

NPS Task Force Meeting 01/10/2023 @NDDEQ Bismarck, ND

NPS Task Force members in attendance

Name	Agency	Email
Karl Rockeman	NDDEQ	krockema@nd.gov
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Rachel		

Additional attendees

Name	Agency	Email
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Jim Collins	Clearwater Comm.	jcollins@clearwatercommunications.net
Malissa McKee	Morton Co. SCD	malissa.mckee@nd.nacdnet.net
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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – Karl Rockeman

DEC. 15, 2021 MEETING MINUTES REVIEW – Karl Rockeman

- Any corrections/additions?
 - None
- Motion to approve minutes from Aaron Larsen
 - Seconded by Ted Preister
- Minutes approved

PROJECT PROPOSAL REVIEW AND COMMENT PROCESS – Emilee Lachenmeier

- Reference meeting packet information
 - Send proposal comments to Emilee Lachenmeier by Feb 1, 2023 (elachenmeier@nd.gov)
 - Reference 319 funding request sheet in meeting packet
 - We will look to cut roughly \$1 million
- A survey will also be sent out following today's meeting

PROJECT PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS – multiple presenters

PRESENTATION #1

*The Prairie Waters Education and Research Center, Valley City State University
Andre DeLorme*

(see project proposal)

Q: Is there a plan for recruiting schools?

A: Valley City State has a good teacher education program, as a result there are many biology teachers around the state that we can get in touch with to participate. In the past we have recruited at a science teacher conference (every spring) and would like to bring this back. We

will have to sit down and do some leg work, in particular identifying where there are stream and river resources near the school, and sometimes just cold-call the schools.

Q: You mentioned workshops with SCDs - do you want to continue these? What did you do previously?

A: Yes, did workshops with SCDs - especially with 319 projects with macroinvertebrate sampling. We can help with a macro sampling workshop and water quality sampling workshop. We used to do a "Water 101" workshop on the basics of water quality parameters and what impacts them. If you have a specific water related topic that you want a workshop on please contact us.

Q: Looking at Objective 2, Task 7 (on the number of students): is the number of students just the fall students coming in over the 35-month period?

A: It is a combination of summer camps, on site school groups, and outreach. It's everything altogether.

Q: That's what you consider "River Watch?"

A: No, that's just the high school groups. At one time we had 8 schools and each had 4-8 students involved. Those are a small group that we work with. With grade school groups we would bring in 80 at a time and do 5 different experiences, dividing them among different presenters.

Q: You expect 2500-3000 students for River Watch?

A: No, that is for the total students we expect for all activities.

Q: What is the name of the program that represents 2500-3000 students?

A: It is divided among multiple programs.

Q: So the students could be the professionals too?

A: No, those are in a separate group.

Q: I am curious to learn more about ND water quality testing certification, how does that partnership work?

A: We work closely with DEQ, workshop on how to properly maintain a Sonde, how to calibrate and deploy, on what the water quality parameters mean. We do a workshop with a quiz/test to make sure participants understand everything. The workshop is mainly for SCD folks. We take them out into the field. Jim Collins did a lot of work with us on this when he was with DEQ.

PRESENTATION #2

*Improving Water Quality with Rancher Mentoring and Outreach, Grazing Lands Coalition
Jim Collins, Jerry Doan*

(see project proposal)

Q: You mentioned there are 34 mentors, do you have a goal for getting new member mentors?

A: We are trying to add more. We have ~170 members in the coalition, and 34 are mentors. Targeting mentors in the east is more difficult than in the west. We have a lot in the west. Our aim is to maintain the quality of our network mentor compared to a higher number.

Q: Is The Nature Conservancy a mentor?

A: They are not a mentor, but are a member of our group.

Q: What is the process to become a mentor?

