



TTK Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 18th, 2014

6:30 – 8:15 p.m. EST

Hoosier Energy Environmental Education Center

Attendees: Josh Brosmer, IDEM, Charles Haney, Hoosier Energy, Bruce Marheine, WLRM, Paul Gettinger, Stakeholder, John “Jack” Gettinger, Stakeholder, Brad Smith, The Nature Conservancy, Joe Freeze, Stakeholder, Dale Phegley, Stakeholder, Lynne Phegley, Stakeholder, Mike Bell, Stakeholder and Sullivan SWCD Board member, and Laura Demarest, WCIWA Watershed Coordinator

Introduction

Refreshments were enjoyed prior to the meeting (courtesy of Hoosier Energy) while brief status updates were given regarding the scope of the TTK 319 Grant project.

TTK Activities, Objectives, and Updates

TTK Implementation Grant Application

An application for 319 funding focusing on cost-share implementation was submitted in August for a continuation of the TTK watershed project. \$336,660 was the requested amount with a match commitment of \$224,440. The implementation project would be slated to commence in January 2016 and end in December 2018. **At the time of this meeting, the WCIWA had received news that the TTK application had passed review with a respectable score. After a few minor revisions, it will be submitted to EPA for further review. Josh Brosmer, IDEM, stated that it is highly likely that the requested funding will be awarded for this grant!**

TTK Cost-Share Interest List sign up

The TTK grant will be dispatching cost-share funding in 2015 to producers in critical areas. Interested folks should speak with the watershed coordinator about their intended project(s) in order to be added to the Cost-Share Interest List. Projects requiring engineering (WASCOBs, etc.) need to be on the list early enough to allow time for planning. **Critical areas have not been finalized at this time, so there is no 100% guarantee that funding will occur for all producers who join the Interest List.**

Data Collection

Much of the first year of the TTK grant has been dedicated to gathering water quality data in order to help the Advisory Committee make informed decisions regarding critical areas. To date, monthly water monitoring on 30 sites throughout the watershed has been collected. **Concentrations for Nitrates/Nitrites, Total Phosphorus, E.coli, and Total Suspended Solids was averaged for each site. Flow information for each site was then used to generate load calculations (i.e. amount of pollutant being discharged per day at each site). This information was presented to the Advisory Committee (see attached) for the purpose of ranking sites with the highest pollutant loads on average for 7 months.**

In addition to this data, resource concerns have been prioritized by the Advisory Committee and are currently being corroborated by windshield surveys (still ongoing), macroinvertebrate and habitat inventories, and desktop modeling. This information is vital to the development of a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan and will help the Advisory Committee prioritize critical areas.

Brad Smith, TNC, suggested that critical areas could be prioritized by considering HEL (Highly Erodible Land) regions, as well. TNC has interest in this and could possibly assist when it comes to compiling maps and information regarding HEL land in the watershed. In addition, stakeholder Dale Phegley reported success on HEL land when using cover crops and pointed out a recent CTIC farmer survey that highlighted yield boosts after using cover crops: 4% corn yield boost and 3% bean yield boost. This information could definitely help promote TTK cost-share next year.



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Indiana American Water grant idea

Cody Brenneman of Indiana American Water passed along information regarding Indiana American Water’s Environmental Grant program where a group can apply for up to \$10,000 to fund a community-based project that will improve/restore/protect local watershed and water supplies.

Various ideas were pitched, including using a youth group such as the 4-H Junior Leaders. Merom United Methodist youth group, or FFA to help with clean-up efforts or in other capacities. Forming a volunteer group could also help with projects in the watershed that are not covered by 319 funding. Additionally, a **rain garden project** was mentioned (and previously favored by Cody Brenneman). Some sites were suggested by Advisory Committee members; land ownership and other parameters will need to be investigated. The 2015 grant application is not yet available, but preparations will be made to apply when the time approaches.

