NATIONAL WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL

Working Together for Clean Water

NWQMC

National Water Quality Monitoring Council
Water Information Strategies Workgroup Meeting
Pensacola, Florida
February 2, 2011

Attendees:

Peter Tennant, Mary Skopec, Mark Niles, Ann Jochens, Gary Rowe, Jeff Deacon, Bill Wilber, Jeff Ostermiller, Leslie McGeorge, Tony Shaw, Greg Pettit, Gary Kohlhepp, Gary Rosenlieb, Barb Horn, Chris Pielher, Derric Iles (phone), Gary, Steve Wolfe, Jeff Schloss, Tyler, Jason Jones, Dave Chestnut, Neil Kamman, Chris Case (SC student on phone), Susan Holdsworth, Pixie Hamilton.

1. Monthly calls – will move these to 11:00 EST instead of 11:30.
2. Discussion from the morning regarding WQS. Craft a paragraph or so on the Council's role as a scientific body. Greg has recommended a casual meeting with state representatives (Thursday). Peter will write the "boundary" piece and Mary will draft the "scope" of what we are trying to do in order to share it with group for input.
3. Use of Volunteer Monitoring Data Survey – Dave Chestnut
   a. South Carolina has a set of protocols to use "outside" data.
   b. Dave provided an overview of the SC outside data survey.
   c. Student has surveyed roughly 20 states.
   d. Eventually include volunteers in the discussion.
   e. Thoughts:
      i. Jason - Differentiate between sources of data in Arizona (%s)
      ii. Gary - Chemical versus biological data. More difficult to verify the quality of the data in biological data.
      iii. What are your state statutes for credible data?
      iv. Steve - Details of the volunteer program will need to come from the volunteer programs.
      v. Leslie – Do you have a certification program for various aspects of the monitoring programs (benthics, chemical, etc.).
      vi. Jeff S. – Student needs to check with University IRB requirements.

vii. Barb – There have been past surveys on volunteer monitoring programs that we want to make sure we use (see past survey from Ellie Ely).

viii. Capture the cost efficiencies (programs are not free).

ix. Barb – suggested ways to move forward – River Rally overlap day; begin a dialogue on uses of data on the website, list serve for the survey.

x. Gary -- Need ancillary data sets (management practices, etc.)

xi. Pull threads from the Survey for follow-up activities (collaboration on use of sensors, gaging, etc.) beyond the typical contractual relationship with the state and federal partners.

xii. Pixie – catch the community and social drivers.

xiii. Susan – clarification on third party sources. She is hearing that permittees collect data with no regulatory requirement to share data, but may be willing to do so. Make sure that we get to that at some point in the future. (Great role for a State Council)…..

xiv. Susan – add a question, "if you don't use third party data, then why not?"

xv. Action Steps:

1. Tweak the SC survey based on input today (Dave will bring back comments to Chris Case) and finish survey by end of February.

2. A smaller subcommittee will review the results and collate common themes (include Jeff Schloss and Barb Horn).

3. Off-line discussion on how we can move forward (potential volunteer survey).

4. Integrating Reference Sites: Objective 1 – answer questions on the vision; Objective 2 – get recommendation from the WIS to request approval from the full NWQMC.

a. Bill Wilbur provided to the Council and WIS two documents: Proposal for a Vision and Draft Resolution.

i. Neil – Asked for clarification on "reference". Bill' vision – inventory process that gets information about the characteristics of the watershed and then compares to all watersheds within the ecoregion that place the site relative to all others. Additionally a national network of sites based on ecology. A frame of reference to evaluate changes.

ii. Jeff – Clarification on site selection. Tiered approach at various spatial and temporal scales. Bill - Discussion needs to be addressed at a technical steering group level.

iii. Gary –what is proposed is a network of networks.

iv. Pixie – three uses of the word "reference": natural, pristine, or comparable (due to unchanging conditions).

v. Greg – concerns about the level of intensity is not enough to be helpful for states.

