

Summary: Lower Kansas WRAPS Meeting of Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Douglas County Extension Office, 2110 Harper, Lawrence, KS

Present: Rick Davis, Coordinator, Tom Olson, Susan Garrett, Amanda Reed, Jerry Wooley, Susan Iversen, Kassie Shelton, Jennifer Blattman, Jason Schmidt, Will Boyer, Cheri Miller, Heather Schmidt

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. Everyone introduced themselves.

► Presentation of SFY2010 project proposals:

Jerry Wooley presented the Frank Brown project located in Leavenworth County in the Stranger Creek TMDL high priority area. The proposal is to install a sedimentation basin to stop erosion problems and provide water for livestock so that they can be fenced out of an existing creek which crosses the property. The property is easy to reach and very visible so will be ideal for demonstration purposes. Jerry used the Region 5 Model that Matt Unruh presented to the Lower Kansas WRAPS group in September to estimate that the Frank Brown project would keep 190 tons of sediment out of Stranger Creek each year.

Comments on project proposals:

- Funding has been withdrawn from the Bryan Smith project. Those dollars were used for the Richard Frey Alternate Water Supply and Pond Fencing project in Leavenworth County approved at the 9/23/09 WRAPS meeting.
- There is still a need for more clarity in what type of project KAWS wants. The Region 5 load reduction model has made it easy to rank projects. But how do you define an eligible project? If the goal is water quality that is somewhat different from bacteria levels.
- The question was raised as to whether we should review the Nine Elements Plan and decide on its provisions before we approve any more projects. Since we don't really know when the Plan will be finished this raises problems for timely completion of projects. Our approval is only one step in a long process that includes KAWS approval and NRCS approval. The Technician has to design the project to NRCS code and then the owner has to sign off on the whole thing.
- It was reiterated that the Frank Brown project is in a high TMDL area and by stopping erosion and fencing cattle out of a Stranger Creek tributary it address two of our designated top priorities: sediment and bacteria

Susan Iversen moved to approve the Frank Brown Project. There were four aye votes. The three SLT members present at that point of the meeting (Iversen, Blattman, Wooley) and Jim Weaver by email. There were no nay votes.

► Discussion on design standards for project implementation:

The group was reminded that there are standards that have to be met, primarily from the NRCS. Once a project is completed, the NRCS has to approve it as built. If they do not approve it, no money will be paid out. The contractor is the big loser if the design is flawed.

► Discuss Lower Kansas EPA Nine Element Plan:

Rick led the group through the most current version of the Lower Kansas Nine Element Plan.

- All the TMDL elements in the watershed have been inserted using KDHE reports.
- The challenge is to produce reasonable estimates of the load reductions that we will achieve and the associated costs. Point sources are not considered significant in our watershed. The decision tree directs us to nonpoint sources such as livestock, septic systems and urban run-off. Verification of reduction of TMDLs with BMPs will come from KDHE stream chemistry.
- Where is the tangible data for nonpoint sources? The Cattle and Calves Inventory and Sales Data tables for Johnson County and some other areas of the watershed provide useful real numbers although it must be kept in mind that head of cattle do not equal animal units. However, you can extrapolate that there are 10,000 head of cattle in Johnson County and 29,000 head in Leavenworth County in small non-permitted operations. The SCC TMDL Needs Inventory lists dollar amounts needed to ameliorate failing waste systems and restore grasslands. Unfortunately neither of these sources is truly current.
- Determining which BMPs to include in the plan is difficult. Rick has sent TSS, BOD and phosphorus numbers from Mill Creek to Matt Unruh asking for suggestions on how to proceed. This area will need urban stormwater BMPs. Attacking the DO level in Washington Creek or Baker Wetlands is also problematic.
- Costs to ameliorate nonpoint source contributions to TMDLs will be very large even spread over thirty years.

COMMENTS ON THE NINE ELEMENT PLAN:

- The livestock data numbers are a useful starting point, but in fact it must not be assumed that all small, non-permitted operations are doing a bad job of controlling bacteria run-off. Will Boyer estimated that at least 50% are actually doing a good job. Jerry Wooley said that he and the Leavenworth County sanitarian went out and identified all properties with CAFO's on creeks or near creeks and they know which landowners are resistant to improving their operations. It was suggested that we use I & E money from KRC to set up a workshop and invite these landowners specifically. This should be done in January or February when the landowners are in a slack time.
- Many waste water (septic) systems are not within 100 feet of a stream.
- Mill, Cedar and Kill Creeks are all covered by NPDES permits for Olathe and Johnson County. Any urban development in the area has to meet Olathe/JoCo NPDES standards for construction. The Olathe WRAPS is not really operating as a WRAPS, but implements storm water BMPs. We could stipulate that these permits cover the urban area and we will not duplicate the work. Also there are non-WRAPS dollars for urban stormwater needs. The NPDES permit and the Stormwater Management Plan would have to be appended to our Nine Element Plan. The MARC APWA BMP plan will also serve to guide us.
- However, agricultural operations in the watersheds of these creeks are not covered by Olathe/JoCo permits so we do have the problem of parsing out the remaining rural areas from urban development areas and addressing their problems.

