

Texas Watershed Coordinators Meeting /
Watershed Planning Short Course
Planning Team Meeting
August 20, 2007
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees:

Beverly Allen – NETMWD	Brian Koch – TSSWCB
Jacob Daniel Apodaca – LCRA	Brad Lamb – EPA
Jenna Barrett – BRA	Stephen Lusk – SARA
Matt Berg – TCE	Mark McFarland – TCE
Robin Berry – LCRA	Susan Meckel – LCRA
Jay Bragg – BRA	Megan Meier – TWRI
Pamela Casebolt – TSSWCB	Eric Mendelman – River Systems Institute
Anju Chalise – TCEQ	Theresa Murray – LCRA
Om Chawla – H-GAC	Jennifer Peterson – TCE
Laurie Curra – TCEQ	Alicia Reinmund – LCRA
Laura Delagarza – TWRI	Randall Rush – EPA
Jennifer Delk – TCEQ	Bud Solmonsson – TAMU
Nikki Dictson – TCE	Mel Vargas – Parsons
Mary Wright Eyster – TCEQ	Cecilia Wagner – TWRI
Lucas Gregory – TWRI	Kevin Wagner – TWRI
Will Hatler – TCE	Clint Wolfe – TAES
Cory Horan – TCEQ	Aaron Wendt – TSSWCB
Ann Kenimer – TAMU	

Purpose of Meeting:

- Discuss Ongoing And Completed Watershed Planning Efforts
- Provide Input On Watershed Planning Short Course
- Review Watershed Steward Program
- Discuss Current Issues With Watershed Planning Efforts

TCEQ Watershed Protection Plans

- Upper San Antonio Steve Lusk, SARA
 - WPP evolved from BMP construction project
 - Bacteria impairment
 - Public Participation consisted of:
 - 3 public meetings over 8 months
 - 1200 invitations sent out
 - 40-45 people attended each meeting
 - Had large maps to identify sources
 - Few of participants had watershed planning knowledge prior to participation
 - Formed River Oversight Committee – largest stakeholder was BRWM

- BRWM (Bexar Regional Watershed Management) represents County Commissioners, City Council, SARA and suburb officials
 - The Water Quality Focus Group of the committee put together the plan through monthly meetings
 - TCEQ approved the WPP in January 2007
 - Created table to organize pollution sources, how to manage, estimated load reduction, technical/financial assistance needed, etc.
 - Developing the timeline was difficult with getting the group to commit being the most difficult part
 - Zoo discharge was a major source; however, NPS runoff was largest source
 - \$1 million committed for UV treatment of zoo discharge; however, permitting process has slowed implementation
 - Main issues SARA had to deal with are (1) the area is completely built out and no room for big projects, (2) lack of data to pinpoint sources, and (3) dealing with stormwater tunnel under city.
 - Having BRWM and agreement between the city of San Antonio and Bexar County supports watershed efforts and allowed completion of the WPP so quickly (17 mos)
 - A big obstacle SARA had to overcome was getting stakeholders together. Initially there was some reluctance from cities and county. If cities wouldn't have agreed to participate, then it would've been impossible to move forward.
 - The Interlocal Agreement used would be helpful for other groups.
 - Strategy for NPS Issues = New power washers on river walk prevent runoff to river; street sweeping; scooping poop; etc.
 - Trying to monitor as they implement different components to determine the effect of each component. Hopefully won't have to implement all components to reach water quality goals, because full implementation would cost \$70 million.
 - ~\$2 million currently committed to implementation
- Arroyo ColoradoLaura Delagarza, TWRI
 - WPP evolved from TMDL
 - Stakeholder group and Ground Rules originated with TMDL efforts.
 - Initial group was not "local" though, so key local members were added.
 - 5 major work groups were assembled. These groups developed restoration strategies.
 - Ag = voluntary implementation of BMPs through TSSWCB & NRCS
 - WWTP = meetings with city managers and public works directors (one-on-one) resulted in cities agreeing to stricter permit limits
 - O&E = consultants conducted survey, developed strategy, and created brand
 - Wetlands = top strategy is developing individual and regional wetlands; consultants developed this component
 - Load reductions developed by Roger Miranda (TCEQ) with data from TMDL study (HSPF model of 14 subbasins in watershed). Graphs developed by Allan Plummer, Assoc. show where efforts should be concentrated
 - Ag reductions estimated by SWAT model
 - Ag and WWTPs were biggest issues
 - Urban growth and assoc. NPS are growing issues
 - Didn't have good data on urban runoff

