

Task Force

Interviews Summary

September 22, 2021



Background

- Check in with Task Force (TF) members on how they feel the overall process is going
- Interviews conducted in August and September
- All responded to 5 questions:
 - How effective is TF at finding and reducing PCBs?
 - Are we focused on right activities?
 - How can we make TF meetings more effective?
 - How to increase TF member participation?
 - Input on tech track facilitation and process



How effective is TF at finding and reducing PCBs?

- The TF is good at finding PCBs but not reducing them (several)
- The TF struggles with implementation, especially collective actions in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Sampling, identifying hot spots and data collection are good
- Most of our work is monitoring and the challenge is showing Measurable Progress
- The TF is still in the finding phase except for Education and Outreach which is valuable



How effective is TF at finding and reducing PCBs?

- Long-term monitoring should not be at the expense of PCB identification and reduction;
 - If constrained by money then monitoring should take a back seat
 - Need direct link to the MOA on the monitoring requirement
- A TMDL may be more effective; Should we rethink the whole TMDL process and revisit whether TMDL process might be more effective at getting goal of cleaner river?
- TF process is more effective than TMDL would be. TMDL path would likely be years of inactivity and not leading to reductions during that time.
- TF more of an active way to find and reduce PCBs



Are we focused on the right activities?

- Focus on other technology and end of pipe treatment to get results (several)
- Quit demonizing wastewater treatment and focus on how tech to improve conditions. Look at new, best available technology.
- GW sampling – look at tests coming from Kaiser and old military depot operations. Is GW standard different from surface water?
- More tours and PR activities; Education and Outreach is not getting enough focus
- Continue to look for additional opportunities for community involvement and making positive changes



Are we focused on the right activities?

- Education helps but we can't have high utility rates.
- Do more source control
- Who to ask about additional product testing for herbicides – riparian restoration in Hangman, Little Spokane (WRIAs 55/57 and 56)?
- Time to look beyond 9-Mile dam and monitor down to Little Spokane River or even into Lake Spokane? This could be the next big unknown area to understand
- Pay more attention to stormwater



Are we focused on the right activities?

- Advance Measurable Progress and align with the Comprehensive Plan.
- The data synthesis workshop was a good global check in and set stage for next steps. May be time to revisit the findings from that workshop to see if there are some ideas that we now might be able to pick up with the latest funding.
- Should be doing as much monitoring of both water column and fish tissue to 1) support progress/contradict naysayers, 2) demonstrating compliance moving into the future for dischargers.
- No solid connection made between water quality levels of PCBs and how it gets into fish. Biota and biofilm seem to be the link. Focus food web and connection to fish
- Should be at point where we are doing clean up now and setting target standards for those involved. No closer to this than when we started.



Any input or guidance on TF meetings, and how to make them more effective?

- Virtual meetings are a challenge, we need more in person or a mix of the two to reconnect (over half the participants)
- We need a clock for TF comments/discussion as we get too focused on one item at times without clear direction (several)
- Sometimes barriers are thrown up during meetings that have a chilling effect (several)
- Keep work group updates brief and leads share upcoming meeting dates and topics
- Increase overall TF membership and diversify representation. New ideas/energy could help increase participation from existing members.



Any input or guidance on TF meetings, and how to make them more effective?

- Longer meetings should be in person
- There is too much time allowed for some topics
- Give non-voting members a time for their input. Industry folks can take us off course on occasion/reduce meeting distractions.
- WG updates – one slide to cover what they are talking about. Show the metrics/background info.
- Provide time for non-voting members to give input.



How to increase TF member participation

- At regular TF meetings people aren't as free to provide their perspectives/state opinions
- Sometimes people are afraid to state opinions for fear of it being used against them
- Too many small work groups/don't have separate work group meetings; keep at TF level
- It is difficult to have time with full time job, plus read and comment on documents or lead a work group
- People participate based on the value they get, and most do because they have to



How to increase TF member participation

- Have two people lead the work groups or someone else take notes
- Everyone needs to participate somehow
- Need some new work focused on reducing PCBs
- Maybe more people would get engaged in technology review.



How to increase TF member participation in TF meetings and in small work group activities

- Some kind of focused membership attempt that would target tribes and environmental groups. Other Lake associations or others in ID. League of Women Voters? Adding pigment association to TF also.
- Organizations should be able to cover both policy/strategy/resources and tracking and also participating in the technical details.
- Ecology needs to have a little more buy-in to TF and help with goals. Ecology could reach out to the NGOs and invite their participation



Thoughts on Tech Track facilitation and process

- Lisa is doing a good job and we need to keep things as they are (almost everyone)
- Bulk of work really is the Tech Track. Should we move discussions back into the main meetings and make less meetings? More streamlined and efficient process?
- ACE – consider decision process for addressing COI risk/basic business procedures. Important to protect the integrity of the funding and the process