

DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup

August 29, 2012

10:00 AM – Noon

Meeting Minutes

Lombard Village Hall, 255 E. Wilson Ave., Lombard, IL 60148
Equivalent of 1 PDH Recognized for Attendance

1. Approval of June 27 Meeting Minutes (Attachment 1)

Motion to approve the June 27, 2012 meeting minutes made by Nick Menninga, seconded by Jim Knudsen, motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Presentation:** The presentation will cover the reasoning, methods and results to date of the release of a number of smallmouth bass in the West Branch of the DuPage River. The survival and movement of the tagged fish will provide valuable information on the management of the West Branch and other local streams and how the new Urban Stream Research Center can be used to support river restoration efforts.

Presenter: Steve Pescitelli IDNR Region II Stream Specialist

This project aimed to provide a possible breeding population in a restored river section and to provide anglers an opportunity to catch larger fish. Fish were released at two locations and press releases were used to inform anglers of their locations. There is a barbless hook regulation, although all of the fish recovered have seen hook damage. There were 51 fish reported at each location. Smallmouth bass are native river fish and relatively pollutant intolerant; their presence positively impacts IBI scores to a greater degree than their number count does.

Jen Boyer asked if there is a food supply in this reach for the fish; Steve stated that it is a concern based on recent sampling and pointed out that stocking fish is not the answer to building a long term population. Stephen McCracken inquired about the USGS urbanization study to which Steve referred; do changes in ambient chemistry and habitat lead to a decrease in macroinvertebrates leading to loss of fish? Steve stated that it is hard to determine and that the study lost sites, decreasing confidence, as they tried to eliminate impacts from dams, channelization and agriculture. Chlorides may have a role and it would be good to expand to 40-50 sites across a spectrum. Stephen added that the DRSCW data set is missing high end sites; this may be improved by the new monitoring locations in the Lower DuPage River Watershed. MBI is sampling at reference sites, but chemical data is lacking at those locations.

John Oldenburg stated that the substrate project in Spring Brook resulted in an increase of 4 taxa, which, to his knowledge, is unprecedented. It will take time to tease out the exact impacts of the project. Much of the data available looks at old urbanization, it is possible that newer areas of development have a different impact.

Jeff Stein described how the Illinois Natural History Survey received federal funds to conduct research related to sport fish. James Lukey, post doctorate, was placed at the new stream research center with John Oldenburg and his crew. Shawn Landsman will focus on Lake Michigan fisheries at the Des Plaines IDNR office. They are investigating responses to flow and temperature changes such as what fish do during peak flow events. They will assess the sport fish population along with the forage fish and macro populations that support it.

Other game or sport fish species and ecological/ fish communities in research was briefly discussed. Larry Cox inquired about IDNR using data, when feasible, from local watershed groups so allowing limited state resources to be focused on other areas where data was sparser. Steve stated that part of IDNR's role is to collect their own data and that it was often difficult to compare across data sets even when collected under the same protocols. IDNR data is also collected in the same manner and locations as IEPA data (macros and chemistry).

Larry Cox stated that DRSCW is encouraging POTWs to implement actions to impact IBI scores by shifting discussion from point sources (chemical) to how streams function and dedicating resources to implementing stream restoration projects. Larry stated that the materials presented at the meeting suggest a number of excellent opportunities for collaboration. Jeff Stein stated that INHS is getting their team together and will be utilizing the expertise of FPDDC and other partners, including the DRSCW.

Dennis Streicher asked about data for Salt Creek. Steve stated currently, there is not much going on in Salt Creek. They tried stocking smallmouth bass in Salt Creek and the Des Plaines River; they didn't do well. The Hoffman dam has been removed and the mouth of Salt Creek looks better – there is a big riffle and they have already seen minnows and twice as many species. We need to get more dams out; dams are just as important as urbanization. Stephen McCracken stated that the section up to the Fullersburg Woods dam had relatively good fIBI scores and was at the threshold for mIBI scores.

Jim Knudsen asked if there were any partnership opportunities to reintroduce species to give restored areas a jump start, maybe a type of pilot program. Steve stated that the urban research center has some resources. Maybe look at mussels, darter species, dams – it depends on how many species and the types. John Oldenburg stated that we need to monitor where they go during peak flows. We need to know what type of restoration project will yield which results. Stephen McCracken agreed that replicating conditions where they are currently found (without stocking) may prove beneficial for future releases.

- 3. Presentation:** In order to make the analysis behind the IPS methodology more accessible, efforts are being made to produce a layman's guide. The presentation will cover the initial draft of some of that material which will accompany the IPS municipal mailing planned for later this year.

