

Minutes

Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) General Meeting March 5, 2015

WPAC held its first general meeting of the year at the Iowa Corn Growers Association offices, Johnston. Present: Mike Delaney, Robin Fortney, John Torbert, Dean Mattoon, Cody McKinley, Greg Sindt, Tim Hall, Adam Schnieders, Jake Hansen, Roger Wolf; and co-chairs Ben Gleason and Jennifer Terry. Interested parties: Linda Kinman.

Old business:

Annual report was finalized and submitted.

New business:

New WPAC framework was explained, e.g. the general WPAC group meetings will be held quarterly with the three task force work groups meeting in between to formulate recommendations and action items for the general membership to discuss. This format will, hopefully, result in increased productivity and effectiveness.

- Identified the top three of the seven areas mentioned in Iowa Code as priorities for WPAC. Defined “consensus”: *“The definition of consensus is ‘you don’t have to love it; you just have to be able to live with it’. Here’s how it will work: WPAC will discuss action items, then each designee in attendance will indicate whether he or she is generally in favor of the item. If there seems to be general agreement with no strong dissent, we will have reached consensus. In the event that there are a few designees who cannot support the item, then we will discuss further and try to reach a common ground that everyone can live with. If this is not possible, then we will approve the item, but also include a minority report in the recommendations--a summary of dissenting opinions by the minority.”*

Task Force Group #1: Create Economic Incentives

Roger Wolf presented Work Group #1’s report. Roger discussed objective 1.2 in more detail—“identifying three legislative priorities that WPAC could get behind”. The group hopes that WPAC could collectively support legislative initiatives, for example, a proposed environmental practices income tax credit. WPAC agreed with the general goals of the group and authorized Group #1 to proceed with identifying related action items.

Task Force Group #2: Improve Water Quality / Optimize Costs: “Farmer-led Monitoring Program”

Chair Dean Mattoon presented Group #2’s report. The group will focus on increasing the amount of edge-of-field water quality monitoring across the state. The following goals were approved by WPAC and Group #2 was authorized to proceed with related action items:

- Provide test strip kits for farmers for edge-of-field nitrate, nitrate and phosphate transparency monitoring
 - Cost analysis
 - Training mechanism
- Interpretation and education about monitoring for farmers:
 - “Broad brush strokes” so individual producers don’t feel like they are put on the spot
 - Accompany test strips with a questionnaire including questions like when was the last rainfall, etc.
 - Info sheet on interpretation, what factors affect nutrient levels, etc.
- Online database for public view (start with Survey Monkey to capture information)

- Aggregate level
- Producer able to see his/her own numbers
- Awareness packet / program for common messaging among groups and organizations

Task Force Group #3: Develop Reliable Protocols and Procedures: “Improving Pollution Control Quantification Protocols and Procedures”

Chair Jennifer Terry presented three recommendations for consideration by WPAC, including requiring water quality monitoring at Water Quality Initiative (WQI) projects and also commissioning a study of monitoring programs around the state to assess gaps, redundancies, and make data available to the public.

John Torbert expressed concern that funds used for monitoring WQI projects would take away from practice implementation. Ben Gleason indicated that scientifically-based modeling of practices suffices rather than monitoring at the sites. Dean Mattoon agreed that modeling is good, but it is also useful to have it backed up by monitoring data. Tim Hall suggested focusing on how best to demonstrate the effectiveness of practices in the projects and that perhaps the monitoring could be done at select project sites around the state—not at all of them. Mike Delaney suggested there is a need for more hard data as to effectiveness, which includes an accountability aspect. Roger Wolf cautioned against using water quality monitoring in isolation, but rather as part of a larger picture; i.e. monitoring should be an integral part of the projects, but not in isolation. He stated that there is great value in monitoring in terms of involving stakeholders and raising awareness, and with limited resources we want validation that practices are producing results. Robin Fortney stated that monitoring should occur at the beginning to set a baseline, during the implementation phase, and after the project concludes in order to ground-truth results in addition to modeling.

Based upon the discussion, Group #3 will revise the first recommendation concerning water quality monitoring in all of the WQI demonstration projects and bring it before the group again to gain consensus. Adam Schnieders, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), suggested that Group #3 meet with him and/or Roger Bruner (IDNR) because they are going to be conducting a statewide monitoring inventory and perhaps this would fulfill recommendation #2. Group #3 will meet with Adam and/or Roger concerning the inventory. Recommendation #3, developing statistical methods for normalizing water quality data, was not discussed at this time.

Water Resources Coordinating Council’s Annual Report on the Nutrient Reduction Strategy

Adam Schnieders reported that WPAC members who wish to submit comments regarding the strategy must submit those comments by May 31, 2015, for inclusion. Adam also reported that IDNR will be conducting a comprehensive inventory of all the monitoring which is occurring across the state by all agencies, including who is doing long term monitoring, what is being monitored, where is it being done, etc.

Next WRCC Meeting

Jake Hansen reported that the next WRCC meeting will be held on March 19 from 9:00AM - 11:30AM. Jake also announced that three new watershed projects have been selected to receive funding for projects over the next three years through the Water Quality Initiative.

Dates for WPAC Meeting

WPAC meeting dates for 2015: June 12, September 11, and December 4 from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM at Iowa Corn Growers Association offices in Johnston. Task force groups will meet in between as needed.

Adjournment