

Minutes
Regional Water Resources Advisory Committee
Friday, March 24, 2017
East-West Gateway Council of Governments, One Memorial Drive

Attendees:

Carol Lawrence, Chair – East-West Gateway Council of Governments
Josh Ward – Missouri Department of Conservation
Stuart Miller- Missouri Department of Conservation
Barbara Charry – The Nature Conservancy
Libby Reuter – Watershed Cairns
Steven Brendel – Madison County Planning and Development
Janet Buchanan – HeartLands Conservancy
Gene Rovak – ASCE/EWRI
Karla Wilson- Deer Creek Watershed Alliance
Jim Kirchherr- Nine Network
Amy Shaw- Nine Network
Molly Saunders- Nine Network
Kevin Albrecht- Missouri State Parks
Adam McLane- The Nature Conservancy
Bill Malach- City of St. Peters
Curt Skouby- Metro Water Infrastructure Partnership/ City of St. Louis
Greg Kohler- US Army Corps of Engineers
Shawn Sullivan- US Army Corps of Engineers
Mike Hartoin- SCI Engineering Inc.
Tracy Haag- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Gary Bonacker- Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District
Tim Rielly- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Robert Stout- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
John Schumacher- US Geological Survey
Bill Ruppert- Missouri Prairie Foundation/Grow Native
Colin Wellenkamp- MRCT I

Staff:

Mary Grace Lewandowski David Wilson Aaron Young Bonnie Harper Helena Sykas

1. Call to Order/Introductions

The meeting of the Regional Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRC) was called to order by Chair Carol Lawrence, East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG). Carol introduced Helena Sykas, the new Environmental Service Planner for EWG. Those attending the meeting introduced themselves and gave an update on their current projects.

2. Discussion Items

- A. Water Matters Initiative - Connecting Water Matters Partners with the Water Resources Committee
- Adam McLane, The Nature Conservancy
 - Amy Shaw, Nine Network
 - Aaron Young, East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Aaron: The Water Resources Committee has been meeting since 2001, bringing stakeholders together to discuss watershed planning and water quality issues. Water Matters, a program started by Nine Network in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), covers similar issues and meets with the same groups of people. After a meeting with upper level EWG staff, the organizations decided it would be more beneficial to join together.

Amy/Adam: History of Water Matters- the focus was environmental issues and was seen as a way to bring people together to discuss regional environmental issues and to figure out a way to connect and educate communities. Overtime, the conversation kept coming back to water and water quality issues, so Water Matters became the initiative. Nine Network and TNC were the two core entities accelerating the work. With the help of a core group of funders, Nine Network began fostering conversations and creating media content to reach communities and get people aware and involved. EWG's work with OneSTL has a great focus on water and it didn't make sense to keep the projects separate. Through a combined approach and collection of interests focusing on water's impact on land, human health, and the economy, the question became, what is Water Matters and how can we get efforts focused in a way to make things happen? The effort requires time and resources. EWG has been a great asset and things are headed in the right direction.

National and local initiatives are working to accomplish the same goals. The work moves forward when public media across the country becomes involved in national networks of partners. Public media not only accelerates work but also enables more community awareness and better levels of understanding, while giving organizations more time to focus on work. Nine Network is working hard to share information across local communities with the goal for them to grow and prosper. The collaboration with OneSTL and the work that has been done in tracking metrics has given an opportunity to work more effectively in targeting these, this can be done through research with general audience, looking at those who are being reached and are understanding are doing more around sustainability, i.e. planting rain gardens and getting rain barrels. The project will continue to expand its audience and are excited about the next steps, while the minimum goal is to expand audience. EWG working with Nine Network will be a way to get feedback and expand audience.

