

Performance Benchmark Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.



Meeting Summary

Welcome *Eliana Brown, University of Illinois Extension*

Eliana welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. She facilitated the meeting and Layne Knoche and Joan Cox from University of Illinois Extension assisted with technology and meeting minutes.

Review of 2021 Report Chapter 8 Adaptive Management *Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency*

Trevor invited suggestions from members as he reviewed chapter sections. Member suggestions for content improvement include:

- Report point and non-point loads on the water quality data and goals in Figures 8.1 and 8.2.
- Include the pounds nutrients reduced along with the acre implementation of each ag BMP in Figures 8.3 through 8.6.
- Include 2019, 2020, and 2021 implementation data in at least one of the Figures 8.3-8.6.
- Horizontally rotate the point source data display in Figure 8.7 to accommodate all years' data.
- Re-word portions of Future Resource Needs section (p. 206) to include lessons learned, action items, key take-aways, and more definitive statements. Specifically, regarding the PFC funding (second paragraph p.206), clarify *who* is proposing the funding legislation.

NLRS Biennial Report additional analysis *Trevor Sample, IEPA*

Trevor explained that a PWG survey about the Biennial Report revealed a desire for more analyses and conclusions drawn about data in the report. He invited suggestions on the desired type of data analysis, who would perform the analysis, potential funding for it, and the timing of analysis. No suggested analyses were brought forth. Trevor said that the Steering Committee would continue to be open to discussions on this in the future. He clarified that such a proposal should be presented at a future PBC meeting prior to being considered for inclusion in the Biennial Report. He also mentioned that such an analysis would need to be completed by May 2023 and would need to be summarized succinctly to be included in the 2023 Biennial Report.

Next Steps *Eliana Brown, U of I Extension*

Eliana reiterated that anyone wanting further analysis could reach out to the Steering Committee. She announced that the conclusions of how to streamline the next Biennial Report will be shared at the Policy Working Group meeting during the Annual NLRS Workshop. She announced that the Workshop date is Nov. 1 and registration is now open. All NLRS partners and stakeholders were notified by email. She and the Steering Committee thanked PBC members for their suggestions on ways to improve the Adaptive Management Chapter.

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Albert Cox, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago; Brian Rennecker, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Chris Davis, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; Cindy Skrukud, Fox River Study Group; Eliana Brown, University of Illinois Extension; Jason Solberg, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association; Joan Cox, University of Illinois Extension ; Kelly Thomson, Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group; Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau; Layne Knoche, University of Illinois Extension; Max Webster, American Farmland Trust; Michael Woods, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Mila Marshall, Sierra Club; Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Welcome *Eliana Brown, U of I Extension*

Eliana facilitated the meeting and Layne Knoche and Joan Cox from University of Illinois Extension assisted with technology and meeting minutes.

Review of 2021 Report Chapter 8 Adaptive Management *Trevor Sample, IEPA*

Trevor requested members openly discuss suggestions as he highlighted each section of this chapter in the [2021 Biennial Report](#). He reminded members that the Illinois Biennial Report had adopted a logic model like the Iowa NLRs to show implementation of the Strategy through resources, outreach, land and facilities, and water. He also remarked that previously PBC discussions resolved to take a larger view of progress toward meeting the NLRs goals, and therefore debuted the Adaptive Management Chapter in the 2019 Biennial Report.

Open Discussion about Chapter 8 sections

Trevor: Water quality data and goals Figures 8.1 and 8.2 (p. 192) will be updated to include new 5-year running averages, 2016-2020 and 2017-2021 respectively.

Comment (Albert Cox): Albert would like to see how individual non-point and point source loads data relate to data already in these figures. He suggested the addition of two additional bars to clarify data by sector. Then progress in each sector is clear in relation to the goals.

Response (Trevor): The water quality data is based on 5-year averages, and point source data is based on yearly averages. Annual point source data is available for 2017-2022, but not before that period, so overall it would not clarify progress in the point source chapter.