Presenter: James Bland

Stephen McCracken introduced Jim and explained that the DRSCW planned to send an RFP to create a reference document explaining to municipal members the outputs from the IPS tool's empirical data (macroinvertebrates, stressors, guidance, salting, maintain buffer

areas, priority projects, etc.); Jim Bland volunteered to create this layman's guide which would help recipients understand how the data was collected and how conclusions were reached.

A copy of the draft guide will be available on the DRSCW website for comments. We would like to know if it increases your understanding of the methods used to develop the IPS tool outputs. The guide will be 6-7 pages in length. Jim Bland asked about the guide's intended audience. Dennis Streicher stated that the audience may include the general public and our own members. This will be helpful for members to use to explain how the DRSCW arrived at recommendations (i.e. optimal buffer width) based on data and analysis.

Larry Cox stated that this area crossed a number of domains and often stakeholders struggled to see the complete picture. The guide would be extremely helpful for discussions regarding each agency's own involvement. Stephen McCracken stated that the talking points will help others understand how we arrive at conclusions, and give a general idea of why we are spending money on what we do. This influences permits and is all related.

Jennifer Hammer stated that an ad hoc committee should be formed to review the guide to make sure we're hitting the purpose of the document and the audiences' needs. Dustin Gallagher stated that his background is in industrial wastewater treatment. People without a specific training/background don't typically understand such complex information. He believes that providing a general description is both important and fascinating. Dustin stated that he appreciates that the methodology uses quantifiable data versus best professional judgment.

4. Project Implementation and Financing Update

- DRSCW Executive Board meeting with Region 5 and IEPA Division of Water arranged by MWRDGC, held on July 24th

The meeting went very well. We discussed project identification, integrated planning and prioritizing targeted efforts to meet the aquatic life goal. DRSCW asked for leeway with permitting in return for addressing habitat, physical and stormwater related stressors. We are waiting to hear from Region 5 and the State on how we might be able to accomplish this.

Larry Cox pointed out that this thinking is out of the box – shifting the focus from only chemical standards to a holistic approach for all CWA goals: chemical, physical, biological. The DRSCW will need to provide local funding, partly because what we are suggesting would create leeway for POTWs moving forward to spend money on other non-wastewater infrastructure projects.

Dennis Streicher stated this is perhaps historic. Chesapeake Bay might be the only other area that has made this kind of shift. DRSCW is hoping to gain a 10-15-year stay on permit changes that impose new limits (i.e. phosphorus).

Stephen McCracken stated that we received very good feedback from major players like Region 5's water division, IEPA's division of water, and MWRD's Executive Director. Their questions have been constructive and we believe they are seriously considering this possibility. Larry Cox stated that we should expect follow up questions. The DRSCW should be prepared to respond and maybe put a specific proposal on the table. We had not done this at the meeting, rather, we provided a concept for their consideration and input.

A question was asked about regulatory worries of this becoming a precedent. Dave Gorman stated that in many ways the DRSCW is unique, and that our request alone does not set a precedent for other groups, unless they want to follow through all the steps we have taken. Larry Cox stated that it does not appear that anyone in the regulatory side wants to be the one who says "no" to this concept. We hope they will find a way to say "yes."

- **White paper update**

The white paper still in draft form and is, at this point, an ongoing document.

- **State funding update**

Larry Cox provided background information for newer attendees. Last year, the DRSCW proposed a pilot program in SB2081. The program would direct a portion of NPDES permit fees paid in the DRSCW service area for 10 years into a 60% grant 40% local share project implementation program. SB2081 passed the senate 57 – 0. The DRSCW learned that IEPA was using these fees alone to fund the agency and an alternative funding method for \$2.5 million was proposed. The legislation approved the funds and DRSCW is waiting for the Governor's Office to release the funds. We will ask for your help in writing letters when that time comes.

IEPA supports the proposed pilot program and our adaptive management approach. DRSCW supplied Chuck Vaughn, the lobbyist DRSCW hired, a specific list of proposed projects for the alternative funding. We will need local funding to make this possible and representatives should start having discussions with their managers if they have not already. To calculate the extra funding for your agency, Larry suggested thinking of sums equivalent to 3 times current annual dues (in addition to the agency dues for basic workgroup activities). This increase would be charged on an annual basis. MWRD and DuPage County have suggested that they might supply the 40% local match on some projects.

Ross Hill asked about the project list that was supplied to Chuck Vaughn. Stephen showed the list supplied to Chuck, to the 319 program and MWRDGC. The list includes Oak Meadows, Fawell dam fish passage and habitat, Lower East Branch habitat restoration and Fullersburg Woods dam modification.

