



**Missouri
Department of
Natural Resources**

WATER QUALITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

DNR Conference Center
Roaring River Conference Room
1730 E. Elm Street
Jefferson City, Missouri

March 16, 2010

10:00 a.m.

MEETING AGENDA

Mississippi River Basin Initiative Request for Proposals Overview and Strategies,
Dwayne Gelnar/Bob Ball, NRCS

Other

Agency Activities

Meetings & Conferences



MISSOURI WATER QUALITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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 Jefferson City, Missouri

March 16, 2010

MINUTES

Attendees:

Greg Anderson	DNR, Water Protection Program	Rick Hansen	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Stacia Bax	DNR, Water Protection Program	Keith Jackson	MO Dept. of Conservation
Tom Clevenger	Univ. of MO Columbia	Rick Merritt	NRCS State Technical Committee
Steve Hefner	USDA - NRCS	Steve Westin	MO Dept. of Conservation
John Bowers	UMC Soil Characterization Lab	Priscilla Stotts	DNR, Water Protection Program
Russell Dresbach	UMC Soil Characterization Lab	Glenn Davis	USDA – NRCS
Robert Reed	UMC Water Resources Research Ctr	Mike Wells	DNR Water Resources Center
Lisa Potter	MO Dept. of Conservation	Mandy Sappington	DNR, Water Protection Program
Jesse Higginbotham	DNR, Soil & Water Conservation Pgm	Tom Wallace	Geosyntec Consultants
Collette Weckenborg	DNR, Soil & Water Conservation Pgm	Bryan Hopkins	DNR Soil & Water Conservation Pgm
April Brandt	DNR, Soil & Water Conservation Pgm	Bob Lerch	USDA – ARS
Pat Hufford	USDA – NRCS	Michael Bollinger	Ameren - Environmental Services
David Goggins	DNR, Soil & Water Conservation Pgm	Nick Muenks	Geosyntec Consultants
Colleen Meredith	DNR, Soil & Water Conservation Pgm	Aaron Garringer	UMC MoRAP
Claire Baffaut	USDA – ARS	Mike McKee	MO Dept. of Conservation
Michael Gold	UMC Center for Agroforestry	Jerri Davis	US Geological Survey
Shibu Jose	UMC Center for Agroforestry	John Johnson	DNR, Water Protection Program
Ranjith Udawatta	UMC Center for Agroforestry	Steve Mahfood	The Nature Conservancy
Chung Ho Lin	UMC Center for Agroforestry	Don Wilkison	US Geological Survey
Cindy DiStefano	MO Dept. of Conservation	John Lory	UMC
Bob Broz	UMC Extension Water Quality Pgm	Peter Scharf	UMC
Kelly Srigley Werner	USFWS MO Private Lands Office	Darlene Johnson	USDA – NRCS
Harold Deckerd	USDA – NRCS	Dwaine Gelnar	USDA - NRCS
Kevin Dacey	USDA – NRCS	Darlene Schaben	DNR, Water Protection Program

Introductions were made.

Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) Request for Proposals Overview and Strategies, Dwaine Gelnar, Darlene Johnson, Harold Decker, NRCS

PowerPoint Presentation; Handouts: Darlene Johnson’s presentation; Harold Deckard’s presentation. Also available: :A Framework for Watershed and Edge-of-Field Monitoring; Monitoring and Evaluation Overview.

Dwaine said the MRBI has been set up as a partner-based initiative. With partners working together it will be driven by all partners and not just what USDA envisions. Darlene Johnson’s presentation is on the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) portion, which involves EQIP, WHIP, and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) funding. There is \$50 million available for this portion. Harold Deckard will present on the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) Initiative. There is \$25 million available for this part. Both of the portions are included in the Request for Proposals (RFP) published in the Federal Register on March 2, 2010. The proposals for each must be initiated through separate proposals and mailed separately, however it should be indicated on each if a sponsor will be submitting proposals for both programs. After the presentations, Dwaine



said he was interested in receiving feedback from the group and try to get partners together. They are discouraging too many proposals coming from different partners that have different motives.