      vi. Steve – unless the primary sites are tied to the secondary sites, then the network is not useful.

     vii. Bill – the network is not just consisting of the top tier in the diagram. Acknowledge the existence of other data sources.

   viii. Susan – looking for an articulation of the screening criteria in the document.

     ix. Jeff – clarify the roles of NARS in the development of the reference network development.

      x. Gary -- CWA vs other views of reference;

     xi. Leslie – difficulty in explaining to NJ folks – what is meant by network?

b. Bill recommends putting together a small group of people (technical steering committee) to begin discussing the strategy.

c. Mary – how will this vision actually result in resource allocation to reverse the loss of reference network information?

d. Neil – recommendation to include lakes and ponds. Or intact watershed processing. Include the intent to follow-up with other resource types in the resolution.

e. Peter – concerns about what the last statement commits in terms of the NWQMC.

      i. Potential Members: Neil Kamman, Chris Piehler, Mary Skopec, Jeff Ostermiller, and Greg Pettit

     ii. Neil recommendation on developing two paths: ACWI path for approval and inventory path (five or six NWQMC members have provided input).

    iii. Action Steps: make copies for everyone to review Wednesday p.m. and reconsider the issue in the morning.

        1. Chris – recommended some wording clarification. How will this be used in interpreting compliance data? Remove the "interpreting compliance data" statement. Replace the word "remediation" with "restoration".

        2. Leslie – recommend adding the words "such as" after the "frame of reference for" statement.

        3. Susan – asked for clarification on when this resolution would go to ACWI. Bill Wilbur's response – will not go on the next meeting agenda, but could be handled in one of their conference calls or WebEx meetings in the near future.

        4. Jeff – Recommends this language "The network design will integrate, to the extent possible, with the existing reference site networks.

        5. Chris – clarify in the third whereas "the" to "this" request. Adequate time and resources committed by signatory agencies – what is meant by signatory agencies? This appears to be asking

ACWI to commit resources that are not ACWI's to commit. Pixie will check on this phrase with Wendy.

6. Chris – what are the tasks that needed to be added to the resolution to more clearly define what is being accomplished?
7. Bill will send the resolution and the concept paper to the group. Comments due by Feb 17th and send directly to Bill and Jeff.
8. WIS group approved the Resolution subject to final editing.

5. Water Quality Statistics and Assessments
   a. Leslie will send the form and framework to Peter and Mary to distribute in the follow-up to the Council meeting.
   b. Doug will be setting up a conference call in two weeks.
   c. C&O workgroup offered to host a technical webinar for the WQSA group.
6. National Monitoring Network Update
   a. USGS Webinar on April 7, 2011 at 1:00 EST to highlight the results from the pilot projects. Pixie will be sending out an invitation in the near future.
   b. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has adopted the NMN design (Chesapeake Bay did not).
7. Integrated Guidance 305b/303d.
   a. Peter shared the Concept Paper for Proposed Topics for Inclusion in Clean Water Act Sections 303d/305b/ and 314.
8. Day 2 Attendees: Gunnar Lauenstein, Susan, Pixie, Jeff Deacon, Tony Shaw, Leslie McGeorge, Gary Rowe, Gary Kohlhepp, Steve Wolfe, Gary Rosenlieb, Tyler, Neil Kamman, Jeff Ostermiller, Jason Jones, Peter Tennant, Dave Chestnut, Chris Piehler, Bill Wilber
9. Program and Monitoring Integration
   a. Steve – introduced the white paper "Toward an Integrated Approach to Assessing our Nation's Waters Discussion Draft for the Water Information Strategies Workgroup Meeting February, 2011". Based on discussions regarding the NARS, NAWQA, and state monitoring programs. This document includes "key concepts" that helps to define what is meant by various monitoring program activities. Goal is to put this on the websites of USGS, EPA.
   b. Pixie – It was important to articulate the questions and the value added from various designs. Ultimately, this will end up with multiple products (web links, white paper, etc.).
   c. Susan – The issue is scaleable.
   d. Jason – Difficulty bringing this down to ground-level or applicability to State.
   e. Susan – We have made progress to align sites, with less progress on methods.
   f. Mary – we need to articulate the scaleable topic in this paper and it is directly related to the state concerns expressed on the Reference Site resolution.