- B. April 2017 Sustainability Summit: Setting Targets for Our Shared Futures/Blue Gray Green Infrastructure Tract
- Aaron Young, East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Aaron: April 5 starts off the two-day event, OneSTL Regional Summit. Day one involves speakers and panel discussions. The Keynote speaker is Dr. Antwi Akom who is the Co-Founder

of the Institute for Sustainable Economic, Educational, and Environmental Design (I-SEED). On April 6 several focus groups will be discussing the metrics, for example watershed plans and impaired streams. The discussions and recommendations will be brought back to the group (WRC) about setting goals for metrics, who and how they can be implemented. Setting regional targets with the metrics is another way to find funding, as the St. Louis community. This is the next step to encourage regional initiative and move the metrics. Aiming to have conversations with all the groups with interests in OneSTL's seven themes of biodiversity, buildings/land use, energy/emissions, food, materials, transportation, and water/green infrastructure.

A concept in the works is the Sustainability Café, which will meet maybe once a month and will be for people involved in sustainability. This could possibly supplement the WRC meetings. Interested parties could meet and exchange ideas and information, and a way to get people involved in the different themes to meet and have discussions.

Question: Is Water Matters a brand for public to access information? It was pointed out that an opportunity for Water Matters would be GROW at the Science Center, as one section is devoted to water and it could be a portal to reach not only adults but also children. Answer: yes it is a brand, Water Matters is for anyone to help get their story out, Nine Network is one of the most watched public networks in the country, putting partnerships together is more impactful. Water Matters would love to work with GROW.

Amy: Anything that has been produced in the last three years for Water Matters can be found at ninenet.org/watermatters. The content is easily sharable. Nine Network spans to all demographics, urban/rural, ages, race etc.

Question: Are there any mechanism to share stories, or agenda items to actively pull from members of the WRC Group? Answer: Carol could send out a notice a few weeks before the meeting as a reminder to submit any agenda items.

- C. Update on Feasibility Study for Meramec and Big Rivers
 - Greg Kohler, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District
 - Kathryn McCain, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District

Robert Stout: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) partnered with Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR) to do this Feasibility Study. The slideshow gives an overview of the works that's being done. Our Missouri Waters efforts look at watershed challenges in a comprehensive way, aiming to engage locals that live in the watershed. The value of that is, those residents have information and priorities that need to be known in order to identify fundamental issues to plan for implementation and focus resources where they are needed the most. Need a broad range of input to figure out what can be done to address issues in both rural and urban areas of a watershed. The Big River has a lot of lead contamination that goes into the Meramec. Just one part is restoring ecological damage and another is the Conservation Action Plan, for the entire Meramec Basin, which has been a good first step in identifying how it's all working together. Sedimentation is a big problem in the Meramec.

There are resources that can help solve broad issues and, if local issues are known, resources that could be used to work towards solving those individual problems as well. It's important to work together to align interests to be efficient with resources and to solve issues that have been identified and prioritize problems that are most important and find ways to implement solutions.

Greg: The Army Corps signed a cost share agreement with MoDNR in August 2015, we're about 1.5 years into the Feasibility Study which focuses on the Meramec Basin in St Louis and Jefferson counties. The study authority specifically calls out those counties which limits any projects to be within those counties, which is the lower 75 miles of the Big River and the lower 50 miles of the Meramec. We are trying to collaborate with anyone who has an interest so that information and expertise are being leveraged.

The overall goal of the Feasibility Study is to look at the areas and identify cost effective projects that are going to protect, enhance, and restore the structure and function of the aquatic habitat. The study is in collaboration with MoDNR.

MoDNR is looking to collaborate with other agencies like U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make sure the study aligns with their studies on lead contamination, The Fish and Wildlife and TNC who are putting together a watershed management plan and watershed modeling, the Department of Conservation, and EWG in an effort to make sure all interests are being taken into account.

In the end, the Feasibility Report will result in a Chief of Engineers Report that can be transmitted to Congress that identifies specific projects that will have quantifiable benefits to aquatic habitats and ecosystems, with a cost amount, and will in turn get authorized and funded for construction.

