

Watershed Planning Advisory Council

Tuesday, April 4, 1:30 - 3:30PM

Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines
2nd Floor Conference Room

Welcome and introductions: Attendees: WPAC Chair Clare Lindahl and Catherine DeLong, Conservation Districts of Iowa; WPAC Vice-chair Ann Robinson, Iowa Environmental Council; Tyler Bettin, Iowa Pork Producers Assoc.; Ben Gleason, Iowa Corn Growers; Jake Hansen, Iowa Department of Land Stewardship; Mark Land, Iowa Floodplains and Stormwater Management; Dean Mattoon, Iowa League of Cities; Rick Robinson, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation; Adam Schneiders, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Greg Sindt, Iowa Water Environment Association; John Torbert, Iowa Drainage District Association; John Wills, Iowa House; Roger Wolf, Iowa Soybean Association

Observers: Bob Bernard, Trout Unlimited; Allen Bonini, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Linda Kinman, Iowa Association of Water Agencies; Pam Mollenhauer, State Hygienic Lab

Reviewed agenda.

Report on past and upcoming outreach around WPAC's 2017 Areas of Agreement

Clare L. reported on presenting Areas of Agreement at Legislative Ag/Natural Resources subcommittee meeting, Feb 8. Told bright spot story, talked a little about WPAC. To make sure they are aware of diverse body that supports planning, funding for water quality improvements, etc.

Legislative Update/Discussion

John Wills was the only legislator able to attend, due to ongoing session. He gave a short summary of action on water still active in the Legislature. Including:

- Committee bill/Chip Baltimore. Expect to be the water quality bill that will come out of house: a "skeleton" bill with ability to be fleshed out Would provide about \$230 million in funding over 10 years Takes \$\$ out of RIF. Also includes a water excise tax that would be used for urban conservation. Would take \$\$ out of general fund next year. For edge of field and in-field practices, also urban. Think has good chance to be passed in Senate. Would create state SRF loan program that would be repaid. Eventually might be capitalized and build up loan amount, and allow dropping of sales/excise tax on drinking water. Would support a more watershed-based approach, statewide.
- Wills said he is co-signer to WISE bill, that would phase in sales tax over 3-6 years, not tax increase, require 60% of \$\$ require to be spent on wq practices. Started as discussion point. Don't expect serious movement. Two could go together. Could raise \$180 million/yr eventually.

Questions:

- Greg S.: Who do you see administering \$\$?
- Clare L: Funding for watershed planning and technical assistance? Now in bill at only 4% versus 10% that has been allowed for admin. A concern: WPAC has indicated support and need for more technical assistance and watershed planning.

Wills: House bill mostly implemented through IDALS for work w farmers. WISE would be centered through DNR but divided up through different state entities based on formula (which might be changed as move forward). See tremendous benefits for what might be happening out in the field. Either/both a tremendous boost beyond funding we have now.

Ann R., Others: State funding more important than ever, as we can expect less funding at federal level for USDA farm conservation programs and 319 program.

Roger W: ISA in support of House Plan and IWILL funding bill. Great if this comes out of this session.

Rick R. IFBF is figuring out spending and priorities. Wait and see.

Ben G.: Glad to hear that something could happen this year.

WPAC in 2017

Clare L.: With a focus on Areas of Agreement, is there something that this group can do in coming year that's productive re this body and bigger aim of promoting conservation and water quality.

Mark L. - A lot of energy around WMAs. Would like to put some energy and see what role of group could be to support watershed approach.

Jake H. Like to see group build on momentum created last year. Think was a productive year. Did move more than it has recently. Thought got some good info on how to engage and how to help, rather than just scolding on what we weren't doing. Did a good job as leaders of discussion of how can we do good with what we have...

IFBF. Got some areas of general agreement, be nice to pursue, follow up, focus on those. Will depend on what legislature does before we get too far down the road.

John T: Agree was one of most productive years.

Other comments:

- A lot of things listed here have been a lot of progress. Some accounting for how things have been incorporated. Measurements essential for long-term progress. More vague... What means. Look at in more depth what those are trying to get at – need more guidance... And accounting for what's already happening.
- What is WRCC doing? Jake H. – What is coming out of? Basically discussing issues that come up – collaborative opportunities. Coordinating council without \$\$ or authority in law to tell each other what to do. Constructive place to hear what agencies are doing together, share info and set stage for cooperation. A lot of empty chairs right now, because federal positions haven't been filled. In a lot of flux. Can be a vehicle to take info from this body and share with agencies and Governor.

ISA – Think areas of agreement are great. If one issue I struggle with. Don't need any more meetings – would be in favor of meeting once/yr. A lot at stake by helping those watershed efforts.

Clare L. - Only required to meet once/year. Do all have a lot of meetings. Pick something productive that everyone can gain something.

Greg S.: Have trouble envisioning how can get anything done if only meet once/yr for 2-3 hours. Would need people willing to undertake subcommittees.

Ben G.: Once

Dean M.: Would like to see one longer meeting that has a more meaty agenda. Would reduce travel for meetings that don't accomplish much.

