

MEETING MINUTES

Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) December 4, 2015

The WPAC held its quarterly meeting at 1:30 pm on Friday, September 11, 2015, at the Iowa Corn office with co-chairs Ben Gleason (Iowa Corn Growers Association) and Susan Heathcote (Iowa Environmental Council) presiding.

Organizations/designees present at the meeting: Clare Lindahl, Conservation Districts of Iowa; Tim Whipple, Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities; Mike Delaney and Steve Roe, Iowa Conservation Alliance; Jake Hansen, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; Adam Schnieders, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Rick Robinson, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation; Tyler Bettin, Iowa Pork Producers Association; Robin Fortney, Iowa Rivers Revival; Roger Wolf, Iowa Soybean Association; and Greg Sindt, Iowa Water Environment Association; for a total of 13 voting members.

Ex-officio members present: Chuck Isenhardt and John Wills, Iowa House of Representatives; Joe Bolckom, Iowa Senate.

Reports and Recommendations:

Task Force Group #1 – “Create Economic Incentives”

Wolf reported the group’s current recommendations for WPAC approval. The first recommendation is to encourage rural/urban collaboration within watersheds by using offsets. Cities need certainty and farmers need confidence to implement practices under an offset program.

Another recommendation is to develop three legislative priorities that all WPAC members can support including funding for the Water Quality Initiative, increasing conservation practice incentives and funding, and developing programs that encourage rural/urban collaboration. Significant, long-term funding is needed for water quality programs.

The third recommendation is to facilitate economic incentive learning opportunities. One opportunity is to assess existing conservation programs. This assessment includes quantifying the backlog of cost share applications, assessing the status of watershed planning, and assessing the status of technical assistance. Another opportunity involves inviting experts to speak at WPAC meetings to promote private sector resources and encourage urban and rural collaboration.

Group #1’s recommendations were approved by unanimous vote.

At the next Water Resources Coordinating Council meeting, Jay Brady and Lindahl will present their groups’ approved recommendations, and Heathcote will present the annual report.

Task Force #2 – “Improve Water Quality and Optimize Costs”

Group #2’s latest update is in the annual report.

Task Force #3 – “Develop Reliable Protocols and Procedures for Pollution Control Quantification”

Group #3's latest update is in the annual report. They are still discussing the water monitoring recommendation for Water Quality Initiative projects. Anyone can attend their next meeting in early 2016 to refine the recommendation.

Annual Report:

Additions needed for the annual report include minor edits, today's approved recommendations, and replace HF 2459 with Iowa Code 466B.31. The report was approved by voice vote with these additions.

2016 Meetings and Co-Chairs:

Members are encouraged to run for co-chairs to be elected at the next meeting. Isenhart offered to share information from his tour of Minnesota at a future meeting. Group #1's learning opportunities also need to be scheduled for future meetings. A balance between presentations and recommendations is needed considering that the WPAC member survey showed a desire for fewer presentations to make the meetings more productive. Wills shared an upcoming water quality seminar in the Okoboji area on August 10-13.

Next Meeting:

The next WPAC meeting will be February 5, 2016 at 1 pm at the Urbandale library. Co-chairs, focus areas, future meeting dates, and Isenhart's tour of Minnesota will be discussed.

Appendix A:

Encourage Collaboration, Support Legislative Priorities, and Facilitate Learning Opportunities

1. Encourage rural/urban collaboration within watersheds.
 - 1.1 State and federal support should be provided for an offset/exchange program. A state or federal guidance document should encourage local governments to help landowners/farmers install conservation practices that can generate credits for the program.
 - 1.2 A pre-compliance offset/exchange program is being developed to encourage urban/rural collaboration in a cost effective manner. Organizations should monitor, support and participate in the development of this program.
 - 1.3 State agencies should work with local governments and private organizations to raise awareness among rural and urban stakeholders about the State Revolving Fund and the value of it and similar opportunities.
 - 1.4 Include in the 2016 IDALS Iowa Soil and Water Quality Funding Summit a session on conservation finance opportunities for watershed projects.
2. Create three legislative priorities annually all WPAC members can support.
 - 2.1 Provide support of the Secretary of Agriculture's request for the Water Quality Initiative.
 - 2.2 Provide support for increasing conservation practice incentives and funding.
 - 2.3 Provide support for programs that encourage and/or reward urban and rural collaboration.
3. Facilitate Economic Incentive Learning Opportunities
 - 3.1 In 2016, WPAC 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.

- Quantify the backlog of conservation practices awaiting state cost share funds to be installed throughout the state.
- What is the status of watershed planning throughout the state?
- What is the status of technical assistance throughout the state?

3.2 In 2016, WPAC 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.

- Ask Shawn Richmond, AAI to speak with subcommittee to develop recommendation to advance the installation of CREP Wetlands.
- Michelle Perez, Senior Associate, World Resources Institute
- Panel of private sector conservation initiatives: Heartland Co-op, United Suppliers' SUSTAIN, Winfield and others

3.3 In 2016, WPAC invite experts to outline the opportunities for urban and rural collaboration, and the status of current efforts.

- Dustin Miller, Iowa League of Cities – CIG Water Quality Trading Grant Status
- Steve Hershner, Cedar Rapids Utility Director – Cedar River RCPP Project
- Dave Taylor, Madison, WI Waste Water – Adaptive Management Pilot Project
- Representatives from Iowa Cities and Rural Stakeholders
- Representatives from Watershed Management Authorities

Submitted by Ben Gleason, Co-Chair
December 28, 2015