Darlene Johnson said they emphasize that this is not a grant program but a partnership effort. The financial assistance will be given to eligible producers and landowners that are in the MRBI targeted watersheds. The objective is to improve the health of the Mississippi River Basin and is totally voluntary. Once the proposal has been submitted and accepted by the NRCS Chief (David White in Washington D.C.) it will be up to that individual partner working with NRCS to get the eligible landowners to sign up. CCPI includes Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The RFP defines who an eligible partner can be. Partners will not be required to provide financial or technical assistance but will receive higher priority if they do. Once a proposal is selected, all funds will go into individual producers contracts. None of the funds will go directly to the partner. Up to 10% of the partners proposal budget can go toward edge-of-field monitoring and evaluation. Missouri will only receive MRBI funding if a proposal is accepted.

Once a partner-submitted CCPI proposal is approved by NRCS and a partnership agreement is signed, eligible producers must participate in an approved area; enroll in EQIP, WHIP, and/or CSP; meet eligibility requirements; and be ranked by NRCS, using partner-developed ranking criteria, which should be on the NRCS Web site soon. The producer must be eligible and the land must be eligible for a landowner to enroll in one of the NRCS programs. Financial assistance for monitoring and evaluation will be piloted. A new NRCS interim practice standard for monitoring and evaluation has been developed. A payment schedule will be developed for cost-sharing on the monitoring and evaluation practice. The partner must identify where the edge-of-field monitoring will be carried out. Several questions were asked with discussions following on edge-of-field monitoring. There are a lot of opportunities with edge-of-field monitoring and will be really important for partners to figure out what they want to do in terms of monitoring in these proposals.

The Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) has \$25 million in funding available for FFY2010. Partners are required to provide a cash match of at least 5% of the acquisition and/or restoration costs. Partners who provide additional financial or technical assistance will receive higher priority. Once a partner-submitted WREP proposal is approved by NRCS, NRCS and the partner will enter into a partnership agreement. All the ranking will be done by NRCS. Eligible producers must enroll in a permanent easement or 30-year easement.

To apply, a potential partner provides narrative responses to the RFP. The partner responses must address all requirements of the RFP. If there is a part that does not apply, an explanation should be included as to why it does not apply and not just say 'not applicable.'

The MRBI will have two RFPs. The first was published March 2 for CCPI and WREP. The second RFP will cover the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) and will be a subpart of the national CIG RFP. Darlene said the second RFP should be out within the next couple of weeks.

Individual producers cannot submit proposals under the RFP. Separate proposals must be submitted for CCPI and WREP. If submitting a proposal for each, it must be made clear in each proposal that separate proposals have been submitted. No technical assistance funds will be provided to partners through the MRBI agreement. The State Conservationist (J.R. Flores, Columbia NRCS) may enter into separate agreements for technical assistance through normal mechanisms. To assist with technical assistance, Mr. Flores has committed up to 15% of whatever NRCS gets in technical assistance funds. Some examples were given. That funding is going to be completely reliant upon the kinds of proposals submitted and accepted at the Washington level.

The proposals are going to be ranked and a lot of the priority is going to be based upon the partner's history on working with landowners, if there is a watershed plan in place, if there has been work in the watershed to address water quality, the funds to be leveraged, and the monitoring efforts.



All proposals in response to the RFP must follow the submittal instructions, and must be postmarked or courier-delivered by May 3, 2010. A copy must also be submitted to the State Conservationist, J.R. Flores. If a multi-state proposal is submitted, a copy must also be submitted to the cooperating state. The State Conservationist is required to review the proposals to check for potential cooperation or duplication of efforts. He will also review for adherence to program regulations, benefits of implementation, and local issue or concerns. The State Conservationist will then provide a general recommendation to the NRCS Chief.

Darlene showed a map of the watershed focus areas (North Fork Salt River; Middle & South Fork Salt River; Lower St. Francis River; Little River Ditches Basin; Cache River Basin; and Lower Grand River Basin). A list of Missouri-chosen Core Conservation Practices and Supporting Conservation Practices were shown for avoiding, controlling, and trapping. There is also a national list. Darlene quickly went over some of the proposal requirements. Of the twelve subcategories that need included in the criteria, four mention monitoring and evaluation. So, monitoring and evaluation will carry quite a bit of weight in the proposal. The proposal is the only document NRCS will use in the evaluation process.

