

TTK Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Tuesday, August 19th, 2014



Attendees

Josh Brosmer, IDEM, Charles Haney, Hoosier Energy, Bruce Marheine, WLRM, Paul Gettinger, Stakeholder, John “Jack” Gettinger, Stakeholder, Bill Coulson, Sullivan County SWCD Board Chairman and stakeholder, Brad Smith, The Nature Conservancy, Mike Kelly, Stakeholder, Joe Freeze, Stakeholder, Jeff Mann, Sullivan County SWCD Board member and stakeholder, and Laura Demarest, WCIWA Watershed Coordinator

Introduction

New individuals attending this meeting included Mike Kelly, Joe Freeze, and Jeff Mann (all stakeholders). Refreshments (courtesy of Hoosier Energy) were enjoyed prior to the meeting while brief status updates were given regarding the scope of the TTK 319 grant project.

TTK Activities

Water Monitoring:

To date, monitoring has been completed for the months of April, May, June, July, and August. Many sites were dry or contained disconnected pools so no water samples were collected. Macroinvertebrate sampling and habitat assessments will be conducted in September and October.

TTK Cost-Share Interest List sign-up:

At this time, nearly two dozen producers have signed up. If funding is awarded for the TTK Implementation grant to follow our current TTK Planning/Implementation grant, we will have more cost-share funds to utilize in the near future. Projects requiring engineering (WASCOBs, etc.) need to be on the list early to allow time for planning. **Since we haven't determined critical areas at this time, there is no 100% guarantee that funding will occur, though it is best to cite interest early.**

Windshield Surveys:

Windshield surveys are ongoing and are expected to be complete before the next TTK Advisory Committee meeting in November. The Watershed Coordinator has been conducting the bulk of the windshield surveys amid other duties, so progress has been slow this summer. **Volunteers are welcome and encouraged as time/mileage can be counted toward match contributions!**

TTK Field Day:

As a requirement of the TTK Planning/Implementation grant, two field days must be planned and orchestrated by WCIWA. Several ideas were discussed.

One idea would be for some time in January/February 2015 to have program based on agricultural topics in high demand. One stakeholder suggested finding a speaker to present information about **drones**, which are a popular and intriguing topic currently in agricultural. Along with this could be discussions on improving water quality through conservation practices, and a precision ag speaker to highlight some of the current tools available.

A second field day idea (which has been briefly discussed earlier this year) is to have a **Wabash boat trip** for people in the community. This could be sometime in the final year of the Planning/Implementation grant, since it will take more time to coordinate and will help drum up more interest for the (hopefully) subsequent TTK Implementation grant. Individuals could bring their own kayak or canoe or possibly rent a canoe from the Merom Conference Center. Launch could take place at Hutsonville and the trip could end at Merom boat ramp. This would create a half-day event. For those not interested or able to paddle, a pontoon boat could be made available by one of the Advisory Committee members. This boat could hold +/- 10 people, though getting people OFF the boat at Merom may be problematic. The group could stop along the way at a sandbar for a break and to listen to a few presenters. The main topic of discussion would highlight the mouth of Turman Creek and discussion of upstream watersheds/water quality in the region.

Other topics could include WRP (Wetland Reserve Program), wildlife conservation, local history, and Wabash River specialists. The Watershed Coordinator plans to attend the Posey County SWCD Wabash River float-trip event soon and will gather ideas that may be applicable to a similar TTK field day on the Wabash River.

Indiana American Water Environmental Grant ideas:

After the last TTK Advisory Committee meeting, Cody Brenneman passed along some information regarding Indiana American Water's Environmental Grant program **where a group can apply for up to \$10,000 for a community-based project that will improve/restore/protect local watersheds and water supplies**. He thought our group would be a candidate for this grant; applications will be collected in the spring of 2015.

One idea would be for starting a local group to participate in activities that would benefit the watershed while also raising awareness about keeping it clean. Tasks could include trash clean-up days, assistance with water monitoring/macroinvertebrate studies, a tour of the Merom drainage basin, and other objectives centered on public outreach and education about water quality.

Other ideas that align with this theme involve setting up a tour of local conservation practices in the watershed. Joe Freeze volunteered to offer his site for a field day, if needed; he is in the process of installing a grassed waterway, two WASCObS, and applied a wheat cover crop last year. His property is situated near the TTK watershed's other population center: Farmersburg. More ideas will be solidified this winter and discussed with Indiana American Water representative Cody Brenneman.

