

# Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force Zoom Meeting

June 23, 2021, Meeting Notes

Facilitated by White Bluffs Consulting

Meeting Documents: <http://srrttf.org/?p=11924>

## Attendees:

### *Voting Members and Alternates*

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

Brent Downey – Kaiser Aluminum

Craig Borrenpohl, Alyssa Gersdorf – City of Post Falls

Rob Lindsay, Mike Hermanson – Spokane County

Jeff Donovan, Cadie Olsen, Mike Coster – City of Spokane

Vikki Barthels – Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD)

Ken Windram – Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board

Galen Buterbaugh – Lake Spokane Association

Chelsea Updegrove – Lands Council

Dave McBride – Washington State Department of Health

Mike Anderson – City of Coeur d'Alene

### *Advisors*

Karl Rains, Adriane Borgias, Jeremy Schmidt, Cheryl Niemi, Brandee Era- Miller, Bill Fees, Diana Washington, Sandy Treccani, Brook Beeler – Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology)

Monica Ott – Avista

Brian Nickel – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

### *Interested Parties*

Dave Dilks – LimnoTech

Lisa Dally Wilson – SRSP and Dally Environmental

Ben and Lara Floyd – White Bluffs Consulting (WBC)

Dr. Lisa Rodenburg – Rutgers University

Bruce Williams – SRHD

Dave Darling – American Coatings Association

Kris Holm

**Introductions and Agenda Review:** After introductions, Ben Floyd reviewed the agenda.

**Meeting Summary Action:** The Task Force (TF) approved the May 26 meeting summary and Lara Floyd will post the final notes to the website.

**ACE Update** – Rob said the ACE board met earlier this month to discuss seeking additional funds from the SRSP to have enough money in bank to move forward with 2021-23 biennium work. It does not appear they will need additional funds from the TF or SRSP members. Jeff said things are on track. They got reimbursement from Ecology in June and should put final reimbursement for the end of State biennium costs in by mid to end of July. A few things are still outstanding, but ACE should be able to cover everything. Some of the uncommitted funds do carry forward to next biennium. ACE has until end of July to submit the final invoice.

**Data Management** – Mike H. said nothing to report just trying to fit in entering data into database received from new sampling. They are looking to make updates to the online data portal.

**PMF** – Mike said Dr. Rodenburg will present today on work completed earlier in the year. Currently working on second phase of work looking at SPMD data, biofilm data collected in 2018 and 2019 and fish tissue sampling results. She has prepared a draft report that has been sent out to PMF work group members for review and will schedule a meeting soon. They hope to bring the report to the TF at the July meeting. They will recommend to the Task Force to move forward with PMF phase 2B, which is a holistic analysis of everything done to date.

- Is the County entering data into the EIM (Environmental Information Management) with Ecology as well? Mike said no, but it is being done by LimnoTech.
- How is the traffic on the web portal? Mike did not know but will check in with Toni Taylor.

**Education and Outreach** – Chelsea U. said they are waiting for results from the media campaign and should have a report at the August TF meeting. Lands Council is finishing an interim report for national iPCB campaign.

**Fish Sampling** – Presentation later in meeting

**Funding/MOA** – Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board has signed the MOA.

**Tech Track** – Lisa said they have a small work group that has met once to discuss the Mission Reach (MR) hot spot related projects and will discuss these later in the meeting under biennial planning.

**iPCB/TSCA** – No update since Doug was not in attendance but similar activities ongoing, as discussed last month.

**Report of Fish Tissue Sampling and Artificial Bottom Fill** – Dave Dilks said two draft reports have been posted and they include information the TF has largely seen before. They are requesting comments ASAP. The fish tissue report is part of TF long term monitoring program. In artificial bottom fill PCB concentrations are elevated in the MR hotspot area. PCBs in bottom fill aren't noticeably higher than in naturally occurring sediment. Elevated PCBs in biofilm and fish are not coming from artificial bottom fill material. Dave hopes to seek approval of both reports at the next TF meeting. Provide comments to Dave by June 30.

**Comments/Questions:**

- Will future sampling for Redband Trout be continued at state line in future? Dave said probably not unless there is a significant shift in water temperatures and the new normal seems to be lack of fish up there. Concentrations are low up there and there are not significant sources upstream of state line.
- Lisa said DFW collected the fish throughout the river, and they will observe to see if there are fish there to collect in future.
- Was there just one asphalt sample taken? Yes, they found a chunk of it and decided to analyze it. Should we take a closer look at asphalt contamination? Dave said assuming

next year's water column sampling gets approved, Gravity could do some more sampling.

