

POLICY WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES
November 30, 2017
Northfield Inn, Springfield IL

Conclusions and Next Steps

Session Wrap-ups

Tracking Agricultural tracking should continue by collecting data. AWQPF Tech Committee will consider adding tillage information by including the Soil Transect Survey and will explore integrating manure application data. Urban stormwater tracking needs to be expanded to include data from MS4 programs. Numerous measurements are needed and the USWG will address this. Point source tracking needs to include the ability to track load contributions.

Monitoring We need to have the ability to evaluate loads leaving the state in a consistent way.

Policy Working Group Overall, the first two years of implementation has had an overwhelming amount of stakeholder involvement through a process that has a role for everyone. Illinois has allowed for time and flexibility to make meaningful investments in permits, programs, people, and partnerships. Looking forward, big challenges are ahead and there is still plenty of work to do.

Goals Going Forward

The Policy Working Group created a short-term subgroup to develop communication strategies and materials to educate governmental bodies about NLRS. Subgroup members include: Hal Sprague, Carol Hays, Cindy Skrukrud, Mike Chandler, Dick Lyons, Alec Davis, Albert Cox, Jean Payne, Amy Walkenbach, Trevor Sample, Warren Goetsch. This subgroup will develop a presentation that can be used by members and draft a letter that could accompany NLRS material sent to the state legislature.

Tracking Spreadsheet

A subgroup refined the resources and outreach spreadsheet, which was presented to the Policy Working Group. It will be sent to members of all working groups to complete with a due date of January 15, 2018. Going forward, data will be collected every 6 months.

NSAC Progress

NSAC contracted TetraTech to analyze IL EPA dataset and found limitations. They are pursuing other ways to approach it to find solid lines of evidence. The next meeting is in December.

2018 Meeting Schedule and Conference format

Generally, the conference received favorable reviews. A follow up evaluation will be sent with a completion date of December 8. The group voted to hold two meetings in 2018, one of which may be just after a conference as it was this year. For 2018 meeting dates, the PWG can send major meeting conflict dates to IWRC.

Wrap-up & Adjourn

The Illinois EPA and IDOA thanked Brian Miller for his work facilitating the NLRS and first biennial report.

Meeting Notes

8:30-8:45 Welcome Brian Miller, IWRC

8:45-9:45 Session Wrap-ups Trevor Sample, Gregg Good, and Lauren Lurkins

- Tracking (Trevor Sample)
 - Agriculture voluntary BMP adoption
 - We need to continue to collect the same data.
 - Agencies
 - Farm Service, DNR, IDOA
 - Need to talk more about tillage and include the Soil Transect Survey
 - Urban Stormwater
 - Permitted and unpermitted sources
 - MS4 programs
 - Tracking practices like rain gardens, permeable pavements, and street sweeping.
 - Strategic actions
 - Forming stormwater work groups
 - Stormwater mgmt planning
 - Storm sewer system mapping
 - Measurements needed
 - Location, practice type, land area treated, when practice was installed, expected life of practice
 - Point Source
 - Regulating nutrients through the permitting process
 - NSAC working on future regulations to address nutrients
 - Permit appeal and settlement
 - Watershed permitting process
 - Watershed workgroups
 - Fox River Study Group
 - Des Plaines River Watershed
 - DuPage River/Salt Creek
 - How do we track loads from point sources?
 - Need ability to track point source load contributions (lbs/year)
 - Majors, Minors, and Statewide
 - HUC 8/HUC 12 watershed
 - Audience discussion
 - Tracking manure application
 - Use watershed modeling to determine load reduction from BMPs
 - Address climate variability

- Perform soil transect survey annually
 - Use tracking to facilitate water quality trading
- Monitoring (Gregg Good)
 - NMC Charges
 - What's leaving the state (5 year avg.) compared to the '89, '96 baseline
 - Super Gages
 - Talking about 9 super gages network
 - Cost is \$2.4 M (expensive, but well worth it)
 - New Joliet super gage recently installed. It should track what's coming out of Chicago urban area.
 - There is a super gage by IN border that allows us to subtract what's coming out of IN.
 - Results
 - Nitrate
 - Green river has highest annual yield for N.
 - Big Muddy has lowest annual yield.
 - Phosphorus
 - Highest yields from Little Wabash and Embarras.
 - Lowest yield Green River.
 - Suspended Sediment
 - Highest yield from Embarras.
 - Lowest yield from Big Muddy.
 - Probes
 - Continuous probes generally showing higher numbers.
 - Need to make sure we're comparing apples to apples with our baselines going forward.
 - NCSA Great Lakes to Gulf
 - Great tool that illustrates nutrient loss so people without a scientific background can better understand the issue.
 - What data sets to upload to the observatory?
 - Recommendations on how to depict data?
- Policy Working Group (Lauren Lurkins)
 - Overview
 - There has been an overwhelming amount of stakeholder involvement.
 - Process that has a role for everyone.
 - Illinois allowed for time and flexibility to make meaningful investments in permits, programs, people, and partnerships.
 - Big challenge still ahead, lots of work to do.
 - Freedom to innovate will lead to most environmental benefit.
 - Agriculture
 - Where have we been?
 - We have been everywhere!
 - Ag community - organizations and individual farmers and retailers are owning this issue