TTK Implementation Application update:

The deadline for submitting the grant application for the TTK Implementation project is September 2nd and everything is on schedule. Some confirmation on Advisory Committee goals was sought and it was iterated that sediment and nutrients take priority when it comes to resource concerns that can be addressed with 319 funding. Additionally, the group brought up concerns about E.coli, though they realize that this problem will be more difficult to address with BMPs. **The grant application is asking for (officially) \$336,600 in cost-share funding with a commitment of \$224,440 in match, which makes a project total of \$561,100. This funding would be slated for January 2016-December 2018.** Many of the tasks outlined in the application would parallel the successful Busseron 319 Implementation project, with a few notable changes including decreased emphasis on youth education and water monitoring. We are hopeful about our chances for obtaining this funding, though we are applying earlier than necessary. If the application is not funded this year, there is a chance to re-apply next year without experiencing a significant gap in funding between 319 grants, if awarded. **Please contact the Watershed Coordinator if you wish to see a copy of the full TTK Implementation project 319 application.**

Watershed Planning

Watershed Management Plan updates:

The Watershed Coordinator continues to compile information for the TTK Watershed Management Plan (WMP) that is a requirement of the current 319 grant. Cost-share cannot commence until an approved WMP is in place. Originally, it was intended to finish the WMP by the fall of 2014, which would have been 1 year ahead of schedule. This goal has been revised due to the great need for more information regarding water quality. Additional monitoring data is needed, windshield surveys must be completed, and more input from the Advisory Committee is necessary in order to create a comprehensive and useful WMP. The WMP is on schedule to be submitted for approval in early 2015. This would allow cost-share funding to begin in the spring of 2015 (still several months ahead of schedule).

Resource Concerns List:

The updated (consolidated) resource concerns list was presented to the Advisory Committee for comment. No significant changes were proposed at this time, though some discussion on the practice of spreading oil on gravel roads led to the conclusion that this is not sanctioned by the Sullivan County Highway Department, but rather, occasionally done by local landowners as a means of controlling dust. This list was streamlined based on comments at the previous TTK Advisory Committee meeting.

Critical Areas discussion:

Determining critical areas is necessary when it comes to strategizing where and how cost-share funding will be prioritized. Ongoing discussions regarding critical areas continue to emphasize the need for reducing sediment and nutrients, along with E.coli, when possible. It was determined that more data would help the Advisory Committee make more informed decisions about which areas would benefit most from BMPs. It will be best to wait until the next TTK Advisory Committee meeting in November to make firmer decisions. By that time, we will have over 6 months of monitoring data and load calculations (determining the concentration of a certain pollutant at each

site). Additionally, windshield surveys and habitat/macroinvertebrate assessments will also be complete. It was also suggested that priority areas could perhaps be determined based on HEL (Highly Erodible Land) soil types. Brad Smith of The Nature Conservancy, offered to help with creating maps for the Advisory Committee to use to make determinations regarding critical areas.

***It has also come to the Watershed Coordinator's attention since the August TTK Advisory Committee meeting that EPA is currently revising their guidelines for determining critical areas. It is truly best that we wait until November in hopes that the guidelines will be more concrete by that time.**

BMPs that would serve the TTK Advisory Committee's goals best would include grassed buffers, conversion to No-Till systems, cover crops, WASCOBs, and grassed waterways. Also, precision agricultural tools would cover many acres, as well. Reducing E.coli loads is more of a challenge, but benefit can be achieved through exclusion fence for livestock, nutrient management plans, and offering extra cost-share incentives through optional septic maintenance (as was done with the Busseron grant). More discussion will follow at the next meeting.

Goal Statements:

As previously discussed, the TTK Advisory Committee's main goals are centered on reducing sediment, nutrients, and E.coli. Sediment appears to be the clear forerunning concern in ongoing discussions and it seems that reducing run-off would greatly decrease nutrients, as well as help relieve biotic impairments in many streams. More discussion will follow at the next meeting.

*The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm
Summary prepared by Laura Demarest, WCIWA Coordinator*

Next Meeting:

***Tuesday, November 18th at 6:30
Hoosier Energy Environmental Education Center***