A: Someone can come forward with interest, but we also go out and look for mentors. Potential mentors have to come before the board and be approved. We are doing a much better job of laying out what's expected of them. If you have ideas for someone who would be a great mentor, please let us know. We also have mentor training where we bring them in and train on current subjects.

Q: How would you advertise and reach potentially interested mentors?

A: We are constantly going out and presenting at different events, for example through the SCD system, and offering services. We are planning to do a road show and take ourselves to the five SCD areas, doing local presentations where we will highlight the grazing exchange. Mentors will speak and get the message out – getting the message out is the hardest part.

PRESENTATION #3

*North Dakota Water Education Program (Project WET), ND Dept of Water Resources
Tina Harding*

(see project proposal)

Q: No questions.

---Break---

PRESENTATION #4

*ND Stockmen's Association Environmental Services Program
Scott Ressler*

Q: (comment) Regarding the success of their tours: they are quality tours, that's why people come, because they bring more people the following year and so on

A: (thank you) There are no professional speakers on our tours, we make the producers talk about what they did and why. People want to hear it from the producers.

Q: How do you (NDSA) and the NDGLC work together when out there? (mentors appear to be in same area)

A: We keep in communication when someone does contact one or the other, and work together. We work with local coordinators. We help and educate them. If we get a call from a producer we contact the watershed folks first. It doesn't matter who gets cost share, it's about getting practices on the ground.

Q: You have three projects - how many are you turning down?

A: None.

Q: You don't need any additional money?

A: We will probably be back next year. We've gone out and secured other funding. Most of the 319 funds are going to on-the-ground practices, specifically addressing AFOs.

Q: Have you every done an estimate of what the WQ benefits have been overall?

A: Great Q. It's not easily attainable. Our model considers P and N that is conserved. In general, we know that if we stop runoff it's helping water quality.

Comment: We can put an estimate on the lbs of P or N that has been kept out of the water. Keep in mind that we won't see results in a 2 or 5-year timeline. There are a lot of watersheds that have benefitted from ag waste systems.

PRESENTATION #5

Big Muddy Creek Watershed Project, Morton County Soil Conservation District

Malissa McKee, Chance

(see project proposal)

Q: One of the major budget items is a CAFO. Do you have one targeted that you think is one of the major sources or would it be voluntary?

A: It would be voluntary.

Q: One of the funding items is pasture range. Would these be fencing out existing grass or new grass? What would that mean?

A: Both.

Q: Do most systems have grass already or need grass?

A: It's a combination. Some have and some need.

Q: If they are existing grass and they get fenced out, is there planned grazing that goes into that so it doesn't get rested and sit there?

A: Yes, there is planned grazing.

Q: Have you had success with riparian easements in the past?

A: Don't believe we have had these in the past, will have to look into this.

Comment: You could add it in a table in your project to show a little bit of history, and to see where there has been success.

Q: Who holds the riparian easement? The SCD?

A: Unsure. It may fall under NRCS, but would depend on how the project gets lined up. It could be split with NRCS. If it is strictly through 319 funds it would be through the SCD.

PRESENTATION #6

*Livestock Pollution Prevention Program, ND Dept of Ag
Jason Wirtz*

(see project proposal)

Q: Looking forward, are you just looking at 2.5 systems for funding?

A: Looking for 3 systems, possibly cost sharing for next year.

Q: You wouldn't have the different kinds of systems, just the partial and two full?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there a way you prioritize those projects if you have multiple people coming to you?

A: We do it on a first-come first-serve basis, if they are eligible. We also have a ranking sheet if needed.

PRESENTATION #7

*Nine-Townships Watershed Project, Mercer County Soil Conservation District
Brian Kerns, Mark Johannes*

(see project proposal)

Q: Regarding Task 2 and 3 (riparian areas): do you have targeted areas or is that approximated?

A: It is approximated. It is a first-come first-serve basis, but there are high-priority areas we try to target.

Q: Is there overlap between Task 2 and winter-feeding systems

A: Yes, 100%.