g. Steve – This would push the federal agencies to not design something new before they figure out how to work with other (state, local) efforts first and not just after the fact. The discussion can create some efficiencies and clarity of how the pieces fit together and when they don't.

h. Leslie – add something at the beginning about implementing the Strategy to Improve Water Monitoring Programs.

i. Mary – We have incorporated the other designs into our programs and to lose a piece will leave a critical gap in our programs.

j. Need to develop a diagram to illustrate this point.

k. Susan – we need to talk about the questions and the tools (designs). Can we extend this discussion to the inland piece of the NMN?

l. Jeff – Who is the audience?

m. Next Steps:
    i. Add the role of the Council to the document
    ii. Articulate the scaleability issue
    iii. Begin working on the critical next steps. Perhaps starting with Success Stories.
    iv. The subcommittee will reconvene and prioritize critical next steps for the next WIS call.
    v. Add State Partners – Leslie, Jason, Gary, Jeff, Mary, Dave, Tony

10. NAWQA Cycle 3 Review – Gary Rowe

a. Draft given to Natural Resource Committee

b. Gary will send the revised draft to the NWQMC based on comments from the NRC to Peter and Mary to distribute. Looking for input from the NWQMC.

c. Cycle three has four goals (addressing status and trends, understanding, and forecasting).

d. Critical issues include excess nutrients, contaminants, sediment, and streamflow alteration.

e. Why Now?
    i. Decreased monitoring data
    ii. Increasingly Complex issues
    iii. Despite Challenges, a strong foundation exists

f. What will the Nation Gain from Cycle 3?
    i. Critical Status Gaps filled
    ii. Reliable and timely trend analysis
    iii. Models and decision support systems
    iv. Causes of ecosystem impacts
    v. Forecasts of future conditions

g. New Analytical Methods on the Horizon (increases the number of compounds, especially in pesticides).

      h. How Can WIS Help?
          i. Which parts of the plan resonate with you (what sells the plan)?
          ii. Are there partnerships and/or collaborative opportunities have we missed?
          iii. How do we improve NAWQA integration with NWQMC activities?
      i. Responses by February 28, 2011 directly to Gary Rowe.

11. Monitoring and Assessment Partnership (Susan H. Report)
      a. Two Workgroups formed: Design and Assessment
      b. Workgroups have presented results to the full MAP.
      c. NLA – design at State Scale and then National Scale; States can opt to do the State Scale survey or not (at multiple years if necessary). Need to address funding, lab capacity, or training for off-year monitoring.
      d. Design Group deferred the issue of doing a little of each resource each year to work through funding, logistics, other issues.
      e. Assessment Workgroup started with the questions to address. Developed recommendations for assessment questions and indicators to support the questions. Sketched out the classes of questions and indicators for the NLA.
      f. Next Steps: Incorporating recommendations into NARS planning documents, How should the state strategies reflect participation in NARS?, Talk about the next priorities for the workgroup, discussion of the allocation of monitoring funds, request to work with the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assistance -- (for example, a benchmark calculator was developed for BP incident; could do this for the full spectrum of 304 criteria). Looking at the nexus between NPDES and impaired waters lists. Chris Piehler gave a presentation along this line in 2006 (?) at the LA NWQMC meeting (check out NWQMC website). OWOW commitment to improve the integrating reporting both for getting assessment decisions and show them on a map.
      g. MAP will meet tomorrow from 8-12 at the Gulf Breeze Laboratory.

12. Monitoring for Spills
      a. Defer discussion due to lack of time.
      b. Next Steps:
      i. Put the Topic on a future WIS call