Stream Health Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

8/4/15

CBPO, Fish Shack

**Participants:**

Neely Law, CWP (Co-Chair)

Rich Starr, USFWS (Co-Chair)

Kyle Runion, CRC (Staff)

Jim Haggerty, USACE NY

Sarah Woodford, VDEQ

Fred Kelly, Severn River Keeper

Scott Stranko, MDNR

Alison Armocida, MDNR

Denise Clearwater, MDE

Julie Winters EPA

Chris Spaur, USACE Baltimore

Justin Hynicka, USGS

Claire Buchanan, ICPRB

Erik Michelsen, Anne Arundel County Dept. of Public Works

Kip Mumaw, Kyle Ashum Ecosystem Services

Marian Norris, NPS

Bill Stack, CWP

Matt Meyers, Fairfax County

Julie Pippel, Washington County

**Action Items:**

Action: Denise to provide information on MDE efforts to streamline permit review process to Co-Chairs to share with workgroup

Action: Request for work group to review existing recommendations from the spreadsheet or include to recommendations and identify specific actions that will address these recommendations or outputs as suggested such as forming a work group or identify a process and forward actions for biennial workplan. Neely and Rich to send email with further guidance on approach discussed today.

Action: Distribute GIT funding request to membership and request for proposal ideas

Action: Stranko send new guidelines MD DNR developed for internal review of stream restoration projects. Law or Runion to distribute to workgroup.

**Minutes:**

**Meeting Purpose**: Discuss and identify actions to populate biennial work plan for implementation 2016-2018

**Overview of permit documentation summary of existing actions and recommendations**

* Neely provided overview of permit documentation summary provided by Jana Davis & Julie Winters. Information in spreadsheet provides summary of permit documentation from approximately 2009 to 2017; provides a comprehensive documentation of meetings, site visits and other reports.
* With this we have a starting point with which we can familiarize ourselves with what has been happening the past couple of years
* Center for Watershed Protection, in the role as a CBP Coordinator, with input from R. Starr, reformatted information and added information to facilitate discussion of how documentation aligns with 5 management strategies (described on page 15 of the Stream Health Outcome Management Strategy).
  + In the “Grouped by Mstrat” page, actions and recommendations are categorized by primary management strategy and further divided into common themes to categorize the actions (noted as Tier 1). Further tiers separate categories into additional categories
* Today we want to look at how those actions and recommendations from the summary align with the five management strategies to start to develop priorities and specific actions within work plan
  + Management strategies and actions are not as specific as they need to be in the biennial work plan. Articulate more specific actions.
* R. Starr reminded membership that first draft of work plan is due November 1, 2015 and actions can come from
  + 1) existing recommendations already in the compilation of permit documentation summary document,
  + 2) specific requests from agencies stating recommendations that are important to them,
  + Or a combination of 1) and 2).
* Various partners will be responsible for actions within the biennial work plan. Though there is no official commitment to specific actions, leaders of many involved organizations have committed to the outcomes of these actions by signing the Bay Agreement. There is a “semi-voluntary compliance” in participating. It will be vital that the SHWG engages with organizations in order to obtain assistance.

**Identify and discuss additional existing actions identified by the Work Group**

General Permitting Issues

* D. Clearwater stated commitment from MDE to streamline the permit process. One specific example of how this will be done is a revised application form to assist with restoration permitting. Intent is to be clearer on what information is required in the application to be sure all information is included with the first submission.

Action: D. Clearwater to provide information on MDE efforts to streamline permit review process to Co-Chairs to share with workgroup

* J. Haggerty concurred that changing the joint application to more succinctly identify the types of information needed for restoration projects would increase accessibility and ease of application process would be beneficial. Noted statutory requirements that need to be met under NEPA and section 404(b)(1) of the CWA, which require avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of impacts to the aquatic environment and state specific requirements (water quality standards) that can affect permit requirements
* N. Law stated need to see how work in MD, for example, can be used as a template to address Baywide permiting issues. Heard from stakeholders in PA, VA, DC the need to address permitting issues, as well.
* F. Kelly stated need for increased communication between regulatory agencies and other organizations can help increase participation in projects and permitting activities. Funds for project implementation need to be expended.
* B. Stack suggested formation of an ad hoc workgroup as an action for the biennial workplan to focus on permitting issues for entire watershed based on past recommendations and issues to address this sense of urgency. Overlap and interrelationships amongst the issues address and need to have a forum to resolve the issues to define effective actions. This will allow for prioritization of specific issues, expediting the permit process.
* C. Buchanan supported this approach
* E. Michelsen & F. Kelly expressed concern that a workgroup would delay actions needed and stated need for actions that resulted in:
  + Regulatory review process that recognized development impacts are different than restoration impacts and
  + Review barriers for the implementation of restoration should be lowered
* N. Law concurred these issues are critical and next step is to identify the ‘how to achieve this results’ and who will be responsible in what specified timeframe

