# Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force

 Quarterly Report 22: (10/1/17 – 12/31/17)

**Project Staff:** Chris Page, Facilitator; Kara Whitman, Project Coordinator; Michael Kern, Strategic Advisor; Cheryl Rajcich, Operations Manager

**Project Purpose:** The Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force (SRRTTF) is a collaborative group of governmental agencies, private industries, environmental organizations, and interested parties attempting an innovative approach to the reduction of PCBs within the Spokane River.

**Q18 Meeting Schedule:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | October |  | November |  | December |
| **Task Force Meetings** | **2017** | TT | EO | TF |  | TT | EO | TF |  | No meetings were held in December |
| 4 | 4 | 25 |  | 8 | 8 | 29 |  |
| **Chris Page, Facilitator** | 1 |  | 1 |  | 1 |  | 1 |  |
| **Kara Whitman, Coordinator** | 1 | 1 | 1 |  | 1 |  | 1 |  |

*TT: Technical Track Work Group*

*TF: Task Force*

*EO: Education and Outreach Work Group*

**Project highlights:**

* **Meetings:** Facilitator Chris Page developed meeting agendas for four meetings including two Task Force (TF) meetings and two Technical Track Work Group (TTWG) meetings. Chris facilitated 4 meetings. Kara also developed the agenda for two Education and Outreach Work Group (EO) meetings, facilitating one of them. Kara drafted and distributed announcements, materials, and summaries for each meeting and for general Task Force communications. Chris and Kara also helped manage communications at the meetings including conference phones, presentations, and the use of webinars. 16 decisions/action items in October 2017 and 11 decisions/action items in November 2017 (not meetings in December).
* **Website Management:** Kara managed and updated the web page on behalf of the Task Force for all meetings facilitated by the Ruckelshaus Center. This included posting meeting announcements, materials and supporting documents, and meeting summaries. 15 announcements were distributed via the Task Force website and Constant Contact during this quarter. Kara also scheduled all TTWG and TF meeting locations and times for 2018 year and sent out outlook meeting invites to all regular attendees of the meetings.
* **Technical Advisor:** The Task Force worked with the Technical Advisor (LimnoTech) and other technical staff (Department of Ecology Environmental Assessment Program staff, representatives from Task Force entities, and TTWG Chair Bud Leber) to assist in Task Force understanding of technical issues, to ensure adequate vetting of presentations and reports before meetings, and to enable the TTWG to discuss and recommend next steps on technical issues to the full SRRTTF for decisions and actions.
* **SRRTTF Comprehensive Plan:** The Center provided communication assistance to, and quarterly check-ins with the multiple working groups of the Task Force related to the Comp Plan.
* **Implementation Review Summary:** The Center began the development of the draft Annual Implementation Review Summary (IRS) as stated in the Comprehensive Action Plan. This included requesting information from the Technical Advisor, each small work group, and from individual entities. The Center compiled a list of action items, decisions, and accomplishments made throughout 2017 for inclusion as an appendix to the IRS. The document is still in development, set to be decided upon at the January 2018 Task Force meeting.
* **Outreach:** The Center also continued to facilitate the Task Force Education and Outreach workgroup, which continued to develop the outreach website. The Task Force posters were completely revised and printed for display at the November 2017 Spokane River Forum.
* **Spokane River Forum:** Kara Whitman attended the “Our Gem” Conference and the Spokane River Forum. Kara printed the revised Outreach Posters and displayed them at the conference. Kara moderated a session on a technical presentation by Ecology’s Environmental Assessment Program titled “Spokane River Toxics Monitoring Results” with speakers Brandee Era Miller and Siana Wong. Kara also participated in the panel discussion on “Creating a Vision for Toxics Reduction with Public Outreach” with Andy Dunau, Mike LaScuola, Tonilee Hanson, and Rick Barlow.
* **Independent Scientific Review and University Resources:**
	+ Chris Page continued to work on connecting the Task Force the director of a joint Washington State University / University of Idaho consortium of faculty and graduate researchers (the Center for Environmental Research, Education, and Outreach), along with a University of Washington professor, to see if the Task Force might potentially utilize academic expertise in the form of an independent science panel to provide peer review, applied research, and other impartial vetting of Task Force science.
	+ Chris Page connected with Donna Reardon of the WA State Academy of Sciences who could provide independent science review, with a specific statement of task. The WA Academy of Sciences Scientists and engineers is organized with a purpose of bringing their knowledge to policy decisions. The academy has 270 members that mostly volunteer their time. The Academy can provide some insight and review of work the Task Force is doing.
	+ Kara Whitman oversaw undergrad student Meghan Harris in the development of two Task Force outreach videos using existing Task Force interviews and information from the approved Task Force posters. These videos will be brought to the Education and Outreach work group for further work and then to the full Task Force in early 2018.
	+ Kara Whitman has identified an undergraduate student at WSU who would like to work on a project related to the Task Force. This student will complete 1 credit of special topics during spring of 2018 on a topic chosen from a list of brainstormed topics at the November Task Force meeting.
* **Task Force Collaboration and Process:**
	+ Collaboration: Chris Page facilitated the Task Force through discussions about sustained Task Force Collaboration. Chris Page contacted many Task Force member to discuss the collaboration and the Task Force facilitation. Chris also highlighted selected Task Force ground rules (from the Memorandum of Agreement) focusing on transparency, public communication, and trust. At the November Task Force meeting, Chris facilitated the group through a discussion around the MOA Groundrules, perceptions of the violation of those rules, and sustained collaboration during the Comp Plan implementation. This is an ongoing conversation that will continue into 2018.
	+ Process: The Center facilitated the Task Force through a discussion of Task Force meeting process: The group agreed to make the following changes:
		- Start full 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.

**Upcoming Center work with Task Force members and Work Groups:**

* The Center will facilitate and coordinate meetings of the Task Force and its work groups, as well as to identify opportunities for university research and expertise to inform outreach and public education and the process of reducing toxins in the River, at least through June 30, 2018.
* The Center will continue to assist in identifying and scheduling presentations on topics of Task Force interest by the Environmental Assessment Program, Representatives from the Duwamish River PCB Cleanup, and other groups.
* The Center will facilitate the Task Force through identification and prioritization of future sampling needed to monitor the success of the Comprehensive Plan.
* The Task Force and work groups will continue to meet on a monthly basis.
* The Task Force will continue to work with the Technical Consultant on completing assigned Tasks as well as on any future work that the Task Force will complete in the implementation phase of the Comprehensive Plan.
* The Center will continue to provide support for Task Force ad-hoc work groups as they implement work plans (Comp plan work groups, education and outreach, database management, fish and hatcheries, TSCA, etc.) as needed.
* The Center will facilitate the Task Force’s process of considering the addition of new members along with agreement on any further needed changes to the group’s Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) if that becomes necessary. The Center would also assist in inviting new parties as identified by the Task Force after MOA legal review.
* The Center will continue to assist the Task Force as it documents activities and develops and implements a communication strategy.

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