, this group needs to be comfortable with disagreement and be willing to share what's behind the disagreements.
- The Task Force was born out of the chaos of the Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process. Entities spent 15+ years getting through that, involved in litigation. Collectively, they got together to find a better way to move forward and get quicker environmental improvement. We could be on a knife edge of tipping back towards the litigation side, rather than this process that is getting to environmental improvement faster.
- Idea: Incorporate a "dirty laundry" segment into future meetings, where "clarification of positions" can be safely discussed to avoid the tipping point.
- We should all consider the spirit of collaboration and the MOA when disseminating public information. We are now at the point where we have to recognize the value of collaboration.
- We need to maintain a spirit of collaboration. It does not make sense to spend time on processes that don't lead to environmental improvement. This group does not operate in a vacuum; there is currently litigation over whether a TMDL should be done in this watershed for PCBs. Litigation can be brought by others not on the Task Force. The best defense against this is to work together the best way possible.
- Question: How do we hold each other accountable to upholding the MOA groundrules? What if members of the Task Force choose not to follow the rules of behavior? What constitutes a violation of the MOA?
- Whole process: As long as the Task Force is moving forward and seeing Measurable Progress (MP), then Ecology will support the effort; if MP no longer happens, Ecology would move towards a TMDL. The group interplay relies on the consensus process, we'll do it until we get it done, but no specific sanctions.
- It is important to recognize that entities may have different opinions and should be able to make their opinion known to the public. There should be an opportunity to ask for clarification on things that happen outside Task Force meetings (that may impact collaboration) and discuss them in a safe space.
- What's the recourse for violating the MOA? The Task Force cannot end as long as dischargers are required to participate in it. Apparent or perceived violations could be brought to the group to address, through a respectful discussion. Then we need to take the lessons to heart and move forward.

- Two essential elements are trust and compromise. Maintain trust in each other that we want the same goal, and work to understand each other's perspectives.
- If a message we are about to send out might raise the suspicions of other Task Force members: for common courtesy, a heads-up would be appropriate. We need open conversation that avoids conflict in the end.
- Politicization should be avoided at all costs. We should recognize that we cannot control what elected officials may say.
- It is often difficult individually, as we do our jobs, to discern every communication that may cause concern with other Task Force members. There is a fine line between something that is politicized versus something that is an entity's opinion.
- Entities or individuals should make clear that opinions are theirs, not necessarily the opinion of the Task Force or other individuals. They should communicate their own positions—and that there is a collaborative Task Force working on these issues. Divisive seeds are not effective as a public outreach strategy.

***Takeaways from the discussion:***

- Agenda item for future meetings: Clarify positions / air "dirty laundry".
- There will be communication between entities when something may cause discord. Participants pledge to comport themselves to build trust, compromise, and communication, using protocols from the MOA.

**Process Management: Are Any Structural Changes Needed as the Task Force Moves Forward?**
***Discussion:***

- Meeting notes and other materials should be reviewed in advance of the meeting to avoid the usage of valuable meeting time.
- Request: End meeting at noon instead of 12:30.
- Fewer agenda items and more discussion. Structure the meetings to talk through more details from presentations, to have in-depth conversations about implications. Maybe we should have fewer, longer Task Force meetings to work through what information means for the Spokane River system.
- Longer-range planning on what pieces of work need to be done, and what each meeting is designed to accomplish. Make sure the right people are at each meeting.
- Design the meetings to follow a logical flow, with goal- and outcome-driven planning. Purpose for every agenda item, with each having a defined outcome that feeds into the benefit of the Task Force.
- Experts on tap and not on top. This process has elevated the common understanding and insight, created a better, more realistic, more acceptable understanding of what we are doing and where we are headed.
- How do we maintain trust and communication if we have fewer meetings?
- The MOA doctrine gives the structure of the Task Force. The Task Force goal in the MOA was to develop the Comp Plan. Now that this is complete, the implementation phase of execution is not defined in the MOA. This document may need to be updated or amended to address where the Task Force stands today.

**ACTION ITEM:** All Task Force members to re-read the MOA and work to identify items on how to execute the Comp Plan, e.g. Task Force functions and marching orders to define the process.

***Process Changes:***

- Start Task Force meetings at 8:30 am and end at or before noon.
- Structure and align agendas with 1-year, 6-month, 3-month goals. Agenda items to have a specific purpose and outcome.
- Presentations at meetings to be vetted for their direct or indirect usefulness for advancing the goals of the Task Force and will be followed by enough time to work through takeaways for the Spokane River system.