Comment (Albert): On p.193 end of last paragraph prior to *Implementation Scenarios*: Provide an update on the NREC and ICGA studies.

Response (Trevor): After the USGS section on water loads in the Chapter 3 Science Assessment, there will be a section summarizing the Illinois R. and Rock R. studies.

Trevor: Implementation Scenarios were shown in Tables 8.1 to 8.4 with ag BMPs and acres needed to reach goals. We could build one table only to show the sources and then discard estimated acres needed since we report that below in the Figures 8.3 through 8.6. We could also include data for the 2020 implementation level and 2021 implementation level in Figures 8.3 to 8.6, in addition to the 2019 bars in these figures.

Comment (Albert): Something that may speak to the effectiveness of each practice would be to show the pounds nutrient reduction along with the acre implementation for each practice. This is how the data is expressed in the point source sector, as pounds reduced statewide. Could we translate acres of an ag practice statewide into the pounds of nutrient reduction by that implemented statewide acreage for each practice?

Response (Trevor): The Science Team uses percent reduction efficiency for each practice and finding the pounds may require looking at the baseline implementation compared to the change through each period. The ability to do this will depend on how the Science Team calculated percent reduction efficiencies. I will have to discuss this with the Science Team.

Comment (Cindy): The Scenario graphs (Figures 8.3-8.6) are helpful. It may be a good idea to incorporate 2019, 2020, and 2021 implementation data into at least one of these graphs, since incorporation of this information expresses whether we are making progress year to year.

Response (Trevor): Since these practices are reported through NASS, it may be biennial data for some practices and yearly for others. Bioreactors, for example, come from a different data source and are reported yearly.

Trevor: Point Sources data baseline was 2009 – 2011, named “2011 data” and includes one graph, Figure 8.7. This figure will be updated to include 2021 and 2022 loads. It would continue to show major and the combined major/minor industrials plus the minor facilities data.

Comment (Cindy): Will N data be provided in the narrative for point sources N reduction from baseline?

Response (Trevor): This is discussed in Point Source chapter. It’s reported but we don’t have a goal for N reduction in the point source sector, since this sector focuses on P and IEPA has agreements with facilities to meet the 1.0 mg/L and the 0.5 mg/L goals.

Comment (Cindy): I present these data to stakeholders, and usually I show this graph on p. 200. Typically, I add a sentence or two about the N reduction.

Comment (Trevor): Should we display all years’ data in this Figure 8.7?

Comment (Cindy): Yes, flip the point source figure horizontally instead of vertically, so it wouldn’t get smaller, just longer.

Comment (Albert): Yes, show all years’ data. Replace the histograms with a line chart eventually.

Comment (Trevor): For now, the bars are showing the difference between the majors and others, but in future could be a separate line on a line chart.

Trevor: The Revision to Conservation Practice Procedure (p.201) section will not be included in the next report.

The section on the importance of watershed-based planning, IEPA 319 grant information, and plan development and implementation over time can be updated. This provides guidance on where partners could direct efforts work on smaller scales. We discussed future resource needs (p.206) and some status of legislation, which could be updated. The recent announcement from the IDOA to increase conservation planning technical assistance capacity at local level will go in the ag chapter and can also be mentioned here.

Comment (Mila): Who hires and trains the forty new individuals working with SWCDs?

Response (Michael): It will be me, Brian Rennecker working in conjunction with AISWCD (Grant Hammer and his team), as well as the Sangamon County SWCD. We will hire. Training will be in partnership with NRCS as well.

Comment (Mila): Is this PFC money?

Response (Michael): No. The 3.5 million are state leveraged funds to bring in federal funds.

Comment (Mila): We have been receiving partner and stakeholder questions asking whether any of the funds will be allocated to wastewater treatment facilities or if they are solely for ag. Could you clarify?

Response (Michael): For this award, the funds are only for NLRS efforts in ag.