Q: Pheasants Forever is listed as partner, but no trees are listed as BMPs... is that something that is done in addition?

A: In Mercer County trees are done through the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Sometimes PF can help cost share percentages that are remaining and help with small plantings. We deal less with this but share with producers that it is an option.

PRESENTATION #8

*Livestock Environmental Nutrient Management Educational Support Program, NDSU
Mary Keena*

(see project proposal)

Q: What do you do exactly working with butcher shops?

A: Butcher shops can landfill, they cannot bury (livestock producers can), they can render, or they can compost. The compost is where the nutrient management planning comes in. We help them with the actual composting process and then are able to help them manage where they're putting it on the land.

Q: So these big events that happen and they can't get things picked up anymore?

A: When big events happen they are typically buried. Sometimes, depending on where they are at, carcass abandonment happens. But, if we can compost quickly we can help them manage that part and also help manage the stress of the event.

Q: Compost idea is great, but are there any butcher shops actually doing that right now?

A: Yes, there are. Cattle.

Q: There are small town butcher shops doing composting?

A: Yes, there are. It hasn't been happening long enough for us to track so we want to put more resources towards tracking that information.

Q: Do they do it on site or truck it off site?

A: Both, depending on the site and location.

Q: Please talk about the development of the permitting process.

A: The permit was already there. The butcher shop could compost if they wanted to but it was the process of filling out the paperwork. This led to several conversations with DEQ and Dept of Ag on who is regulating, etc. A word doc was developed instead of a fillable pdf on a computer. They have to watch and read resources before committing to the permitting process. The application comes from DEQ and goes back to DEQ.

Q: On livestock mortality: how big of a nutrient source are livestock carcasses?

A: We have a sense of this. There is a lot of data collected, especially in other states. In ND we have done a few tests on smaller, normal mortality compost rows which ends up being similar to what we find in manure. It's comparable to our beef manure in ND.

Q: (comment) When MN wouldn't take our offal anymore a study was done and the number was around 1,000 animals a day. We are around 200 a day so it's not profitable to build a rendering plant in ND, it's unlikely that would happen.

A: Some folks switched to landfilling but now landfills are charging more and it's not something they typically manage. Places that accept it also are not always close to the butcher shops. Now that things have settled down people are coming back and asking more about composting options.

Q: What is the most common question you get?

A: "What's my manure worth?"

---Break---

TASK FORCE DISCUSSION ON FY23 PROJECT PROPOSALS

- Please reference funding request sheet in handout.
- We are looking to cut roughly \$1 million, which is very doable for this set of projects (since projects are requesting funding for a number of years longer than they typically receive).

Floor is open for discussion –

Q: What's the education percentage requirement for funding?

A: The only requirement NPS program has is 50% for watershed projects. As we sit, with consideration of staffing and support, we are at slightly under 50% for education projects.

Q: Would like to clarify with EPA what is required if it is close to 50%.

A: EPA response: At least 50% of the funds must go to watershed projects, and no more than 50% can go to education projects

Q: Are other states having any trouble meeting that 50% requirement?

A: Each state does it differently, but the requirement remains and it is a hard and fast requirement

Q: All of the watershed projects have small I&E, but they are considered watershed not education?

A: Correct.

Q: For the education demonstration projects, thought it used to be a number of years (two years?). It's really misleading if you look at these numbers. Numbers/timelines for each project are different. Is there something written that education projects are 2 or 3 years? Don't recall ed projects being longer than that?

A: It is an assumed rule more than anything. They can request the full term, but in the past we have approved requests for 2-3 years.

Comment: If we're going to consider making cut, look at breaking them down by each year, and then making a decision.

Comment: Greg's guidance was also to "ask for more and expect less"

Comment: It is very reasonable to look at yearly reductions.

Comment: It might not be fair to the folks that are new to this process, compared to those that have been through this before and know what to expect.

