Spokane River DO TMDL
Ad-hoc NPS Tracking/Monitoring Meeting
Washington Department of Ecology
July 16th, 2012

Minutes

In Attendance: Adriane Borgias, Ecology; Ben Brattebo, Spokane County Utilities; Rick Noll, Spokane Conservation District; Jon Jones, Ecology; Elaine Snouwaert; Ecology; Andy Dunau; Spokane River Forum

All meeting materials, including those referenced in these minutes can be found on-line at www.spokaneriver.net/dotmdl.

Welcome and Introductions

Andy Dunau welcomed participants to the meeting, each of whom introduced themselves.

Meeting Purpose

Purpose of the meeting was to consider needs and options for tracking/monitoring efforts to reduce phosphorus loading into the Spokane River from tributaries, primarily Hangman (Latah) Creek and the Little Spokane River.

Characterization of Issues

Modeling for the Spokane River DO TMDL assumes a phosphorus load allocation from from both tributaries. The phosphorus load allocations to the Spokane River are based on the concept that “man-made” impacts will be remediated. Issues that could affect meeting the standard or the speed at which phosphorus reductions occur, include:

- Geologically, the Hangman watershed is very young. This means that patterns of erosion and sedimentation are dynamic and loading continuous, even without human impacts.
- The rate at which farmers and others agree to change practices, e.g.—convert to direct seed, is variable. Availability of incentives, such as funding to change equipment, is one example.

Tracking/Monitoring

Participants agreed that existing monitoring points at the confluence of the Spokane River with each tributary could be used to measure phosphorus loading reductions over time. Caveats, however, include:

- Month to month and year to year changes in snowpack, snowmelt, rain on snow events and other weather dependent variables will lead to significant point-in-time differences in loading. Thus comparisons of data from one year to another or monthly trend analysis must be done with great care.
- Trying to establish location ratios for use within tributaries to determine the effect of particular projects on overall load reduction are unlikely to be successful and would require extensive modeling that has not yet been developed.
- Tracking items, such as miles of riparian buffers, acres of direct seed, feet of stream bank stabilization, could be more important and indicative of progress than tracking in-stream parameters because in-stream outcomes will not be directly attributable to individual activities.

Data Collection

Ben shared spreadsheet developed by County NPS project to track NPS projects. Participants agreed this was a good tool to track efforts. Possible additions could include:

- Categorizing projects, e.g.—direct seed, erosion control, outreach/education
- Add implementation date
- Add, if applicable, load reduction objective, e.g.—what Ecology requests when water quality grants submitted. This is different than providing a location ratio to determine specific contribution to phosphorus reduction at Long Lake.
- Text field to note outcomes. May include specific fields for outreach, e.g.—number of people attended, pre-survey, post-assessment.

Elaine has a spreadsheet of projects in Hangman. She and Jon could use the spreadsheet provided to establish common fields for reporting. Rick said much of the data the Conservation District collects is in paper form, but could be added to this system.

Web Based Interface

Andy showed an example of web based mapping system that could be used to display results, including identifying projects with particular attributes. Questions and issues included:

- If you make the web site fully public, withhold names and addresses of participants engaged in projects. Show point on map only. If motivated, a person

could identify landowners by cross-referencing with county property data base or going to the actual location.

- Funding to fully develop the tool is not identified.
- There needs to be an agency/person that can manage data entry and maintenance. Although different entities could be given permission to enter data, there is a need for consistency that requires a centralized management location.
- If particular aspects of the data base were to be used for further data analysis, e.g.—add up acres of projects using direct seed or estimated amount of phosphorus reduction, data would need to be exported to a spreadsheet or another data base.
- No single entity currently has information on all projects, nor are all projects required to report to a single entity.

Additional Comments

Ecology, Spokane Conservation District and Spokane County see value in tracking/monitoring of NPS activities, both from a Spokane River DO TMDL perspective and a tributary perspective. The greatest value is to provide transparency and improve communication between people and entities working in these areas. In terms of the DO TMDL 10 year assessment, such a tool can articulate the fullness of efforts to reduce loading.

Once significant implementation has been achieved, additional and/or separate analysis, may be required to consider whether the load reductions for sedimentation, turbidity, and phosphorus in the tributaries are approaching modeled predictions and whether additional reductions to man-made loading are possible.

Next Steps

Participants will summarize findings from the minutes at the August 21st workgroup meeting. Based on input from participants, consideration will be given to further developing the tracking tool developed by the county and/or developing a web based system to support.

Meeting Adjourned