Problems the study looks at includes bank instability and excessive erosion, lead contamination, aquatic barriers, land use changes and lack of vegetation resulting in altered hydrology with the potential to be improved. Possible solutions include bank stabilization projects, sediment basins and sediment traps, grade control, plantings to reestablish buffers, trying to achieve better connectivity. Challenges involve collaboration and continuing to try to get more groups to the table, geographic limitations within the two counties, limited projects with what the Corps looks at, regulations and policies which different agencies operate within, and technical and financial challenges to get projects constructed.

There are 5 milestones that the Army Corps have to achieve for a Chiefs Report.

1. Scoping phase
2. Specific potential projects
 - a. Preliminary recommendations (Aug/Sept 2017)
 - b. Document draft report of public comment
 - c. Revisions- incorporate comments
3. Agency Decision
4. Detailed design work/ Analysis for cost estimates
5. Review board- August 2019 (4 years total)

Robert: The Feasibility Report is one small piece to the entire issues of the watershed. Funding is available for implementation, none of the projects are regulatory, they are what people want to participate in, and Army Corps is willing to help identify issues and offer resources. The watershed needs to be dealt with in a more comprehensive way, its very project oriented and there are projects here and there. If we want to make significant changes to a watershed, we need to have a more focused, coordinated, and strategic approach, which is what Our Missouri Waters is trying to accomplish. Listening to people and combining resources and looking at problems in a global way and form partnerships, the vision of Out Missouri Waters is to build and maintain a collaborative effort. He pointed out that we are all downstream from somewhere.

D. Lower Meramec Watershed Plan Update
- David Wilson, East-West Gateway Council of Governments

David: EWG is working on updating the Lower Meramec Watershed plan designed to improve water quality, the study area runs from Pacific to the mouth. We are looking at how to make sense of so many issues, looking at polluted streams. Among partners there is a lot of interest in Keifer Creek, a tributary that runs through a Castlewood State Park. The 750,000 people who visit the park annually don't know about the high bacteria content. The plan is looking at a 20 year time frame. Once a plan is in place, implementation can occur. Working on a plan to have different partners working on different aspects is key. The next meeting on the watershed plan is May 18, at the Meramec Regional Recreation Association (MRRA) meeting. Elements on the plan can be found (powerpoint) EWG website at water resources section, also summarized in meeting notes from December meeting.

E. Our Missouri Waters – Lower Missouri Project
- David Wilson, East-West Gateway Council of Governments

We are working with MoDNR on Our Missouri Waters program to look at the lower Missouri from Hermann to mouth, and also working with Boonslick Regional Planning Commission District representing Warren and Montgomery counties. We have had three meetings and three more are scheduled. The next one is on April 10 meeting in Marthasville talking about septic/sewer issues, in particular onsite treatment and small wastewater treatment facilities. Previous meetings have been at St Charles, Starkenberg where we discussed levee district issues and farming issues, and the last meeting was in Washington, which looked at recreation and river trails and economic development in relation to health streams. The May 10 meeting in Chesterfield will look again at levee issues and also floodplain development and wetland mitigation. In June we are partnering with the Missouri River Country Initiative- as they have expressed interest in becoming the advisory committee for the Lower Missouri River Watershed to serve as an ongoing voice for all communities there. Information on EWG website about Our Missouri Waters and initiative on Lower Missouri and Lower Meramec.

3 Other Business

Carol announced David Wilson's retirement in May. He will be the next chair of the MRRA. He was given a round of applause.

The next meeting in June will be a tour of an MSD wastewater treatment plant, filmed by Nine Network. Still need to figure out dates and location but will send information out in May.

Send any information on topic that you would like to have discussed in these meetings, email Carol or Aaron.

Nine Network will show the Missouri State Parks documentary, “Wish You Were Here” on June 8th as part of the Channel Nine pledge drive.

A soils exhibit is coming to the St. Louis Science Center from the Smithsonian which contains a soil profile from every state of the union.

4. Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting of the Water Resources Committee was adjourned.