- Where do we need to go?
 - Continue work on implementation.
 - Do not burn out! Or burn out our “early adopters”.
 - Local leaders to assist in local adoption.
- Point Source
 - Where have we been?
 - Real financial investments in new tech and plant upgrades.
 - Numerous permits modified.
 - Huge reductions in P already.
 - Where do we need to go?
 - Continue to understand that every plant is unique and installation of good tech takes time.
 - Innovation will get us to useful projects faster.
 - Watershed based studies should take precedence.
 - Don't forget about opportunities for trading.
- Environmental
 - Where have we been?
 - Happy to see progress with ag and point sources.
 - Where do we need to go?
 - Our first goal is 7 years away – will we be able to meet it?
 - Whose job is it to compile point source data?
 - Funding for SWCDs.
 - Expand authority to counties for stormwater fees.
- Urban Stormwater
 - Where have we been?
 - More work to do.
 - But to have success due to 319 program, Lawn to Lake, MS4 driven education, MWRD investments, Calumet Stormwater Collaborative.
 - Where do we need to go?
 - Focus on bringing in more stakeholders in this work group.
 - Investigate funding sources like IGIG and stormwater utility fees.
 - Education is key. Street sweeping accomplishes much.
- Drinking Water
 - Where have we been?
 - Happy to be here.
 - Excited to see more awareness.
 - Where do we need to go?
 - Want to see more cover crops, reduced tillage and setbacks, grassed waterways, and filter strips.
 - Want to see continued collaboration.
- Government. Agencies
 - Where have we been?

- We “got to know each other” and figured out what we can all offer towards solutions.
- Where do we need to go?
 - Continue to become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the practices.

9:45-10:15 Goals going forward

- Hal Sprague: We have the information and skills, but we don't have the audience. People we need to get to won't just come into this room and sit down to listen to us. Think of groups we can speak to like the Illinois County Board Members, as part of our education push.
 - Have we invited the municipal league to be a part of this group?
 - Amy Walkenbach: In the very beginning, we did.
 - Hal Sprague: They tend not to show up, so that's why I'm saying we should go to their meetings. We want to be in a room with 40 county board members.
- Cindy Skrukud: Do we want to go to the legislature and get them to endorse the strategy?
 - Carol Hays: Especially since we said we need more money/data collection. That's a place it could come from..
- Brian Miller: Are there those who would like to work with Hal and get you on the County Board Member agenda?
 - Warren Goetsch: What's the ask? For urban areas, you need to increase awareness. If they're not even aware of the issue, it's difficult to get progress. At the General Assembly, I think the ask needs to be very specific and maybe the focus there is the monitoring issue, the super gage that you want to add, for example. If we go out to other groups, we need to have a clear goal in mind customized towards that group. I'm not sure what the focus would be besides general awareness and looking for more resources for something specific.
 - Cindy Skrukud: We need to say “look this is a very important issue we're working on and we need your support”.
 - Hal Sprague: Number one is education, they don't know about the hypoxia situation the way we do. They will turn around and say “who cares about this? What do the county administrators think?” It's a political process, they want to know what other people think. The board groups are important to the legislators.
 - Warren Goetsch: I was just asking Amy whether we shared these documents with legislators. I don't think we ever did. Maybe we send copies of this to leadership with letters from the EPA and someone else. Say “here are a couple areas that we need help with” and make them aware of the monitoring issue.
 - Hal Sprague: I think that's an excellent idea. If we sent this out to 118 representatives, 59 senators, I'm sure there are people in the ag community who want to be the one to support the community.
- Lauren Lurkins: At IFB, we contact farmers and gave info about the NLRs Strategy and the Biennial report and we get good reception from that. I think we do talk to lawmakers in various ways and this is something we have talked about to them