- Reduction for Ag, WWTPs, and Regional wetlands were all that was used to calculate reductions
- Challenges:
 - People didn't believe it can be done
 - Funding = low per capita income & reluctance to raise taxes
 - Getting people to think outside the box
 - Making the plan the Communities' Plan
 - Giving all community leaders the opportunity for input/signoff
 - Things are changing = must have adaptive management
 - Issues with lack of data to determine loading and load reductions
 - DATA IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHERE TO CONCENTRATE EFFORTS
- Training should stress:
 - "Insight training" – everyone has different ways of doing things
 - Know how things work in your watershed

TSSWCB Watershed Protection Plans

- Leon River and Lake Granger..... Jay Bragg, BRA
 - In addition to Leon & Granger, BRA has TCEQ funded WPP on Granbury
 - Leon = focus of this presentation
 - TCEQ has ongoing TMDL that stakeholders were skeptical of
 - Stakeholders asked BRA to develop WPP
 - BRA received grant from TSSWCB and contracted Parsons
 - Stakeholders defined as affected persons; universities & agencies have advisory role
 - BRA meeting one-on-one with key stakeholders for input before conducting larger public meetings
 - Education is needed first
 - WPP being done in place of TMDL
 - TMDL study is being used to develop WPP however
 - Recommendations by stakeholders (10 landowners) – address illegal dumping, feral hogs, bird roosting under bridges, range and pasture management (overgrazing, alternative water, etc), dairies, septic systems, and provide education for absentee landowners
 - Important to talk to key stakeholders prior to stakeholder meetings
 - Stakeholder process = using more informal process instead of formal voting body
 - Using consensus building
 - Have an advisory council = creates more buy-in
 - Load reductions for TMDL used HSPF = BRA will try to use this model to evaluate implementation options
 - Challenges include:
 - "Nay Sayers" who don't think they're part of the problem and want more data
 - Keeping costs down (many impaired waters to address in state);

- Small cities (<30,000) – how to handle infrastructure improvement. This is a national problem. A USDA-RD Rural Community Assistance program may be able to help provide funding for waste water needs.
- Plum Creek..... Nikki Dictson, TCE
 - Plum Creek selected by Wharton Regional WCSC
 - Met with local, county and state officials to identify the influentials in the watershed
 - Conducted a watershed tour
 - Sent out 700 mail outs
 - News Releases in local papers – local papers deemed the project “news-worthy” for the first 2-3 articles. After that, had to pay for meeting announcements.
 - Put together a website
 - Held public meetings; gave survey
 - Formed steering committee and work groups based on survey results
 - Committee composed of 27 local residents with agencies serving on technical advisory group
 - Took steering committee on watershed tour
 - Provided presentations on issues to educate them and familiarize them with the watershed so that they could make educated decisions
 - Assessment tools used:
 - LDC to evaluate load reductions
 - SELECT used to identify sub-watershed loadings
 - SWAT planned to be done later
 - Getting data on wildlife numbers & septic systems is difficult
 - Restoration measures development
 - Examples of other WPPs provided to Partnership
 - Walked group through model results & data
 - BMPs selected by work groups
 - Prioritized implementation by sub-watershed and proximity to creek
 - Challenges:
 - Data gaps (new landuse, population data, wildlife, livestock, septic, BMP efficiencies, lack of electronic data in counties)
 - Specifics on BMP implementation (locations & numbers needed)
 - The watershed short course should include:
 - Resources available and other WPP examples
 - Sources of data
 - Options for assessment and modeling
 - Stakeholder facilitation & conflict resolution
 - Big question that should be answered is how much detail is needed to get the blessing of the agencies and stakeholders both of WPPs.