**Kaiser Pilot Testing Update on Reducing PCBs from Groundwater** – Brent Downey shared the presentation. The initial order 2692 was from 2005 and the first amendment happened in 2012 and then it was amended again in April 2020. PCBs were manufactured by Monsanto and used in industrial facilities like Trentwood before knowing the risks. Legacy groundwater contamination came from PCB in hydraulic oils used in casting. They are working on expanding their treatment operations.

**Comments/Questions:**

- Is there a target treatment flow rate when this is fully implemented? *Right now, our primary target is above 200 gallons/minute but as they get more information from the study being performed, they will continue to reevaluate as go forward. Kaiser can modularly expand the system without having to change footprint too much. The order states that Kaiser will implement full scale until they no longer have impacts to Spokane river. It would be capture and treatment that was leaving Kaiser site wasn't higher than what was entering Kaiser site. In quarter 4 of 2021 Brent would be available to give an update on this effort, possibly at the October TF meeting.*

**PMF Results for Municipal Treatment Processes:** Dr. Lisa Rodenburg presented her study results of PCBs sources to Wastewater Treatment Plants in the Spokane River basin. Five plants were considered (Spokane County, City of Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board and Post Falls). The data was mostly compatible and all used SPB-octyl column. She analyzed Inland Empire Paper and Liberty Lake separately and they were not included in the PMF. One thing noted is the IEP influent was very similar to Aroclor 1242 and she believes it may be coming from carbon less copy paper, but that is just a theory at this time.

**Comments/Questions:**

- What is the date range for the data used in the study? *Dr. Rodenburg said 2016-2019.*
- Karl asked about the date range of the data and specifically regarding the blank contamination issue. Since the TF started this effort, they have worked to decrease blank contamination so curious to see if we look at silicone markers over time if able to see blank contamination is going down or maybe it varies depending on lab that is used? *Dr. Rodenburg said she did not see any pronounced trend.* Karl asked about Hayden and thought it may be worthwhile to see what type of industrial facilities are in Hayden's collection area. *Dr. Rodenburg said that a lot of military installations built quickly in the 1940s and 1950s used materials that included silicone-based PCBs. Brian Nickel with EPA noted that the US Army Corps of Engineers had built a facility at the airport in 1942, which is in the Hayden service area.*
- A member asked about blank contamination regarding the labs or with equipment and the plants, but could there be silicone used somewhere in the plants? When you say blank contamination, is it all of the above? *Dr. Rodenburg said that is a good point, and you are right it can be used for many things. PCBs getting into receiving water are real*

*and not blank contamination. We don't know whether the contamination is coming from WWTP, contract lab, etc. and it is impossible to know.*

- Didn't we look at the equipment blanks vs lab blanks? *Dr. Rodenburg said she will check. Blank contamination in a lab is indicative of processes at the slab could contaminate samples whereas blank contamination for equipment blank could be both and could be introducing anything in the sampling train into the sample.*

Mike recommended we approve this report as final. It has been presented to work group, SRSP and the TF.

**ACTION: The TF approved the PMF results for Municipal Treatment Processes report.**

**SRRTF 2021 – 2023 Initial Biennium Work Plan Approval and Next Steps** – Ben shared the work plan memo that was developed by small work group leads and a few others. This was shared at the meeting last month and this updated memo is being shared today, including some new information. This would be for the first amount of biennium funding. These are the items that have been identified, scoped and budgeted. An RFP process was approved last month for the two iPCB/TSCA projects and cost estimates and scopes will be shared later in the year. The total being recommended is \$731,000.

- In the interest of transparency, we should add who were the authors and who did the primary work on creating the plan? *Yes, it was the work group leads and a few others (Doug Krapas, Karl Rains, Vikki Barthels, Mike Hermanson, Rob Lindsay, Jeff Donovan, Dave Dilks and Lisa Dally Wilson, along with Ben)*
- Karl said these are proposed activities which many have already been discussed. Ideally, we want to approve as many of these as possible since will be in first contract with Ecology.
- Ben said it leaves \$1.27 million to be allocated, but more scoping of activities will be happening and additional funding recommendations will be coming to the TF.
- Lisa said under the TTWG projects there are three line-items that say new and were discussed by the MR hotspot group that met this past month. Some are coming from the sampling results that were just received.
- Rob said one of the unfilled items is the treatability studies and Spokane County is interested in leading a work group and using their facility as a test case to conduct PCB treatability studies. They do not have a specific proposal yet but have discussed internally and are prepared to move forward. Reach out to Spokane County if anyone else is interested in participating.

Dave Dilks shared a presentation of the TTWG recommended projects.

