

**Goose Creek Watershed Planning Meeting
March 10, 2016
Downtown Sheridan Association Community Room
Meeting Minutes**

Present:

Bill Adsit
Robert Brug
Orrin Connell
Amy Doke
Dave Garber
Edith Heyward

Sue Martin
Mike Nickel
Rick Pallister
Roger Reinke
Carrie Rogaczewski
Don Crecelius

David Todd
Dan Coughlin
Ken Muller
Dan Roberts
Mark Reid
Michael Watkins

Orrin Connell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Open and Introductions:

Orrin Connell, watershed representative for the Sheridan County Conservation District Board of Supervisors welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those in attendance to provide a brief introduction of their affiliation with the group. After introductions, Orrin turned the time over to Carrie Rogaczewski, District Manager for the Conservation District.

Bacteria Load Reduction Needs/Requirements:

Carrie began the meeting by visiting with the group about the history of the Goose Creek Watershed Steering Committee. In 2001-02, the Sheridan County Conservation District partnered with Sheridan County to conduct the Goose Creek Watershed Assessment. Since then, the District has worked with landowners to develop the Goose Creek Watershed Plan. Over the past several years the District has been working to implement that Plan. In 2008, WDEQ moved forward with the Goose Creek TMDL. At that time, the steering committee chose not to update the Goose Creek Watershed Plan, as they didn't want to duplicate the ongoing effort of the TMDL. The committee took a couple of years off from meeting and met again in 2010 to develop the Goose Creek TMDL Implementation Strategy to address bacteria and sediment issues within the Goose Creek Watershed.

2015 Monitoring Results

The District has continued to do interim water quality monitoring every three years within the Goose Creek Watershed. Since the 2001-02 assessment, the District has monitored in 2005, 2009, 2012 and 2015. The four year span in between 2005 and 2009 was due to staffing and funding limitations. Carrie then presented the group with a packet of preliminary data from the 2015 sampling season. In the packet were the bacteria results and trends. The data hasn't been fully validated, but it does still provide a representation of where we are at within the watershed. The water quality standard is based on a geometric mean of five water quality samples within a 30 day period. The District based their samples around 2 geometric means for an early (May-June) and late season representation (July-August). This past sampling season, the data showed that the two canyon sites (Big Goose Canyon and Little Goose Canyon) had the

highest pH readings. The lowermost sites on all the mainstems had the highest temperatures. We have continuous temperature monitors on these sites and all exceeded the temperature standard. The two canyon sites did not exceed the temperature standard. From graphs Carrie presented to the group, everyone could see that there was an overall decrease in bacteria from 2012-2015 on most of the mainstem sites (however, Carrie noted that this data is preliminary, and even though there were decreases in bacteria from 2012-2015, depending on precipitation and other factors, an increase could be observed in future sampling seasons).

Progress Register

Carrie presented the group with the Goose Creek Watershed Progress Register. Progress Registers are maps that show water quality improvement projects within the watershed. When the watershed steering committees were first formed, they knew it would be tough to see direct correlations between projects and bacteria reductions. To make a meaningful connection, Progress Registers were developed to show the progress of water quality improvement, by highlighting improvement projects. The registers are updated annually.

Priority Areas

Carrie took bacteria data from the previous years and compared it to the current sampling season. In most cases, bacteria loads improved or stayed the same. Jackson Creek is the only tributary site that went up. As Carrie mentioned before, it's good to see this trend but we have to be careful. Bacteria are so variable and could increase with the next sampling season. Hopefully the downward trend continues as we make progress within the watershed. For now, we can use the priority areas to evaluate or rank projects if funding between two or more projects becomes an issue.

Implementation Strategy Update:

When the group developed the Implementation Strategy for the Goose Creek Watershed TMDL in 2012, they set it up on a 3 year timeline. It has been three years so it is time to update. Carrie drafted an updated Implementation Strategy for the group to go over. As part, she provided the group with the milestones completed since the 2001-02 Assessment. Since that time, there have been 21 septic system improvements, 13 livestock projects, 2 fencing/stockwater projects, 4 bank stabilization/erosion projects, 9 willow planting projects and 3 diversion projects. Carrie didn't change much of the original implementation strategy, but did identify action items to be addressed over the next five years. The group decided to get back to Carrie within a week if they had changes to the strategy. If the minor changes are received, she'll incorporate those into the plan. If more major changes are warranted, she'll bounce those ideas off the group before proceeding with updates.