- Formalize the Task Force current focus with an "Implement the Comprehensive Plan" MOA addendum. Suggestion: perhaps the TTWG can take on this work?

**Technical Topics:**
***ACE Report:***
- Uncommitted funds: $46,504
- Committed Funds: $141, 217
- Update: Spokane River Stewardship Partners (SRSP) funding ($125K for 7/1/17-6/30/18) will be added.

**ACE Ecology Contract:**
The TTWG discussed contract and project management details at the 11/8/17 joint TTWG/SRRTTF meeting. The contract is undergoing Ecology fiscal review. The Task Force/ACE will need a contract with LimnoTech for some Tasks. ACE will need to work with Dave Dilks on how to structure that contract, since most specific Task scopes have yet to be defined.

**Projects and Project Management for all Tasks (1-6):**
Each project lead should begin developing a plan for timing, approach, goals, and any other important elements of the project scope to bring to the Task Force. Then the Task Force can give input for each to have a specific scope of work developed, and give ACE the go-ahead to move them forward. Suggestions include:
1. Project leads: get some thinking together on some timing and steps, for a January Task Force agenda item (to consider and give input).
2. Planning Calendar for each project with tasks, responsible party, anticipated completion dates, etc.
3. For consistency going forward, consider using a Gant chart.

**ACTION ITEM:** Spokane Regional Health District to provide a project scheduling/tracking sheet they use as a good template for Task Force project tracking. (COMPLETE)

**ACTION ITEM:** Karin Baldwin to send out the budget and timeline from the contract to the Ruckelshaus Center for dissemination to the Task Force to assist in project lead development of scopes of work. (COMPLETE)

**Comments on Ecology Environmental Assessment Program (EAP) Tribal Boundary Study**
Brandee Era-Miller has received comments from a few entities, addressed these comments, and added clarification to the report in places. The study objective was to establish a monitoring station at the Spokane Tribal boundary, characterize toxics in surface water and suspended sediment during three hydrologic regimes, and to collect data to support procedures for using a Continuous Low-Level Aquatic Monitoring (CLAM) device.
- **Q.** Will the summary recommendation be, use the CLAM? **A**. No definitive conclusion on this; it's open for discussion. Brandee does recommend that if CLAM is used, it should be with a stainless-steel disk since that greatly reduces blank contamination.

The suspended sediment trap data will go into Ecology's Environmental Information Management system (EIM); two-liter sample data (with a different censoring process, 3x rule), CLAM, and other data will not go into EIM because they lack a data reduction standard. Brandee is hoping to finalize the report by the end of December.

**ACTION ITEM:** Brandee will send Kara Whitman the revised report as soon as possible, with the stipulation to have comments back a week later. (COMPLETE)

**Comprehensive Plan Annual Implementation Review Summary**
Chris Page reviewed the emerging draft document. For appendices, Limnotech wrote a summary of technical activities and Kara Whitman compiled a list of action items and consensus decisions. One approach would be for Task Force member entities to summarize activities related to implementing the Comprehensive (Comp) Plan.

i.e. control actions already being done (inputs, outputs, outcomes) by December 15th, 2017. After discussion, the Task Force agreed to keep it simple and focus on milestones listed in the Comp Plan for 2017, limiting the Implementation Review Summary to Table 11 from the Comp Plan (on page 67): is the Task Force accomplishing what they set out to do in 2017? If not, why not and what needs to be done?

**ACTION ITEM:** Ruckelshaus Center to track progress on Comp Plan Milestones (Table 11) for the Implementation Review Summary. (In progress, to be completed by January of 2018.)

**Toxics Management Plans/Best Management Practices (BMP) Effectiveness**
Dischargers are required to share these with the Task Force for review and comment. Each permittee has a different timeline to submit its annual plan. Task Force members can spend time reviewing these if they feel it will help move the Task Force forward.

**ACTION ITEM:** Ruckelshaus Center to provide links on the Task Force website to the Task Force member (permittee)Toxic Management Plans (TMPs) if, and when they are available. (Ongoing)

**Update from Lands Council on Fungi Project**
Mike Petersen said a few years ago he ran across research indicating that different kinds of forest mushrooms could break down PCBs. This inspired a study the Lands Council recently completed (Phase 1 of 2) in partnership with the City of Spokane. At a sterile lab on Ash street they looked at eight varieties of fungi using the study questions:

- Would the different fungus varieties grow in vactor waste?
- If so, how effectively could each variety break down PCBs in vactor waste?