#### **Comments/Questions:**

- With the group of projects for the Mission Reach (at bottom on last bullet), is the thought to do a single QAPP for all of those and some more detail provided for newer ones? *Dave said that is the intent and all are to be done during low flow this summer and a second QAPP would have to be done next year.* Karl said a lot has happened and going on in MR and it may be helpful to spend some money and have LimnoTech do a combo literature summary and overall strategy document that shows what's going on

and where the TF intends to go and how these studies relate to each other. Also, when talking about the MR and efforts we have already listed we still need the next step and doing confirmation sampling to really identify and confirm if there is a hotspot, so we may want to earmark some of our unallocated funds towards confirmation sampling as a placeholder for the next steps.

- Dave said the confirmation summary of what's going on in MR is an excellent idea. It will be hard to know what to allocate for next steps but leaving some money aside is a great idea.
- It was suggested to add a line of confirmation sampling of \$200,000 to the table as TBD right now. There is the ability to shift funds between tasks and could always shift funds back to other tasks later on.

Brandee talked about the PCB sniffing dog and having it look around the riverbed and MR area. In terms of timing, late August could be a good time during low flow. This is new technology, and it may or may not work. Contracting through the U of W can take some time and there is a formal way and a less formal way where their researcher just sends an invoice. Ecology is wondering about accessing the areas along the MR and getting permission from landowners. The price is about \$5,000 for three days which is an estimate and another \$2,000 to do a report. It could be as little as \$3,000 total though.

**LimnoTech, WBC and Lisa Dally Wilson Contracts:** WBC did assume some in person meetings in their budget going forward. Lisa Dally Wilson work for TTWG facilitation will still be same work she has been doing but the group is recommending it be covered by the new Ecology contract instead of by the SRSP.

- Ecology took a look at MOA and when it talks about staffing it defines it through an open and competitive process for this type of facilitation effort.
- Ben said WBC was doing Tech Track (TT) facilitation with Bud before he retired then there was a discussion of having Lisa take over facilitation and coordination. It was de-scoped from WBC and given to Lisa. Along with this recommendation, the TF will need a new TT lead with Lisa supporting them and working with Dave Dilks. WBC could put it under their scope and have Lisa as a subconsultant.
- Karl said it is about the process and Ecology suggests it stay with WBC, including the option of having Lisa work as a sub for TT facilitation, or follow the process in MOA. A work group lead has never been paid.
- Rob said ACE will do what the TF instructs them to do. He asked Ecology, is this about the process or is this about the service provider? Or both?
- Let's err on the side of good judgement and in a less cumbersome way.
- Cadie said the rules about how the City spends money are important. Are we following the City's legal practices in contracting and avoiding conflict of interest?
- Adriane said they are not questioning Lisa's abilities but from Ecology's perspective they have to ensure complete transparency. Over time the diversity of opinion on the TF has started to narrow. The process of doing an RFP could give the ability to make things more transparent. Lisa's representation of the SRSP now could be of concern with her work paid by both State and SRSP funding.

- Rob said the County supports WBC in having Lisa as a subconsultant. It seems to be the person not the process.
- Mike H. said Lisa is the reason the TT has been so effective recently.

Ben proposed continuing the discussion at the July TF meeting. Additional comments were shared:

- In the past when the TF has had discussions about consultants, they have had these discussions with the consultant not in the meeting. Ecology is looking at the long-term success of the TF and it is about process and transparency. This work is starting to be recognized state-wide as successful and a model of how we want to do things in the rest of the state.
- One of the main reasons Lisa has been involved is because the rest of us aren't. We have allowed ourselves to rely on someone else to be the coordinator of information.
- An RFP is the process that needs to be done to ensure disclosure and transparency and the best person could be Lisa.
- Ben again offered that WBC could add Lisa as a sub and there be a clear delineation between SRSP work and the TT work. Adriane disagreed with the suggestion.
- Chat: Why not go out for strong technical lead? This work will get more technical than less. The work is complex. The budget may get bigger so having someone who can grow with the position may be very important. A volunteer lead may not be the best fit for a group directing a 1.2 million budget.
- We may want to see if there are state contracting rules for the money and we don't want to do anything wrong.
- It would be good to look at the contract with ACE and clarify that. ACE may want to put up some procedures with this topic now that there is more at stake.
- Rob said the ACE bylaws are very brief on contracting. Spokane County has extensive experience with managing grants by state. An existing procedure may be sufficient.
- Mike H. asked about process going forward and what to do with TT until a decision is made? *Ben said the TF will keep on going with the TT work being led by Lisa and Dave, with Lisa's time covered by the SRSP.*

**ACTION: The TF approved the initial biennium work proposed with the addition (\$870,000) minus the contract with Lisa Dally Wilson which needs further discussion.**

**Upcoming Task Force Meeting Topics to add:**

- Add approve Dave Dilks report regarding fish tissue and artificial bottom fill sampling to July meeting.
- Add approve PMF Phase 2B data sampling report to July meeting.

**The next SRRTTF meeting will be held on July 28, 2021, at 8:30 am**