Carrie also wanted the group to know that the District/NRCS along with the Nature Conservancy and the Sheridan Community Land Trust are one of two successful applicants in Wyoming for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This program will allow producers to apply for programs through EQIP, but they will not have to compete for funding with projects out of Johnson and Campbell Counties. This grant is in the amount of 1.9 million.

SCCD Goose Creek Social Indicators Survey Update:

Last year Carrie applied for a grant through WDEQ to conduct a survey to question folks in Sheridan County about water quality concerns. This survey, known as a Social Indicators Survey, is based off a tool developed by Michigan State University. Over the past several months, the District and other agency folks in Sheridan County have been working together to develop the survey. The initial tool wasn't as flexible as it seemed and couldn't be tailored to the needs and demographics of Sheridan County residents. Since its inception, the group has been working with PB Communications to develop the survey. PB Communications was able to re-tool the survey to better meet the needs of the group. There are actually 2 different surveys. One targets a rural audience, while the other targets urban audiences. The focus is the Goose Creek Watershed and the survey aims to find out what practices people are willing to try, if they are not already doing them, to improve water quality. Carrie hopes the surveys will be mailed out later this spring.

SCCD Goose Creek WWCD Level 1 Watershed Study Update:

In August, the District was approached by a water improvement and service district requesting the District to pursue a Level I Study through the Wyoming Water Development Commission (WWDC). The SCCD Board would only pursue the study if it was watershed wide. There have been several potential projects that have been identified as candidates for WWDC funding in the Goose Creek Watershed, but those funds cannot be accessed until a Level I Study is complete. The request for a Level I was funded and consultants have submitted their proposals. The consultant will be chosen later in May with the study to begin later this summer.

Storm Sewer Maintenance/E. coli Detection Project Update:

Dan Roberts, Utilities Manager for the City of Sheridan, provided an update on the 319 Grant the City received to address sedimentation and bacteria loading from storm water outfalls within the City. The City has had *E. coli* positive sample tests at all their storm water outfalls. They were able to secure a 319 Grant to address sediment loading to get stormceptors installed at four outfalls (so far three have been installed). These stormceptors act as sediment traps and will also filter out hydrocarbons. The sediment and hydrocarbons are captured and stored in a basin that is then cleaned out using a vacuum truck similar to what would be used in sewer cleaning. It is then taken to the landfill or the wastewater treatment plant where it is dewatered before taken to the landfill.

The City was also able to do line cleaning and video inspection to rule out cross contamination. The only thing they found was a sewer pipe going through a storm drain that wasn't connected to an outfall.

USFS Watershed Issues Discussion:

In an interest in protecting the Goose Creek Watershed from potential contamination from minerals development, Amy Ormseth of the USFS was approached by Don Creselius and Edith

Heyward about possible protections in the Forest Service Plan as it pertains to mineral withdrawal on Federal Lands. Amy suggested the discussion be brought to the Goose Creek Watershed Steering Committee to give the group a chance to discuss this issue and any other issues that may be of concern within the watershed. There are a number of things we want to watch and be aware of. The Forest Service is very adamant about providing clean water to municipal areas. The Federal government is in charge of hard rock mining, and the BLM is in charge of leasable minerals. The process of restricting leases on the whole watershed is very difficult. If the group wants to withdraw leases on only a portion it's much easier. The first step would be to contact the BLM (for leasable minerals) or the Forest Service for hard rock mining. Both agencies would have to conduct leasing analysis if someone wants to extract. The potential up on the mountain is significantly lower for the leasable side, but more so for the hard rock. Mike Nickel, Sheridan County Commissioner, encouraged the group to continue to look into the topic and see what types of lease restrictions are available. In the mineral leasing world there is more control and say as to how, where, what and when the extractions may occur. With hard rock mining, the Federal government has very little say in what the individual or company may do.

Bill Adsit wanted to address road restrictions on Red Grade. With the warm weather and early thaw that Sheridan County has experienced this year, he is concerned about the early opening of Red Grade Road. He doesn't believe the County should open up the road on April 15th, but should wait until at least May 15th or 20th to prevent resource damage from motorized vehicles using roads/trails that are too wet.

Additional Comments from the Group:

Dan Coughlin mentioned to the group that there would be a Basin Advisory Group meeting on March 16th at 6:00 at the Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library. The Governor has a number of water quality initiatives. One is to begin work on the high risk to reservoirs on forest lands from catastrophic wildfires. Wildfire is something we should be looking at in the drainage. At some point we need to identify the risk and come up with a mitigation and recovery plan to reduce the impacts of fire.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for 2017.

Submitted by Amy Doke, SCCD Program Specialist