TTK Field Day TBD: Winter/Spring 2015

To follow up from the previous Advisory Committee meeting, a short continuation of the ‘field day planning’ discussion ensued. A few new ideas were brought up, including a Turtle Creek Reservoir boat tour highlighting erosion control practices and discussing erosion. Since this was done already in October, it may count towards the grant requirement of two field days. The topic of drones is still favorable, as well as having a cruise on the Wabash in the future, though more information needs to be gathered before this can happen. It was also mentioned that levee erosion may be visible from the Wabash and that more concern for this problem should be generated. Other potential topics included farm pond management, mussels, and commercial fisheries.

Critical Area Determination

EPA-defined Critical Area changes/new policies

According to guidance from Josh Brosmer, IDEM, ***EPA is in the process of narrowing down their requirements when it comes to critical area determination.*** Previously it was possible to deem a number of areas within the watershed boundaries as ‘critical’ on a variety of parameters. For the Busseron 319 project, 11 of the 12 subwatersheds were determined to be critical for at least one parameter, for instance. Currently, the critical area policies are still being retooled by EPA, ***but it has been advised that the Advisory Committee should focus on a more concentrated region when it comes to determining critical areas.*** The intent is that instead of a ‘shotgun’ approach of BMPs throughout the watershed, EPA would like to see a concentration of BMPs in a more focused area, which will hopefully yield measurable results in future water testing and pollutant load reductions.

Review/Discuss collected data, other funding sources for “Non-Critical” areas

After reviewing the presented data (see attached) along with known resource concerns in the area, it was decided that the Advisory Committee would take the opportunity this meeting to draft a set of proposed critical areas for EPA to review. If these critical areas are approved, they will be included in the Watershed Management Plan (in progress) and used to determine where cost-share funding will be prioritized.



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Much discussion took place and based on the available data, it was determined that sediment was a prevalent concern throughout the watershed AND also a concern that could be remedied through the types of BMPs the 319 grant would offer. If sediment can be slowed/stopped, it is also assumed that nutrient runoff will be reduced as well. The Advisory Committee mentioned that it would prefer to have fewer restrictions when it comes to choosing critical areas and that other areas in need of BMPs would be eliminated through this process. It was decided to rank three subwatersheds as ‘critical’ for sediment: 1. West Turman 2. Thunderbird Pond 3. Little Turtle.

Additionally, the high E.coli levels that showed up in testing results also appear to be a widespread concern. It was suggested that one subwatershed (Dodd’s Bridge) be targeted for livestock BMPs in an effort to try to reduce animal contributions to the E.coli loads. It is unclear if this will be allowed under EPA’s reformed requirements, but will be submitted in draft form for approval.

Unfortunately, not all subwatersheds could be considering ‘critical’ under EPA’s reformed requirements and it may be that not all of the proposed critical subwatersheds submitted in draft form will be approved. Provisions were discussed for ways to obtain additional funding for BMPs that can be used to supplement the need for projects in ‘non-critical’ areas while also counting towards the in-kind goal. DNR has a LARE (Lake and River Enhancement) grant that can be used toward ‘Watershed Land Treatment’ and the Sullivan SWCD intends to pursue Clean Water Indiana funding next year. If these funds are awarded, it would allow more flexibility and cost-share availability for landowners in the TTK watershed.

Prioritize Critical Areas for EPA draft

In summary, the draft of proposed critical areas that will be sent to EPA will be as follows:

Resource Concern: Sediment

1. West Turman Creek subwatershed (Turman Creek watershed)
2. Thunderbird Pond subwatershed (Turman Creek watershed)
3. Little Turtle Creek subwatershed (Turtle Creek watershed)

Resource Concern: E.coli (Livestock practices only)

1. Dodd’s Bridge subwatershed (Turman Creek watershed)

More information regarding critical area approval will be available soon. Please contact the watershed coordinator with questions and/or comments.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday, February 10th, 2015 at 6:30pm**
Meetings are held in the Hoosier Energy Environmental Education Center, south of the Turtle Creek Reservoir, west of Sullivan, IN.

Prepared and submitted by: L. Demarest