Permitting Issue: Alternative Analysis

* R. Starr proposed action in the biennial workplan to address alternative analysis based on information provided in spreadsheet. (e.g. Meeting led by CBT and MDE in 03/13 recommended that Corps, EPA, and jurisdiction work together to determine if local WIPs can satisfy need for alternative analysis).
  + Alternative analysis includes two separate parts of the stream restoration project process: site analysis &, design analysis.
  + Suggested action to develop guidelines to determine site and design analysis. R Starr volunteer to lead this effort (populating first several columns in biennial work plan with the exception of timeline). Referenced work being done with MDE
* B.Stack suggested that this could also be addressed by the “permitting work group” that he suggested.
* E. Michaelson suggests *WIPs be used as another solutio*n to alternative analysis for site identification threshold and accepting sealed and signed plans from consultant as design threshold. Further added existing methods to measure and monitor geomorphoric and biological functions should be sufficient
* M. Meyers stated additional would be beneficial from regulatory as well programmatic needs at local level to select ‘good projects’.
* Biennial work plan action may be to develop a technical working group is to establish criteria to approve alternative analysis in permitting process given two examples suggested.

Action: Request for work group to review existing recommendations from the spreadsheet or include to recommendations and identify specific actions that will address these recommendations or outputs as suggested such as forming a work group or identify a process and forward actions for biennial workplan. Neely and Rich to send email with further guidance on approach discussed today.

Pooled Monitoring

* S. Stranko suggested action to “expand and formalize” pooled monitoring approach identified in spreadsheet and as part of ongoing collaborative work in MD. We hope that information gained from restoration projects can help inform permit reviewers and expedite the process.
* There is life beyond this first round of pooled monitoring research with four projects funded to for a three year period; next year, $300k toward more pooled monitoring and research
* DNR has a long term commitment from CBT’s funding, but is looking for more partners and funding.
* Suggestions to formalize pooled monitoring plan include:

1. finding semi-permanent funding sources for pooled monitoring
2. Transition from ad-hoc to more permanent institutional framework
3. find a way to expand pooled monitoring outside of Maryland and into the entire Chesapeake watershed
4. Data management need for the data (relates to data clearinghouse action identified in spreadsheet)

* N Law reminded twofold focus on Stream Health Outcome that address stream health to improve Bay water quality (TMDL) and local stream health.

**Other Actions**

* S. Stranko: There is a lot of existing research that we need access to in order to review and summarization so we can learn from it and have this knowledge used by decision makers
* *M. Meyer:* Another piece of information to use is USGS data; how can we use this data as a tool to inform and influence design in stream restoration?
* Rich Starr concurred there is a lot of data available and advance recommendations of the expert panel that explored some of this research to help facilitate better designs.

**What’s missing?**

*Matt Meyer:*

* What is the optimal target/what lift can we set for urban areas dealing with local benthic impairments in IBI?

*Neely Law:*

* Make effort to engage those who haven’t submitted input to put into work plan now rather than later.

*Rich Starr:*

* Add column to list who added specific information in case someone wants to contact them about it? Neely will check protocol.

**Member updates:**

*Scott Stranko:*

* Future of MD streams restoration and protection conference at Mount St. Mary’s College… may produce interesting info for this group
* Maryland water monitoring council annual meeting in November… presentations showing data;
  + Workgroup working on similar issues, future report of progress; DNR & trust fund work can help group along… stay in contact

*Matt Meyer:*

* MWCOG having a workshop in September to have localities talking about how they deal with stream restoration. Carl Berger has more information about this workshop.
* Continuing to work with USGS, looking to better use data and take it to the next level for design; pool ideas, money for research

*Denise Clearwater:*

* MDE is working with ACE on revised application; plan is to have distinct section for restoration projects;
* Rapid assessment and checklist being tested, noting if revisions are needed;
* Meeting with Rich on the latest product, a detailed process for reviewing restoration projects,
* Department is committed to expediting permit review

*Neely Law:*

* More emails coming;
* In July, the Bay Program is notified of $840k distributed amongst GITs to develop biennial work plan, metrics to develop progress, implementing biennial work plan; they are requesting initial draft ideas and proposals in Sept. Members should review the Bay Program’s guidelines and reply with any possible projects
  + Part of request for funding, request from SHWG in February to fine-tune issues described in worksheet with no update
* Spreadsheet “ripe for ideas”, still requesting input from members.

Next meeting Sept 8 – day after Labor Day

*Scott Stranko:*

* DNR has released guidelines for stream restoration to review projects, providing recommendations for other agencies, Action: will send this link out

**Next Steps for the Workgroup**

Populate biennial work plan

**Next Meeting**: September 8, 9:00-11:00 a.m., CBPO, Fish Shack