USWG Tracking Subgroup Call

Aug 26, 2020

In attendance: Eliana Brown, Illinois Extension; Kate Gardiner, Illinois Extension; Layne Knoche, Illinois Extension; Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA; Chris Davis, Illinois EPA; Brian Rennecker, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Justin Keller, Metropolitan Planning Commission; Jeff Edstrom, IDNR Coastal Programs; and Lisa Merrifield, Illinois Extension

Summary

Welcome
Eliana Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Recap of Past Tracking Efforts
At past meetings, the subgroup has discussed metrics and potential practice lists. Calumet Stormwater Collaborative (CSC) is doing a parallel effort to establish a green infrastructure baseline inventory. Justin Keller presented this project at Aug 11, 2020 meeting.

Extension Grant Collaboration Grant
The application is due September 30, 2020. Lisa Merrifield and Eliana Brown are working with Carrie McKillip, Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), who is interested in strengthening EDEN's stormwater/green infrastructure (GI) information. Could create a GI tracking platform and any resulting information would go into the NLRS Biennial Report.

Per Reid Christianson, NGRREC and NCSA have an existing project to map agricultural practices on the Great Lakes to Gulf (GLTG) Virtual Observatory. We could potentially add urban stormwater green infrastructure practices and CSC regional data to the GLTG platform.

Next Steps
Stormwater Tracking Subgroup recommends that this grant proposal idea be taken to the full group during the September 8 meeting.

Lisa Merrifield will write the proposal for the Extension Collaboration Grant. Let Lisa know if you are interested in being added as a collaborator of if you have feedback on the idea. Lisa and Eliana will reach out to NCSA to be a collaborator with their GLTG portal.

Minutes

Welcome
Eliana Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Recap of Past Tracking Efforts
At past meetings, the subgroup has discussed metrics and potential practice lists. Calumet Stormwater Collaborative (CSC) is doing a parallel effort to establish a green infrastructure baseline inventory. Justin Keller presented this project at Aug 11, 2020 meeting.

Justin Keller: Right, this is part of a three-year workplan. After CSC had been together for about 2 years, they wanted to have a plan going forward, which is when they came up with the baseline inventory idea.

Extension Grant Collaboration Grant

The application is due September 30, 2020. Lisa Merrifield and Eliana Brown are working with Carrie McKillip, Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), who is interested in strengthening EDEN's stormwater/GI info. Could create a green infrastructure tracking platform, the information would go into the NLRS Biennial Report.

Per Reid Christianson, NGRREC and NCSA have an existing project to map agricultural practices on the Great Lakes to Gulf (GLTG) Virtual Observatory. Could potentially add urban stormwater green infrastructure practices. CSC regional data could populate the GLTG platform.

How to gather data from the rest of the state, by contacting MS4 coordinators?

Dick has invited Lisa and Eliana to join the call tomorrow and talk about it. Website is greatlakestogulf.org.

Justin Keller: GLTG looks like a water quality portal. How does it tie in to USWG?

Eliana Brown: We are hoping that GI stormwater data would be another layer on that map that they are developing for an existing project.

Justin Keller: That makes sense.

Jeff Edstrom: Thinking about the inventory and GLTG website, are they mapping anything like individual practices? I'm a bit confused as I only see water quality monitoring data.

Eliana Brown: I understand your confusion, they are still in the process of making the agricultural practice maps and they are not on the website yet.

Lisa Merrifield: My understanding is that Reid is working with this group to develop that layer.

Trevor Sample: I think they're largely going to be basing it off the publicly available data (319, cost-share programs, etc.).

Eliana Brown: Yes. From my understanding, many producers are generally private. From a stormwater point of view, the utilities are more commonly publicly owned and so the owners may be more motivated to publicize the GI they have. So how do we gather this information? If an MS4 gives us the information, maybe we could provide them with a report about it. It would be helpful information to add onto their reporting requirement to the Illinois EPA.

Lisa Merrifield: My thought was just that we need to give people some incentive to do this. If by entering data into this system, MS4s get a report that they can just amend and send to IEPA, that might be a win-win.