Comment (Albert): Many tentative statements are made in this Future Resource Needs section (p. 206). Word these as a list of lessons learned or as action items instead of using the current phrasing. For example, p. 205 “...other state and federal cost share problems *could*...”. Let’s determine if we can make more definite statements. On p.206, “...a formal needs assessment survey is recommended...”. Again, let’s list key take-aways for which stakeholders can perform actions.

Comment (Trevor): Since we have no authority for nonpoint source runoff and since implementation is voluntary, we need to be mindful that these are recommendations, and don’t want to sound regulatory.

Comment (Albert): Let's list recommendations.

Response (Trevor): We'll propose this to the IEPA and IDOA directors. During the initial development of this Chapter this issue came up. As a state agency we don't have authority to say: "This is exactly what/how we need to do something," since there are so many ways to address nonpoint sources. We also will not want to allude to who would do it or cost of doing it, since this could be any number of partners and approaches. PWG will be able to review wording in drafts, as will the state agency directors.

Comment (Cindy): Let's make sure we report on the unprecedented flow of money into conservation funding. We want to continue to use any opportunity pull in federal funding while it is available.

Response (Trevor): Yes, new funding will be mentioned. Some funding summaries may be most appropriate for ag or for adaptive management chapter.

Comment (Max): In the PFC section, the wording, "...legislation to include NLRS objectives and funding over next six years is underway at the writing of this report". Let's clarify who is taking the lead on the legislative pushes? Last year this came up that this wording implied state agencies were initiating legislation around these goals. Clarify *who* is proposing legislation to avoid confusion.

Response (Trevor): We will see what the status of legislation is at the time of the draft writing next year.

Trevor: Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades (p.207) is updated by IAWA. The Green Infrastructure Inventory will be updated to reflect stormwater needs for next year. Water Quality Monitoring is locked in with future funding, but the next report will continue to talk about the importance of funding water quality monitoring. There will be updates to the USGS Illinois River Basin Next Generation Observing Systems in the Science Assessment chapter. Also, we will continue to include the section on the importance of funding the Agency monitoring programs and the work with University of Illinois Extension.

NLRS Biennial Report additional analysis *Trevor Sample, IEPA*

Trevor explained that the Steering Committee had surveyed the Policy Working Group members to gather perspectives on the Biennial Report and how to best streamline it. Responses to the question, "Who is the audience of the report?" garnered multiple responses, suggesting it is serving many audiences. PWG members were able to recommend changes to the report, and some indicated desire for more analyses of the data and more conclusions drawn. The Report follows a logic model and there are examples of additional analyses taking place outside the scope of the report and with other funding. The analysis Reid Christianson provided on the Implementation Scenarios, the work Dr. Mclsaac has done on the Illinois River and the Rock River, are two examples of outside analysis that were summarized in the Report. Data availability timing is an issue with report production and additional analyses is not in the logic model or scope of work for the production team. If there are any additional analysis that should be done, we welcome discussion at this time. The type of data analysis, who would perform it, potential funding, and timing of analysis can all be discussed today.

Comment (Albert): If a partner thinks additional data analysis is needed, they would need to take the lead and contribute financially.

Comment (Trevor): Also, we would need that partner to present information at a follow-up PBC meeting to make sure the analysis is relevant and suitable to include in the report. We would need this by May 2023 at the latest. The analysis summary would also need to be succinct, as we are trying to streamline the Report. Most of the data in the Report is public data. Partners are free to use data and produce their own publications as well.

No suggestions for analysis were made at this time.

Trevor invited future comments on this topic be directed to the steering committee via email or phone discussions.

Next Steps *Eliana Brown, U of I Extension*

Eliana and the Steering Committee thanked members for the suggestions today and reiterated the invitation to reach out to the Steering Committee with any discussion about additional analysis. She announced that the conclusions for Biennial Report streamlining will be shared at the PWG meeting on Nov. 1, 2022.

Eliana announced details about the Nov. 1 Annual Workshop, which can be found at the IEPA's Illinois NLRS Implementation [webpage](#). These details have been emailed to the NLRS partners and stakeholders.