Mark L.: A lot of groups doing these things. But helpful to keep tabs on and let groups doing the actual work tap into. Possibly create a scorecard and document into a report that shows direction. That might be facilitated session so can develop an annual report.

Ann R.: Suggest twice/year. Seems necessary if want to do anything constructive. What about workgroups? If going to meet less often, do we need workgroups to be meeting in between to bring things to the table? Maybe not do presentations so much: Alert members to WRCC or other meetings that may be of interest. Watershed planning, WMAs, if this is broadly supported in Areas of Agreement, how can WPAC support existing or expanded efforts?

John T: Also be comfortable with twice/year. To better reflect range of things happening. Think times when meetings were very contentious and stressful. Think light years ahead of where we were.

Unknown speakers:

- Goal set by legislature is to make recommendations... can we realistically do if only have one meeting/year.
- Our charge is really to make recommendations. And are we really focused on doing that? Are we fulfilling charge of group?
- One meeting year or meeting as needed. Good to get feedback sooner rather than later. Could do on call if beneficial for state agencies to present what's happening. Could have speakers?

Greg S.: Thought our workgroup on measurement was very productive and stimulating, but in the end, a waste of time if WPAC not likely to honor that work by supporting recommendations to come out of.

Clare L: Think done about as far as we can go. Can dive deeper into something. Find out how as a group could strengthen watershed approach.

Ben Gleason: When get into nitty-gritty, don't agree. Because of diversity. Have to stay at a high level.

Rick R. – Let chair and vice-chair decide process and whether one or two meetings/year needed. How we could use them.

Election of Chair and Vice-chair

Rick R. – Move reelect chair (Clare Lindahl) and vice chair (Ann Robinson) for another year term.

Vote: Passed unanimously with 12 out of 20 voting members.

Other Comments/Discussion from Members:

Ann R. – Shared info about survey of watershed leaders on water quality data collection, purposes and resources needed. Had good response to survey from WQI and WMA projects – about 67% of those contacted. Used list compiled from agencies and IHR. Widespread support for monitoring from those that responded to survey. Many good comments, encourage WPAC members to read how watershed leaders are using water monitoring.

John T: Reported on results to date of Des Moines Water Works lawsuit. Federal and state component – IA supreme court met on those issues last Sept issued in Jan on state issues and briefly put, re damages and limited liability of drainage districts. Found in favor of drainage districts. Lawsuit dismissed. Still within 30-day period for appeal process.

Tyler B: Iowa Pork still has funds for events, such as meals, coordination with IDALS for edge-of-field practices. Contact Tyler if think have project that might use \$\$ for.

Mark L: Focusing on floodplains currently. Have strategic planning session scheduled later this month. Considering working on more water quality issues.

Jake H: On April 21, deadline for preapps under RCPP. IDALS has 2 projects right now, don't know will do anything new. Might be willing to partner on a project. Another WRCC meeting before June 30.

Ben G: Working w CDI on distributing Retain Test kits. Planning summer meetings.

Roger W: – ISA Environmental Program Staff busy doing 8 watershed plans, HUC 12 scale, including assessments, using GIS tools, stakeholder process, watersheds mirror goals of state INRS. On track to have 20 plans written in next year or so. Three connected with cities.

Dean M.: League of Cities currently forming nutrient trading program for IA. Inc. registry to match projects need \$\$ with cities that might want to support. Working on metric system now.

Rick R: Grant program, w county Farm Bureaus working on variety of projects. This year's funding cycle completed.. At least 15 apps for over \$300,000 funding. Most got some funding. FB Spokesman had special insert last week on conservation.

Greg S.: IWEA supporting cooperation between and point and nonpoint through sponsored project funding. Promoting doing projects that will have large amount of real benefits, not just "feel good."

Adam S.: Making good progress on point source side of INRS. Municipalities and agencies cooperating with NPDES program that DNR requires permits from major dischargers. Now have 103 permits negotiated out of 150 issued.

Catherine DeLong: Went with two commissioners to National Ag Day in D.C., to advocate for: Conservation technical assistance; Farm Bill Title 2 Conservation funding; US EPA 319 grants.

Clare L: Received McKnight grant to help support work on ag sourcewater in partnership w DNR. Will bring on 2 district staff to focus on sourcewater to provide capacity at local level.

IDALS and DNR – Retirements: Wayne Petersen retiring. Have urban conservation in IA because of Wayne. Also John Olsen in DNR water quality also retiring this week. Going to miss them.

Public Comment Period

SHL – Established to watch over public health, espially with regard to water. Starting to see emergence of antibiotic resistant microbes in soil. Need to be concerned about implications for animal health as well as human. Water quality and health workshop and Governor's Public Health public health conference, April 10-12.

Allen B: – Thank CDI for standing up for 319 program in congressional lobbying.

Bob B: Iowa TU focused on addressing threats from invasive plant species. A lot of manual labor. Ongoing process. Getting support from national office.

WPAC adjourned at 3:00 p.m.