The partnership agreements will identify roles of the partners and NRCS. It will also include monitoring and evaluation responsibilities, format and frequency of reports, plan of work and budget, project schedule, and other requirements. By June 30 these partnership agreements will be signed and partners will then be ready to conduct a signup with producers. All funds will be obligated by Sept. 1, 2010. Dwaine talked about trying to leverage staff costs and some in-kind from several agencies and groups and try to get them together in a particular watershed where there are common interests. There is a national RC&D Clearinghouse Web site to see what proposals are being submitted. If someone sees an area of interest to them, they can contact the sponsoring entity and let them know what they would like to contribute. This may help with the financial assistance that will help with leveraging on things like the edge-of-field monitoring. Dwaine said they envision the SWCDs will play a very active role. Some state and federal groups may provide in-kind contribution. Again the deadline is May 3, 2010.

Dwaine said they are still learning a lot in this first year. Hopefully, the next three years will be easier. NRCS state staff will be available to assist with questions.

In answer to a question, Pat Hufford thought the landowners were excited about having this opportunity for additional funds in their watershed to do conservation practices. There continues to be concern about their privacy and sharing edge-of-field data. In the Farm Bill, it states NRCS is mandated to protect their data. Dwaine mentioned there was not a lot of funding for cropland through EQIP this year. Hopefully, this will be an opportunity to get EQIP funds to those producers. Bob Broz mentioned that crop producers he spoke with were very interested, but the 25% cost-share not paid by EQIP may be an out-of-pocket cost to the landowner, which seems to be the problem.

WREP through the MRBI, Harold Deckard, NRCS PowerPoint presentation

Harold said that WREP is different than the CCPI in that WREP pays 100% of average cost. Through WREP you can protect (easements), restore (shallow water habitat, plant trees), and enhance (maybe add shallow water habitat to an existing easements). These proposals are multi-year proposals. So, there may be other years where there will be no competition. There is \$25 million in financial assistance available in 2010. Partners must provide a 5% match in cash for financial assistance. If additional contributions are provided, a higher priority will be given. After the proposals are ranked and selected, landowners apply in the project areas at the local NRCS office. Partners may assist landowners in developing and ranking their applications. With assistance from partners, NRCS has developed a ranking criteria which can be used. Harold had that available. Harold talked about the ranking considerations.



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In answer to a questions regarding edge-of-field monitoring, Dwaine said they want to have documented outcomes or measurable benefits or practices in terms of load reduction on edge-of-field monitoring. Pat Hufford mentioned a couple of helpful documents that are on the MRBI Web page related to monitoring (“Interim 799 Monitoring and Evaluation Standard” and “A Framework for Watershed and Edge-of-Field Monitoring, Including Environmental Indicators”). Glenn Davis had copies of these available. Discussions were held regarding how modeling would fit in.

Contact Dwaine or any of the staff if you have any further questions.

Agency Activities

Priscilla Stotts mentioned to the group an opportunity to support an AmeriCorps member. She had information available on how much they get paid. She also shared the new updated list of DNR phone numbers.

Bob Broz mentioned a modeling webinar, Tools for Watershed Management Planning, on April 22, in cooperation with the Heartland project. (<http://www.heartlandwq.iastate.edu>).

On April 23-24, Water Quality Extension, in cooperation with DNR through a 319 grant, will hold a Watershed Management Planning Education and Training session at Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark. Please register to attend.

The Water Quality Short Course will be held in Columbia at the NRCS Training Center, April 27-29. This course is in cooperation with DNR, NRCS, and University Extension. Registration is \$60.

May 4-5 will be the Watershed Education Workshop in Nebraska City. This workshop deals in delineating watersheds and how to build watershed models for educational purposes. Heartland will pay for room and board. Registration fee is \$20.

The National Soil & Water Conservation Society meeting is scheduled for July 19-21 in St. Louis.

Shibu Jose mentioned the Center for AgroForestry has long-term monitoring data that goes back approx. 15 years looking at nutrients as well as herbicides. If anyone is interested in seeing any of the publications, please contact them. Some may be online. Some cover the watersheds chosen in the MRBI program.

Bob Lerch said they are trying to figure out what they are going to do for CEAP monitoring in the Salt River Basin. A lot depends on the outcome of the RFP.

Meeting adjourned.