Comment: Both Prairie Waters and WET talked about challenges and renewing interest in schools, maybe there is an opportunity for a combined approach.

Comment: Prairie Waters always seems to be a bit overplayed on the budget, looks like a lot of dollars per kid.

Comment: Consider that Prairie Waters doesn't have the national support that something like Project WET has.

Comment: They will probably see a pretty dramatic shift in their budget with their move to a new location.

Q: Is USFWS partnering with Prairie Waters on the project? Since they are going to be using that facility (the fish hatchery)?

A: There appears to be opportunity for collaboration.

Comment: Education is important, but I want to see the budget go to practices on the ground.

Comment: Traditionally for ND, we have been over 50% budget for watershed projects, but this year we are a little closer to 50-50 because of the influx of education projects.

Comment: The influx came in with three people requesting 3+years

Comment: And, some having higher budget.

Q: I am still questioning the nonpoint source relevance of the butcher shop project.

A: The project isn't addressing landfills, it is addressing composting and application.

Comment: Project accesses some of the non-traditional audiences (e.g. equine). It is great to see some outside of the box thinking.

Q: Regarding task force evaluation guidance and the five goals: do all projects have to meet all five goals? Is it a rating to select projects?

A: The sheet is a guidance showing NPS program goals and the expectation is that the project reflects those goals in some way.

Comment: Previously there was a numeric rating system which made it easier to look at the whole thing administratively.

Comment: In the past there was not feedback on using those documents, want to make something that's functional for people to use in reviewing project proposals.

Q: What's the most beneficial to the applicants? The feedback is for them.

Q: Are there projects that didn't make it this far this year? A lot of manure-based projects this year.... Are we missing anything?

A: Some years we are heavy on I&E, some years manure, there seems to be a cycle to funding requests.

Comment: Regarding Morton Co SCD: Good questions asked on more specificity on grazing plan and functions. That would be a request -to spell out more detail on the how and the what.

Comment: Keep in mind that they are both new staff.

Comment: Lots of issues with coordinator turnover and other staff turnover.

Comment: On the two education proposals, both are doing similar things, but neither listed the other as 'coordination' but the areas do overlap. Same with the counties, they didn't mention each other.

Comment: There are two different aspects, NDGLC is grazing focused and NDSA is feedlot focused.

Comment: It's nice to be able to see the history of a project and what's been done over the years, even though it's not part of the application. This is especially helpful for those new to the task force. Only a few of the presenters spoke to this.

Comment: Possibly hasn't been a component in the past because projects, even different phases of the same project, are treated as individual projects and need to be assessed separately.

Comment: A lot of the project successes are highlighted in their annual reports

Q: Timing? Can we get an idea of what funding timeline will look like?

A: Typically we expect funding to come through from EPA in June/July, and then project budgets are approved.

Comment: EPA does not know when they will have the funding and when states can allocate. But expect June/July. All R8 states are doing this around the same time so ND is on track.

Comment: Feb 1 deadline for Task Force member comments.

Q: Other than the legislative session happening, is it problematic to have task force meetings at the start of the year? Traditionally Greg had it at the end of the year. How do folks feel about doing meeting in Jan or Feb in the future?

A: Ted P always has a conference in Jan next week and will always be busy

Kathy D annual dept meeting end of year

Kevin K mentions end of year reports

Comment: Leaning towards early Jan timeline, Emilee L will send out a survey

Q: Thoughts on breaking down task force into different groups? For example a watershed project review group and an I&E project review group and both relay to one another, to maybe break the workload down.

A: Downside is that you don't see the similarities and overlap across all projects.

Discussion on having more proposal criteria, such as page number restrictions, for easier comparison and review (with an open appendix), so you're not comparing a 10-pg and 45-pg proposal.

Comment: Feb 1 deadline for Task Force member comments. Feel free to make comments on documents or in another format. Share with Emilee Lachenmeier.

---Meeting adjourned---