- Warren Goetsch: I do think sometimes that the connection isn't made. We've had struggles with funding SWCDs in the last few years and I wonder if the connection isn't made between what's in these documents and that line in the budget. We try, but don't seem to make any headway and there may be a disconnect between the line in the budget that's already there and some of these initiatives.
- Carol Hays: And that would also help with the county board members. We do have connections with county board members and visit. Where we could use that avenue within the SWCDs, you're right Warren, the connection isn't there and they don't understand what they could do for us.
- Albert Cox: I've decided to back up a bit and look at the strategy document and Biennial Report. I think that once we have an initiative, it's always good to consider who are the key players that would work towards moving that initiative forward. In this case, it seems like it is like everyone and you cannot have everyone in this room. It means that we are missing something. In Point Source sector, we realized there was gap between getting municipalities to connect that information. We should have a staff member for outreach and have a separate outreach meeting, not a committee per say, but some group to establish and give to each of the sectors to reach out.
- Brian Miller: What do you all think of that?
 - Cindy Skrukrud: We talk about ideas in terms of what our specific asks are.
 - Carol Hays: We need a coordinated message and don't want to do that haphazardly.
 - Hal Sprague: I think it's a good idea to think of process and content separately. Collect the ideas and information. Need to send a unified message, not a mixed message. Nothing worse than having a county board member go to one session from urban and then hear a different message from ag and not know what message to send to their constituents.
- Brian Miller: When would we want to do this?
 - Hal Sprague: She mentioned their first meeting of 2018 is in April.
- Brian Miller: Are there folks who would like to be a part of this? Raise your hands.
 - Hal Sprague, CNT
 - Mike Chandler, IDNR
 - Albert Cox, MWRDGC
 - Alec Davis, Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group
 - Warren Goetsch, IDOA
 - Carol Hays, Prairie Rivers Network
 - Dick Lyons, Illinois Council on Best Mgmt. Practices
 - Jean Payne, IFCA
 - Cindy Skrukrud, Sierra Club
 - Amy Walkenbach, Illinois EPA
 - Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA

- Warren Goetsch: there will be a customization of those metrics for IL so we'll probably be adjusting metrics based on a basin-wide effort. Is that your vision?
- Katie Flahive: I would echo everything you just said and maybe put a little more clarity on the Mississippi Basin picture. The way we've talked about it, Laura and Reid are tracking. Biennial reports for NPS and PS - there are metrics that have been agreed to. NPS report will be coming out quite soon, probably by end of this year. NPS report initial discussion of what the MARB scale NPS will be. Likely less metrics that are state-specific and we can anticipate at the MARB scale what we can track and that multiple states can describe based on what info they have at their state level. The metrics you're talking about here are key to report to IL.
- Brian Miller: We need to be able to have some causality between what you're seeing on the ground and what you're seeing in the water.
- Cindy Skrukud: Christianson was talking about the expected captures for given practices, so it seems like we need to be saying "this is what we're seeing in IL in terms of cover crops, strips, whatever, and we see the adoption at this rate" we need to assess is this rate high enough?
- Now that we have a lot more data, I'm wondering if we can't look at some of those things and figure out did it have an impact on the last three years? Greg, I'd like your thoughts
 - Greg McIsaac: For statewide analysis, we never put together a budget. We could show a correlation. I'm not sure why we didn't do that for the science assessment, but the reason we didn't continue is that the fertilizer sales data became suspicious. The last fertilizer sales data we used was in 2013 and after that, it seemed like there were a lot of strange numbers in there.
 - Jean Payne: Better fertilizer numbers now exist.
 - Brian Miller: so that could be one step. And I assume the nutrient monitoring council would have some interest in that.
- Brian Miller: Is there anyone who disagrees with that idea? Are we on pace, or do we need to pick it up or slow it down?
 - Albert Cox: I think that it is imperative to answer that question because if we set a goal, hopefully that goal meets criteria and if we have a goal by 2025 that we achieve something, we do not want to get there and say "OOPS" so it is important that we have a realistic goal and think about what we could do to make the goal realistic.
 - Dick Lyons: Do we need intermediate goals?
 - Albert Cox: We need intermediate action!
 - Dick Lyons: We're going to have to define some things ourselves, like what is a cover crop? Which are the most effective? And what I'm saying is, maybe we all have to do some homework. To me, as a farmer and someone who sits on this committee, that doesn't mean much.
- Guanglong Tian: The question do we have enough confidence to take us to 2025? We don't want to get to 2024 and say "oh wow we have to think of something different"
- Brian Miller: I think the question Cindy is raising is that there is some scientific uncertainty and I don't know how you can answer that. I think there are some key steps,

we've heard where different people want to go, are there some action steps that should be taken to make this better?