Chris Davis: I think that my coworkers in the MS4 program would appreciate fewer reports to review. However, I think the concept is good and maybe we could work with the area-wide planning commissions, like MPC and Greater Egypt, to receive the information on behalf of the agency. It could be something that EPA endorses without being the direct recipient.

Lisa Merrifield: That's good to know.

Next Steps

Lisa Merrifield is writing the proposal. She will get more guidance on September 1st and can add as many collaborators as we want. She doesn't think it allows letters of support. If we can partner with GLTG, that would describe the methods and how they plan to keep it going. If NCSA are not interested, they will look for a faculty member to build a story map. There is an evaluation component to the grant application and then the team (collaborators). She is looking for feedback on whether it's a good idea and how to get data.

Chris Davis: Is the tracking going to be limited to practices already installed or will there be an opportunity to identify locations for practices and then they get the "what we hope to do, what we've already done" information.

Lisa Merrifield: I hadn't thought about that. If we get the funding, this would be an interesting aspect to add.

Chris Davis: From my perspective, we have to get to some point where we have a system that helps to document what's happening with Illinois practices. I think the idea is something we need to support and assist with.

Lisa Merrifield: That's good to hear because we want this to be a robust conversation and so that it's helpful to everyone.

Jeff Edstrom: You could reach out to the Illinois Association of Regional Councils about this. In Chicago, CMAP is the regional council. I think having something where people could put in what they have vs what they want, that goes into watershed planning too.

Eliana Brown: I think it will be very important to create those incentives. Hopefully these conversations will help there be something inherent within requirements to provide a good incentive to provide data.

Chris Davis: It's possible that we may have some partners coming in and promoting/proposing work they want to do and this tool could possibly be a potential shopping site for someone trying to find partners to trade with and document project successes. Now that takes it to a different arena, of course, but keep the concept of potential trading in mind.

Eliana Brown: Start with something small but flexible to grow into a useful tool.

Chris Davis: I like where you're going.

Jeff Edstrom: I have some tools that might help conceptualize this. One is for different agriculture practices that are put in place and the resulting change in water quality. It's a scoping tool that's helpful for thinking about those things. Another tool is for Great Lakes Areas of Concern and includes impairments in watersheds and projects that need to be done to get them off the list.

Lisa Merrifield: If we get this funding, we don't want to reinvent the wheel. We'd like to take what's worked before and expand upon it. Is there anything you can share with me that I can link to in this proposal?

Jeff Edstrom: I've got some things that I can share with you and we can talk through.

Justin Keller: For people to give the data, we also must develop the why – why should they give the data and what are they going to get out of it? What are people going to do with this thing? Our initial impetus was that we wanted to see an increase in the amount of GI and what are people going to do with this thing. I recommend that this group wrestles with the idea of what people will do with it.

Jeff Edstrom: Government accounting board (B62) talks about how GI can be used as capital infrastructure now from an accounting standpoint and municipal bonds can finance them. We always talk about how there needs to be an infrastructure inventory.

Justin Keller: One of our discussion points was that regional agencies can use it, but what's the benefit for the individual municipality? We agreed that municipalities will not be the primary users, so we need to have a good reason for them to help us and provide data.

Lisa Merrifield: Right, part of the conversation needs to be "why."

Jeff Edstrom: It's one more thing that can build a foundation for them.

Eliana Brown: I'm wondering two things. One is whether we mentioned the 319 grants and if they participate in this, we give them greater priority in 319 or GIGO funding. I'm also thinking of the other reason to do GI (flooding) if there's an incentive that could be tied to the EDEN network.

Lisa Merrifield: What Carrie McKillip from EDEN really wants is case studies and examples of what communities have done. I have a planning student who I think could help us start to develop those. It would be nice to use this dataset to get us started on telling those stories. One thing I've heard is that seeing case studies is helpful for municipalities trying to decide.

Eliana Brown: Great. We were chatting about your urban planning student collaborating Layne Knoche, who can provide more detail about the practices from a landscape architecture perspective. We think that would be very strong and provide a high-quality product.

So, let me formally ask this group if they support this proposal and recommend it be taken to the full USWG. (votes) OK! It looks like a yes. Thank you!