

Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) Meeting Minutes February 5, 2016

The WPAC held its quarterly meeting at 1:00 pm on Friday, February 5, 2016, at the Urbandale Public Library, with Co-Chair Susan Heathcote (IEC) presiding. Organizations/designees present at the meeting: Clare Lindahl, Conservation Districts of Iowa; Steve Roe and Jeremy Rosonke, Iowa Conservation Alliance; Jim Gillespie, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; Bill Ehm, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; John Torbert, Iowa Drainage District Association; Rick Robinson, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation; Dean Mattoon, Iowa League of Cities; Tyler Bettin, Iowa Pork Producers Association; Greg Sindt, Iowa Water Environment Association; for a total of 11 voting members.

Ex-officio members present: John Wills, Iowa House of Representatives.

Other attendees: Vanessa Fixmer-Oraiz, HBK Engineering; Evan Del Val, ISG Engineering Group; Brett Lorenzen, Environmental Working Group; Linda Kinman, Iowa Association of Water Agencies; Jake Hansen and Will Myers, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; Allen Bonini and Adam Schneiders, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Ann Robinson, Iowa Environmental Council; Pam Mollenhauer, State Hygienic Laboratory; Bri Farber, University of South Carolina.

New Business:

Report from Task Force Group #1: Create Economic Incentives

Rick Robinson reported for the task force, referencing its report to January 2015 WPAC Annual Report, page 5: The task force is focusing on three general areas in 2016. 3.1 Request information from IDALS-DSCWQ and DNR to assess existing conservation programs and determine if needs are being met and if new innovative programs and projects should be developed. 2) invite experts to help the WPAC identify, understand and compile public and private sector incentive opportunities for conservation and agricultural technologies in order to determine recommendations that promote private sector engagement, nongovernment incentives and agricultural technology development. 3) Invite experts to outline the opportunities for urban and rural collaboration, and the status of current efforts. Robinson said the intent is to have the presentations to the workgroup meetings outside of the full WPAC, but to invite others to attend, rather than at the full WPAC meeting (at least when there will be guest presenters). Heathcote commented that she likes the idea of having workgroup meetings publicized to entire membership.

Report from Task Force Group #2: Improve Water Quality and Optimize Costs

Tyler Bettin referenced the task force's report in the WPAC annual report, waiting for some feedback for starting test kit trial. Suggested tabling report until task force lead Ben Gleason arrives (but he did not attend, so tabled until next meeting.)

Report from Task Force Group #3: Develop Reliable Protocols and Procedures for Pollution Control Quantification

Susan Heathcote reported that Task Force #3 met February 2. The group continues to work on issues identified in its 2015 report. A focus for now is on refining a recommendation to encourage monitoring in WQI projects that did not pass when presented to WPAC in 2015. Jay Brady with IWEA has drafted a summary paper that outlines the issues and revises the recommendation. The task force should have the paper finalized soon and will distribute to full WPAC before next meeting. Plan to invite others interested in topic to attend the task force's next meeting and offer feedback to the task force.

The task force also plans to have a presentation at its next meeting by IDALS and IDNR to review what monitoring is going on through the agencies. The task force will plan to invite other WPAC members.

Select new co-chairs:

Heathcote asked if there were groups interested/willing to co-chair. No one volunteered. She said IEC is willing to continue in the co-chair role. IEC's representative in the future will be Ann Robinson.

Rick Robinson said it would be best to have a member who hasn't served as co-chair before, do it, so that chairmanship rotates. However, he said, he is not aware of any groups who have volunteered that have not been recent chairs. He said there has been criticism that there isn't enough coordination between WRCC and WPAC and suggested that problem can be addressed by having DNR and/or IDALS as chair or co-chair for coming year. He nominated the agencies as co-chairs, or chair and vice-chair. Greg Sindt seconded. In response to Rick Robinson's proposal, Bill Ehm, DNR, expressed appreciation for being part of the WPAC, but was not sure if it was an appropriate role for the agency. He would like to discuss this with DNR Director Gipp before he responds to the nomination. Jim Gillespie, IDALS, expressed similar concerns, and said he would also like to discuss with his boss, Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey.

Heathcote suggested the possibility a group could be the chair, and the agency could assist with administrative duties, such as notetaking, which can be more challenging for volunteers. Decisions on Chair or Co-chair for 2016 were tabled for the next meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is planned for mid-April, but will be finalized after February 17 WRCC meeting. Heathcote asked whether there is a desire to have WPAC and WRCC meetings on same day to help people who have to travel. The limited feedback was that it is better to have WPAC meeting some time before WRCC meeting, to allow time to prepare a report to WRCC.

A presentation on the Minnesota Watershed Tour in fall 2015 with Iowa legislators was presented by Evan Del Val, ISG Engineering Group, and Vanessa Fixmer-Oraiz, hbk Engineering. There were a number of questions about the presentation and Minnesota's watershed programs. Slides and supporting material from the presentations were sent out after the meeting to WPAC members and attendees.

Public/Other Comments:

Steve Roe announced the Raccoon River Watershed Conference, Saturday, March 5. More information at: http://northraccoon.org/North_Raccoon/RRWA.html

Allen Bonini, DNR, shared copies of the agency's 9th annual success story publication, "Working for Clean Water," which can be found online at: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Watershed-Improvement/Watershed-Successes>. The agency will give a presentation to the next WRCC meeting, regarding a survey of attitudes on water quality by the University of Northern Iowa Center for Social Behavior Research. The initial report on the baseline will be presented to WRCC at Feb. 17 meeting. Information about the survey is now on the watershed improvement page of DNR website, at: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Watershed-Improvement>. The survey will be the focus of presentations at the opening session of the Iowa Water Conference, March 22-23, in Ames, and at the watershed management authority meeting rescheduled for Feb 22, in Urbandale.

Iowa Representative John Wills presented information on a water conference, Prairie Lakes: Working Together for Water Quality, August 10-12, in Okoboji, which will include a field tour on soil health and presentations on the human side of water quality. There will be some nationally recognized speakers. Info is not yet posted online, but registration is slated to open March 23.

Representative Wills previewed a water quality bill he is introducing that includes several different aspects, including:

- Work with agribusiness and ISU Extension to build a conservation planning certification program;
 - Recapture balance of fertilizer fees collected that are currently going to the general fund (est. about \$1.25 million per year) to help implement the nutrient reduction strategy;
 - Allow agribusiness, private groups to design certain practices, without engineers having to certify;
 - Increase IDALS FTE to include 30 environ specialists to work on watershed projects;
 - Allow for property tax reduction on conservation practices, such as bioreactors, prairie strips, restored wetlands, strips; and
 - Consider economic impact and quality of life in watershed prioritization decisions.
- Representative Wills answered questions about his legislative proposal.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15.

*Respectfully submitted by Susan Heathcote, Co-chair
March 14, 2016*