The study found fairly low PCBs in the vactor waste. The fungi grew in the vactor waste in all different PCB concentrations. Tests showed the fungi causing a significant decrease in some congeners, including some of the least biodegradable congeners; however, they also saw an increase in others. The overall total PCB did not change, but the congeners did change.

Phase 2 of the study will involve the best performing species of fungi (oyster mushrooms), using a higher-PCB-concentration media (potentially soil form Kaiser) to again test the fungi's growth and effect on PCBs. They will collaborate with North Central High School senior projects and use a state-of-the-art lab and a bioremediation expert from Fulcrum working with high school students to guide them through the experiment. The estimated cost for Phase 2 is about $15,000 for the next year.

Concurrently, the Lands Council experimented with a storm garden on Garland Street where they added biochar in one cell, leaving the other one as is. The stormwater that flowed through the biochar showed a reduction in total PCBs by 58%. Could there be a synergy between capturing PCBs and breaking them down? Is there a potential to integrate both biochar and fungi into storm gardens, brownfields, etc.?

***Questions/Comments:***

- **Q.** What happens to the biochar after contamination with PCBs? **A.** The biochar stays in the storm gardens. It would need to filter a LOT of water to reach PCB cleanup levels under Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA).
- **Q.** It sounds like the fungi don't consume PCBs, but dechlorinate them; has other research found this? **A.** The research showed that it did break down PCBs almost completely, part that via dechlorination. The timeline of this study was shorter, so it is possible that it would break down enough to become a congener that is not as bioaccumulative. Also, research says that some congeners may have a lower health impact.
- **Q.** Could the Task Force consider funding this project? **A.** Yes, the Task Force expressed general agreement that this would be a good use of Task Force funds.

**ACTION ITEM:** Mike Petersen to pull the scope of work together and a budget for Phase 2 of the fungi work to be discussed and/or decided upon for funding at the January 2018 Task Force meeting.

**Spokane River Forum** (updates, discussion):

- Encouraged by the number of folks in attendance and the range of interests represented. The conference is gaining more traction.
- Education and Outreach session: many entities working on toxics outreach. How do we effectively communicate as a region? This discussion will continue.
- "Philosophy of Disagreement" speaker (Dr. Baumgartner) gave a framework for decisions and disagreement.
- The Task Force is not one voice all the time, so presenting as a collective would be difficult unless it is about specific work being done by the Task Force. *(NOTE: next Forum is 18 months out.)*

**EPA Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant–Regional approach?** Proposals are due in early February. They appear to be looking for proposals for restoration/land acquisition activities, so this grant may not suit the full Task Force, but perhaps for an individual entity.

**Announcements, "housekeeping or Future agenda items.**
Kara Whitman relayed interest among undergraduates at Washington State University in research projects to benefit the Task Force. She asked for project ideas from the Task Force; one credit would involve about 45 hours of work, or two credits about 90 hours. The Task Force could also consider an intern option /6-9-month intern program. Also consider Master or PhD projects (at WSU or the Universities of Washington and Idaho).

***Undergrad research project ideas:***

- PCBs in blood serum/Bioaccumulation – congener level data exists. Summarize the data by age distribution, numbers, geography, etc. *(see presentation by Richard Grace of AXYS Labs at SRRTTF Workshop)*.
- Fish tissue PCB analysis from Puget Sound
- Review prior technical workshop notes for questions asked that did not get pursued.
- Regional comparative analysis of National Data on PCBs, a data compilation (this would need a specific research/study question, as there is lots of data out there).
- Cost-benefit analysis of Task Force members spending on PCB reduction ($ per gram removed) – research where dollars can be best spent removing what's left. PCBs = among the most expensive elements to treat (about number three overall). This might help mobilize changes to the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).
- Wastewater treatment technology carbon footprint (also a cost benefit issue). This technology uses lots of energy. The City is working Eastern Washington University and Gonzaga to capture some information on greenhouse gas emissions.
- How much is still in use? Buy back? Enclosed uses of PCBs are still allowed. The Comp Plan had an inventory of estimates (not exhaustive).
- Next level of treatment, how effective are they (all other compounds)?
- Other PCB efforts around the nation: what is being done, what is effective (or not)? Dave Dilks could provide direction on where to look (not necessarily for an undergrad or grad to take on, but of interest).

***WA State Academy of Sciences*** could provide independent science review, with a specific statement of task.

***Reminder*** – no Task Force meeting in December 2017

**No Public Comment**

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The next Full Task Force meeting 1/24/18 from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm at the Spokane County Water Resource Center
The next Technical Track Work Group meeting 1/3/18 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Department of Ecology in Spokane