The DRSCW must be financially prepared in the event that the IEPA/USEPA says "yes" and avoid a position where we do not have the money to tackle projects. Given the costs of phosphorus removal (>\$1 per gallon) even large scale river restoration projects seem

cost effective. Jim Huff added that phosphorus removal was an annual commitment that would raise maintenance and operations costs at POTWs. Jim asked if the DRSCW would receive word from IEPA that the rules would not change mid-way. Stephen stated that we know we will have to do phosphorus removal but it is possible that management and technical advances in intervening period will offset maintenance and operations costs when the time comes.

Larry Cox stated that we hope to address stressors in the order identified by our priority stressor analysis. As we address other stressors, phosphorus may become a priority stressor.

Nick Menninga stated that the Gulf Hypoxia may complicate our calculations.

5. Monitoring Committee

- West Branch 2012 Basin assessments - First round biological monitoring is complete, round 2 is scheduled for September. Ambient water column and sediment chemistry sample collection is underway.
- Salt Creek Basin Assessment 2010 – Final report has been posted at www.drscw.org.
- East Branch DuPage River Basin Assessment 2011 – currently being drafted.
- Database Development (DB) Update – Schema is developed and a number of individual file templates have been delivered. The DB Intern has been hired and is populating the database.
Geosyntec and Alfredo Munoz, our intern, are doing a great job.
- Effluent monitoring for chlorides is ongoing at all West Branch POTWs.
The data is still being collected; at this point we do not foresee continuing this monitoring in other basins. A report on this will be made at our next meeting.
- DO monitoring

6. Projects Committee (new business)

The DRSCW Project Committee is writing a proposal to IEPA to apply \$30K from the Churchill Woods project to another IPS output/ DO improvement project. DRSCW has very limited funds for project development and this would allow us to get another project underway.

- Potential Oak Meadows Dam removal and stream restoration project
The project would be run in close collaboration with the FPDDC/ERA/Martin's design company and the initial step would be a topo survey if the proposal with IEPA is approved. We could possibly use the FPDDC money as local match funds.
- Ammonia study (lower East Branch DuPage River) update.
Moving into final sampling - will make a presentation at the next meeting.
- Topographical screening of stream segments
- Fawell Dam fish passage study
- IPS outreach materials
- PAHs – Coal Tar Sealant MOU between DRSCW and agency member public works departments (Attachment 2).

Dan Cronin plans to sign the DRSCW's PAH MOU at October 31 meeting. We will begin, in earnest, to advance this. Jason Elias asked about providing a document outlining costs for coal tar alternative products. He stated that while there may have been other contributing factors, their lot was almost twice the cost. Stephen will develop a product cost sheet.

Please send any changes or comments on the draft PAH MOU to Tara Neff ASAP. Larry Cox made a motion to distribute the PAH MOU to agency members, Dennis asked that the document be forwarded for comment. We need to have all returned by the October meeting. The motion was approved unanimously - one abstained (wanted to converse with manager).

- Potential USGS coal tar sealant study

7. Chloride Reduction update (new business)

- The Public Roads Deicing Workshop will be held on September 26th at the DuPage County DOT facility (Attachment 3)
- Parking Lot and Sidewalk Deicing Workshop will be held on October 4th at Arrowhead Golf Club (Attachment 4)
- 2011-2012 Salt Use Questionnaire Update
We'll redistribute registration material, please follow up with your organization.
- Elgin O'Hare Expressway Expansion Update
IDOT and the Tollway appear to be considering working with the DRSCW to reduce chloride loadings. Stephen thanked Huff & Huff for also suggesting the idea of sharing costs on chloride reduction.
- CDM contract extension- Chloride Committee would like to negotiate the scope for the extension of the contract.
The DRSCW saved \$6096.00 on the HACH bench service agreements over 2 years. Stephen proposed moving the funds to the chloride reduction program. Larry Cox made a motion to repurpose this savings to the chloride committee to use in the on-going contract with CDM Smith. Steve Zehner seconded, motion carried unanimously.

8. Watershed Permitting Update (old business)

9. Fecal Coliform TMDL (old business)

10. Watershed Committee Updates – West Branch, East Branch and Salt Creek

11. Business Items

- **Membership 2011 -2012** – Attachment 5
- **Accounts Update** - Attachment 6
- **Grant Management Update** – A partial draft final report for grant FAA 3191008 has been filed with IEPA. The grant period is scheduled through September 30th, 2012. This

may be extended if IEPA agrees to allow the DRSCW to reallocate the DO Improvement funds to another project.

- **Other Business**

12. DRSCW Calendar, Presentations and Press Coverage (new business)

- The Executive Board is setting up meetings with DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin and the DuPage County Mayors and Managers Conference.

13. Workgroup Meeting Schedule (10AM-Noon at Lombard Village Hall)

- October 31, 2012
- December 5, 2012
- February 27, 2013 (Annual Meeting)
- April 24, 2013
- June 26, 2013