-There will probably be a different timeline for priorities in different parts of the watershed. Every high priority TMDL has to have its own game plan, but the order in which we address them is up to us.

-It was suggested that the Nine Element Plan needs to list our TMDLs but does not need tremendous detail on each one. KDHE already has that information. Then it should list the BMPs we will use to address them. It will be important to get together people that know landowner situations in the watershed so that we get a good estimate of the number and type of BMPs needed. We must have realistic BMPs that will actually be used by landowners.

-Efforts should be focused on seasonal, feedlot and feeding operations. Wintering pastures are often inadequate. Fencing livestock out of streams should also be emphasized.

-As far as estimating actual BMP needs, Leavenworth County has records of what is needed; there is not a lot of change in that part of the watershed. Jerry Wooley offered to go through their files and get the information back to Rick within the week. All the Conservation Districts have a good knowledge of conditions. Wyandotte County CD is actually co-located with NRCS.

-The price tag for all our BMPs is high. We need to start locating funds we can pull in.

➤ Discuss Lower Kansas brochure:

Rick showed us the brochure he created for the Lower Kansas WRAPS. The group liked it. There are only a few minor changes to be made. The logo indicates the mix of rural and urban areas in the watershed and is the same one used by the Middle Kansas WRAPS.

➤ Update from service providers

- Jason Schmidt from the Kansas Rural Center told us that they can do a grazing workshop and 2-4 grazing consults with farmers with their dollars from the Lower Kansas WRAPS. These need to be completed by March. In addition they can do 4 River Friendly Farm Environmental assessment notebooks. Usually a grazing consult leads the farmer to work on a notebook. Once the notebook is completed, a farmer is eligible to apply for \$5,000 in cost share dollars. KRC can do one \$5,000 project in the Lower Kansas this year.

Comments:

- Cheri Miller suggested approaching a horse rescue operation in Edwardsville that would be appropriate for an assessment notebook and needs constructive suggestions. This operation has too many horses for the land area and there have been high profile complaints. The owner would probably be receptive to a more friendly, consultative style approach.
- Cheri reported that the Wyandotte County CD has been inundated with Conservation Stewardship Project applications. These folks would also be good targets for notebooks because they are very interested in improving their operations. She also reported that there was a clean-up day at Kaw Point and over 400 people participated.

► Project Update:

The Bonner Springs streambank project is stalled. There have been changes in personnel and they have lost part of their funding. They do not currently have a project design or a contractor. Rick talked to the current intern and was told that they are considering downsizing the project. The stream bank is very badly and actively eroding and is quite close to a road. A smaller project than that originally proposed would be unlikely to solve the problem.

In August and again in September, the SLT voted to have an official letter sent to Bonner Springs giving them a deadline for signing a contract and for project completion. Although Rick has been in contact with the intern in charge, an actual letter documenting a deadline has not been sent. It was argued that if we pull our funding the project will not be done, or the whole application process will have to be started from scratch some time in the future. The SLT members present acknowledged that it is an important project, but still felt that our money could not be in limbo any longer. The original allocation was made over a year ago and there is still no final project design or contractor. It was agreed that Rick would send a letter telling the city that they have to sign a contract for the project by December 31, 2009 with a project completion deadline of February 28, 2010 or our funding will be withdrawn.

► Other Agenda Items:

- We need to recruit new SLT members. John Cotter has resigned. Mike Epler is changing jobs and will be resigning. Extension districts are being revised and a new agent may have a different area or be uninterested in serving. A monthly meeting schedule is demanding. Once the Nine Element Plan is completed, we should be able to go to less frequent meetings.
- Update on series of articles by Tim Carpenter, Topeka Capital Journal reporter, concerning water resource management on the Kansas River. Mr. Carpenter originally did an article on atrazine levels in the Kansas River. Rick contacted him to suggest he do a whole series on the river and Middle and Lower Kansas WRAPS. He is interested, although he is most interested in focusing on Topeka, and would like to have a meeting of locals to get input. FYI: The Kaw is the longest prairie river in the world.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m. The next meeting will be Thursday, December 3rd at the Johnson County Sunset Building. Room TBA.