Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Meeting
February 16, 2017
Prairie Dog Women's Club
Meeting Minutes

Present:

Susan Holmes, SCCD	Carleton Perry	Tammi Fladager
John Kane	Mark Ree	Sol Brich, WDEQ
Bonnie Brady	Chris Labbe	Ron Stegg, TetraTech
Robert Ligocki	Tiffanie Labbe	Theresa Shaw, SCCD
Dick Legocki	Curtis Fladager	Carrie Rogaczewski, SCCD

Meeting Opening and Introductions

Susan Holmes called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and introductions were made. Susan reminded everyone about the advisory nature of the group. Formal positions can only be made after discussion and approval by the SCCD Board of Supervisors.

2014 Monitoring Results

Carrie provided a brief recap of the 2014 monitoring season. Essentially, the same sites with bacteria levels above state standards in previous years continued to have elevated bacteria levels in 2014. However, decreased bacteria concentrations were observed at most stations. Many factors can affect bacteria concentrations, including precipitation. The bacteria being sampled are not pathogenic , but are present in the digestive tracts in warm-blooded animals. These bacteria serve as indicator organisms and MAY indicate increased potential for the presence of other pathogens.

Monitoring in 2014 was the first year for sampling according to revised WDEQ methodology, which required calculating geometric means on samples collected within 60 days instead of 30 days. Even with the new methodology, samples in 2014 were comparable to other years because they were collected using the same procedures and in similar timeframes. Early season (May-June) and late season (August-September) geometric means from 2014 were compared with early and late season geometric means from other years.

The next interim monitoring season for the Prairie Dog Creek Watershed will be in 2017. The SCCD Board reviewed their overall monitoring program in 2015. While the Board determined that it was still important for SCCD to continue monitoring, they decided to reduce the number of sample stations (throughout all watersheds) for the interim. The main purpose of the interim monitoring is to evaluate changes in water quality over time. Through discussions with WDEQ, they felt it would still be possible to meet interim monitoring goals and objectives with a reduced number of sites. Carrie proposed eliminating four stations within the watershed; there would still be at least one sample station within each subwatershed and one on each tributary. Sample locations are pending landowner consent. The proposed sample schedule includes 5 samples from May 15-July 15 and 5 samples from July 17-September 17. This schedule will allow us to calculate three geometric means: one for May-July, one for June-August, and one for July-September.

Progress Updates/Priority Areas

The Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Based Plan, which was approved in 2011, was updated in 2016 to reflect new data, load information, and project needs. The group reviewed the progress update and progress register (handouts). The progress register (map) documents water quality projects within the watershed to demonstrate progress that may not be reflected in water quality sampling in the short-term. The projects that are on the Progress Registers are primarily those done through the SCCD office and do not reflect other activities/projects completed by other organizations or individuals. Since 2001, 18 projects have been completed within the watershed that include corral relocations, septic replacements, stockwater and fencing installations, diversion replacements, and riparian buffers. The SCCD has a program to assist with willow plantings along streambanks, which is provided to landowner free of charge.

The SCCD is on track with the implementation goals of the updated plan, with the exception of project installation. Project requests are down in all watersheds. It is unclear whether that is because all of the "easy" projects are done, current economic conditions, or lack of awareness on issues/programs. Carrie would still like to conduct some sort of follow-up on past completed projects, but has not been able to coordinate that yet.

SCCD used load duration curves and load estimates in The Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Plan and subsequent updates. Load duration curves relate bacteria to flow information and demonstrate how much bacteria levels need to be reduced in order to meet the standards. Load reduction requirements are calculated for each subwatershed for each monitoring year. Maps depicting the load reduction category (Low, Medium, High) provide a visual representation of general changes in reduction requirements over time. The maps are not intended to be used to determine specific water quality trends within the watershed. There are too many variables and not enough data to accurately develop trends in the short-term. SCCD uses the maps when ranking projects; the load reduction category of the appropriate subwatershed is one of several ranking criteria used to determine whether a project is funded. As of the 2014 data, all subwatersheds are in the Low or Medium reduction category.

TMDL and Watershed Plan Update

Sol Brich, WDEQ TMDL Coordinator, explained WDEQ's requirements under the Clean Water Act of 1972. When waterbodies do not meet water quality standards, the state has 8-13 years to develop a pollution remediation plan through a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). A TMDL has two main components, a waste load allocation and a load allocation. The Waste Load Allocation comes from point sources, which are regulated through permits. The Load Allocation is for non-point sources, which are diffuse in nature and not permitted. Programs to address non-point sources are voluntary. The Prairie Dog Creek watershed is somewhat unique in that it has no permitted point sources for bacteria. Sol recognized the good work that has been completed through local efforts in the Prairie Dog Creek watershed. However, WDEQ is up against the deadline for having to have a TMDL in place for the watershed. To assist in the effort, WDEQ contracted with TetraTech.

Ron Stegg, TetraTech, noted that WDEQ initially expected the Prairie Dog Creek TMDL to take a year and include quite a bit of time. However, when Ron obtained information from the SCCD website, he saw that a lot of the work had already been completed locally. Typically, the first step is to write the TMDL, then write a plan, then implement that plan. The Prairie Dog Creek Watershed is already in the implementation pahse and there is no reason to change that. In a nutshell, they need to repackage what has already been done. For the most part, he will be able to incorporate existing information from the watershed plans into the TMDL document. He stressed that nothing will change with regards to the way the current plans are being implemented.

Once he completes his work, Ron will provide a draft of the TMDL document to Carrie. The group decided to have Carrie send them a postcard letting them know it is available for comment (instead of sending multiple copies of the entire document). Folks can either come in the office and review it, review it on the website, and/or ask Carrie to send them a copy. After the group has provided comments, there will be a 45 day public comment period and then a 60 day administrative period.

There were some additional questions/discussion on what happens after the TMDL is completed. The streams, while still impaired, will be moved to another "list" of waterbodies with completed TMDLs. The ability to secure grant funding to address the waters will not be compromised, in fact, it may open up some additional funding resources. Given the non-regulatory nature of the watershed, there was concern about whether EPA would, at some point, come in and try to regulate non-point sources if water quality does not improve. That has not been the case in other states, rather, they've tried to revise the approach and adapted the plans.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 2018.

Submitted by Carrie Rogaczewski, District Manager