Third Party Watershed Protection Plans

- North Central Texas Water Quality Project.....Clint Wolfe, TAES
 - Started in 2003 as a cooperative project between EPA & NRCS

- Were initially going to do plans for 1 lake per year
- Now in 4th year and the 1st one is just now done
- Plenty of data available
 - Land use, soil type, WWTP discharges, and fertilizer use
 - Used for modeling
- Working with sediment and nutrients (high Chlorophyll *a* concentration)
- Stakeholder Approach:
 - Informal meetings were held until comfort level with data achieved
 - Larger steering committee met once comfortable with info and project was far enough along to have info to present to committee
 - Steering committee and work groups formed
- Working with Vision North Texas to assess where urban growth will occur
- Met with small groups to get assumptions used in model
- Loading assessed by landuse and subwatershed
- Evaluating loading reductions associated with WWTP upgrades
- Challenges:
 - Watershed residents don't drink the water
 - Rapid development
 - Much of watershed under county's jurisdiction thus no zoning
 - Lack of info on BMP effectiveness
 - Getting models to work together

Texas Watershed Planning Short Course Kevin Wagner, TWRI

- Funded by TCEQ using EPA 319 funding
- Purpose is to develop and deliver 3 weeklong short courses on watershed planning
- Participants will learn how to develop each of the 9 key elements of a WPP
- Tentative dates are Spring 2008, Winter 2008, and Spring 2009
- Certificates of completion to be provided
- Venue = Mayan Dude Ranch, Bandera, Texas
- Class size = 40
- Cost = \$350 plus meals and lodging
- Prerequisites = general water quality knowledge
- Instructors TBD
- Textbook = Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters
- Course will cover:
 - Partnership Building
 - Watershed Characterization
 - Finalizing Goals and Identifying Solutions
 - Designing an Implementation Program
- Recommendations made by attendees included:
 - How can practitioners better explain “phased” implementation? Must do a better job explaining what adaptive management is and how you present that to stakeholders. Some against the phased approach of implementing WPP. This info should be incorporated into course.

- Include agency expectations.
- A template document may be beneficial
- Include lessons learned from National Estuary Program (Galveston Bay)

- EPA reps said 1st 3 elements in WPPs are coming up short
 - EPA stated that first 3 elements are coming up short in watershed plans
 - They're generally addressed
 - Trying to develop broad/general projects on minimal data
 - Modeling is suspect
 - Need more specifics on loading and not just generalization of sources
 - Don't identify specific sources – before spending millions implementing, plans should do better job of assessment
 - It was suggested that EPA must invest more into assessment to achieve this.
 - 319 program really needing implementation resulting in restoration
 - Need to reduce level of uncertainty at outset to gain public confidence
 - Current watershed plans looking at too large of watershed. Suggest starting off small. Arroyo is too large.
 - It was suggested however that you can do larger watersheds for holistic strategy and then monitor effectiveness at smaller watershed scale.
 - Basically, EPA wants more robust data before implementing
 - But what if stakeholders “ready to roll” on implementing projects to reduce loadings?
 - If you make stakeholders wait too long to collect more data then they might lose interest and not participate.
 - Stakeholders want to see action and move forward and it is the agencies that want to see more data.
 - Instead of trying to get funding to collect more data, many WPPs have made some assumptions and just learned along the way
 - Short course needs to be much more specific than EPA guide. Course needs to describe what a good WPP looks like and provide fundamental guidelines.

Texas Watershed Steward Program Jennifer Peterson, TCE

- Goals:
 - Enhance & sustain stakeholder involvement in WPP efforts
 - Increase citizen awareness
 - Empower individuals to take leading roles in water quality improvement
- Achieved with 1-day training program
- Provide CEUs for CCAs, TDA, and Teachers
- Have curriculum handbook & PowerPoint presentations
 - Program Intro
 - Overview of Watershed Systems

- Overview of Watershed Impairments
- Managing to Improve Water Quality
- Community Driven Watershed Protection and Management
- Developing computer-based training
- Marketing program using brochure, fact sheet, post-cards, poster, banner & press
- Develop a program evaluation including:
 - Pre-test/Post-test
 - Delayed Post-test
- Can cater to specific watersheds and issues
- The TSU Certified Public Manager Program is similar to the Watershed Steward Program.

Open Discussion Aaron Wendt, TSSWCB

- Short Course Topic on “Reasonable Assurance” is needed
- Long-term sustainability is big issue
 - In Bastrop Bayou, plan will be turned over to citizens group by the COG. This gives instant ownership. Right now the citizens group is a loose alliance. It is envisioned that the citizens group will become a 501(c)(3).
 - Local governments have to be involved.
- Future meetings would be beneficial. Should primarily be for Open Discussion however.