- Carol Hays: Of the BMPs we've accepted, which ones will get us to where we need to be? What combinations can help us get there, and how many do we need? So we calculate the different scenarios so that we can have a goal and think about how to get there. Then at least you'd have an idea of what that road map needs to look like. I think we probably have the information needed to do that based on what I know we have and what we've seen other states do.
- Lauren Lurkins: I use these tables and we went through these tables so we're years into having this discussion. Frankly, all the programming that we've created and the investments our farmers have been making is because of these. Laura Gentry said she's done the analysis and taken Mark David's analysis further to know what crops grow where and seeing what practices would work where. We're not here today with a clean slate, we've all been bought in. From the very beginning, it was about "this is really hard" and we'll never be able to track what every farmer is doing in every growing season. I thought we'd decided to get what we could and track what we can't. We can track government programs better than we can in the private sector. We will try our best to gather what we can on every acre, but we will have to make some assumptions.
- Brian Miller: You can do a fairly biennial comparison - we're shooting for X percent cover crops and right now we're at Y percent. As we get better and get more data, we can reevaluate our previous guesses.
- Cindy Skrukud: We have more data about what's happening on the ground. We can say "this is what appears to be happening on the landscape" and do an analysis on "at the rate we're going, is this going to be enough to reach our goal?"
- Julie Armstrong: We're measuring yield, N & P loss reduction, Lowell Gentry talked about combinations of practices. Basically what his research is showing is that the numbers in here are the same if not better.
- Lauren Lurkins: The idea is that we always revisit this, every two years. That's just something that if we don't do every two years, we are missing out on the opportunity to see those trends.
- Dick Lyons: There are some real gaps in that survey - people may be saying they do something when they don't know what it is. We only have a room full of people, not all the IL farmers. We need to get out the message that they're helping us satisfy the hypoxia issue by filling out the survey. That way, it'll bring people on board. I think what you're talking about keeping track is extremely important to get us to where we want to be.

10:15-10:30 BREAK

10:30-11:00 Tracking Spreadsheet Eliana Brown, IWRC

- Eliana Brown: A subgroup discussed ways to improve the resources and outreach spreadsheet. IAWA expanded this spreadsheet to ask facility upgrade information. We'll

be sending it out for you to complete by January 15, 2018. Would you prefer to be asked once or twice a year? (Twice)

11:00-11:45 NSAC Progress Candice Bauer, USEPA (Presented by Paul Terrio, USGS)

Charges

- NSAC to make recommendations to IL EPA regarding nutrient river and stream eutrophication water quality standards.
- Consider whether standards should vary spatially or by other classification factors.
- Consider need to obtain EPA approval in recommendations.
- Analysis of IL EPA data
 - Conducted updated analyses of IL EPA dataset with EPA funding (assistance from Tetra-Tech).
- Limitations
 - IEPA monitoring program was not specifically developed to support nutrient criteria development.
 - Data collection is not developed in a probabilistic design.
 - Lack data on periphyton in IL streams.
 - Some analyses exclude sites.
- Questions:
 - Cindy Skrukud: I don't think you're saying you're eliminating the analysis?
 - Paul Terrio: We're still considering everything. We did a lot of work with stressor response relationships and were a little disappointed with what we found. So, we're looking at other ways to look at it, other lines of evidence that can give us some support.
 - Cindy Skrukud: I'm not as familiar with N numbers, but seems the P numbers are in line with what MN and WI have. Was there a reason why the group didn't address level 4 ecosystems?
 - Paul Terrio: We did some. Some correlation that was very small, the ecoregion dataset doesn't show any more compelling relationship that we can use to predict.
 - Cindy Skrukud: Am I correct that the overall EPA ecoregion did not have that same stressor response relationship?
 - Paul Terrio: That is correct, when you look at those ecoregions and the space they cover across the continent is huge. They may not be very similar to IL at all but they're in the same ecoregion.
 - Cindy Skrukud: What look have you done on recreational and drinking water issues?
 - Paul Terrio: I think that kind of gets back to what was one of the reasons we had that user perception survey and I'm trying to get a handle on that specifically.

11:45-12:15 2018 meeting schedule and workshop format review Brian Miller, IWRC

- Liked
 - Got to hear more in depth from each sector

- Format good
- Happy hours
- Whomever did the planning, it should be the same way because they did an excellent job.
- Big questions and having specific folks respond to those questions.
- What the other states are doing on the ground?
- Liked showcases (could inspire partnerships).
- Would like to see next time
 - Letting us get insight into each of these areas, might also be interesting to see crossovers and how we're working together.
 - Watershed approaches (rural-urban).
 - Lessons learned, scaling up.
 - Case studies from other states.
 - Hear from **SWCD**.
 - Want conference earlier in the year - after harvest.
 - Late Oct, early Nov. before thanksgiving.
 - Maybe two conferences in one year, alternating years with the Biennial Report.
 - Maybe one year is more of a conference and the other year is more of a working group.
 - Helps to get the baseline perspective from US EPA Hypoxia Task Force at the beginning.
- Disliked
 - It's hard to limit yourself to 10 minutes.
- To Do
 - Send out conflicts calendar from last year to remind people of big meetings.

12:15-12:30 Wrap-up & Adjourn Amy Walkenbach, Illinois EPA and Warren Goetsch, IDOA