

WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ADVISORY COUNCIL
10:00 am, September 27, 2024
Room 111 DEQ Metcalf & Zoom Meeting

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Council Members:

Amanda Knuteson (chair)
Ron Pifer (vice chair)
Eric Campbell
Mike Koopal
Jeffrey Mark
Shannon Holmes
Adam Pummill

Montana DEQ:

Lisa Anderson
Abbie Ebert
Torie Haraldson
Lindsey Krywaruchka
Tiffany Lyden
Maddie McGeffers
Kyle Milke
Eric Sivers
Andy Ulven
Mae Vader

Members of the Public:

Ed Coleman
Laura Collins
Gallatin River Task Force
GODELK
Kelly Hendrix
John Iverson
Karli Johnson – MFBF
Quincy Johnson
Casey Lewis
Aaron Losing
MEIC Official
Joe Schrader
Trevor Selch

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Knuteson called the meeting to order and a round-table attendance was taken.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jeff Mark moved to approve the agenda as written. Adam Pummill seconded, all approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Adam Pummill moved to approve the July 12, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Jeff Mark, all approved.

BRIEFING ITEMS ON AGENDA

- DEQ Rulemaking Updates
- Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC) Update
- Septic Issues and Strategies Subcommittee Update
- Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Support and Coordination
- WPCAC Member Updates

DEQ RULEMAKING UPDATES

Lindsey Krywaruchka – Water Quality Division Administrator

Lindsey shared that DEQ had a big rulemaking lift since the 2023 legislative session, with seven rulemaking packages. Six are complete, the remaining one being the narrative nutrient standards that will expire at the Secretary of State's office.

Comments and Questions from WPCAC members

Amanda Knuteson asked Lindsey to reiterate the six completed rulemaking packages. Lindsey provided a summary list: legislative changes to subdivision rules, groundwater permit exclusion rules, non-degradation rules, DNRC reference rule, UV for public water supply, and subdivision stormwater rules.

Public Comments

None.

WESTERN MONTANA CONSERVATION COMMISSION UPDATE

Mike Koopal began the update by explaining he is currently serving as chair for Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC). WMCC was created in 2023 legislative session, effectively combining the Flathead Basin Commission (started in 1983) and the Upper Columbia Basin Commission (started in 1997). Mike explained the voting members, advisory members, meetings, and committee structure. He shared an update about the on-site wastewater treatment committee that was recently formed and explained their plan to develop a series of white papers on the septic leachate issue. He said the committee wants to closely coordinate with WPCAC on this and other issues to provide efficiencies at the state level and leverage partnerships.

Ron Pifer added that the committee developed a list of topics for further investigation.

Casey Lewis shared links and information in the meeting chat:

<https://westernmtwaters.com/our-work-and-projects/grants-resources/>
<https://westernmtwaters.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WGCC-EPA-Grant-Subaward-Guidelines.pdf>
<https://westernmtwaters.com/about-us/reports-and-publications/>
<https://westernmtwaters.com/about-us/committees/>
Save the date: Water Quality Rotunda Event at the Capitol, March 7, 2025
<https://www.nowra.org/conference/mega-conference/>

Casey explained WMCC received a large EPA grant, from which they are developing four grant programs, two focusing on green stormwater infrastructure and two focusing on septic leachate, that will open in early January 2025. She also summarized some of the focus items from the last commission meeting on September 11th in Butte. The next WMCC meeting will be in Missoula in January, the meetings are open to the public, everyone is welcome.

Comments and Questions from WPCAC members

Amanda Knuteson asked if case studies about local codes and ordinances was one of the topics for white papers. Mike Koopal said yes and shared some of the other topics. Amanda also suggested additional outreach avenues to encourage public involvement at future WMCC meetings, and commented on the

collaboration between WPCAC and WMCC with Mike Koopal and Ron Pifer currently serving on both groups.

Public Comments

Abbie Ebert commented that the Montana Watershed Coordination Council maintains a bi-weekly newsletter that can be helpful to share and view upcoming events.

SEPTIC ISSUES AND STRATEGIES SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Ron Pifer - WPCAC vice chair

Ron said he is trying to finalize the white paper he has been working on.

Comments and Questions from WPCAC members

None

Public Comments

None

VOLUNTEER WATER QUALITY MONITORING SUPPORT AND COORDINATION

Abbie Ebert – Senior Water Quality Monitoring Scientist and Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator | DEQ Monitoring and Assessment Section

Abbie provided a slide presentation. In Montana, volunteer monitoring is primarily conducted by watershed groups and conservation districts. Abbie explained that groups monitor to: determine current conditions, identify pollution sources, evaluate project effectiveness, analyze trends over time, and/or enhance public outreach and education. For each she provided examples of projects that different groups are undertaking. She explained that overall, volunteer monitoring helps engage volunteers and communities in pollution prevention and restoration, provides opportunities for partnerships and collaboration, and increases water quality data throughout MT.

DEQ has a Volunteer Monitoring Support Program that provides groups with financial support for lab analysis, training and technical support, and coordination with other volunteer monitoring programs in the state (i.e. Monitoring Montana’s Waters and MSU Extension Water Quality). DEQ’s lab analysis funding is a competitive program with an annual application. Volunteers provide high quality credible data that DEQ is able to use in things like Montana’s biannual Integrated Report and Impaired Waters List, TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) development, long-term trend reporting, and reporting success stories. Over the last five years, volunteers have collected 20-25% of the data submitted to Montana’s water quality (WQX) database.

Comments and Questions from WPCAC members

Ron Pifer thanked Abbie and said he was familiar with the volunteer monitoring that the Bitterroot River Protection Association is doing and asked if they were monitoring for metals. Abbie clarified that they are currently monitoring for nutrients.

Mike Koopal commented that with successful programs like this, the next question is ‘how do we expand’? Mike brought up lakes and stormwater monitoring and asked if any of the current volunteer water quality monitoring training included Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Abbie answered DEQ does not have an AIS component since MT’s Dept of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) implements AIS programs and training, but some groups like the Clearwater Resource Council have coupled their water quality monitoring with AIS

monitoring. Andy Ulven, DEQ Water Quality Planning Bureau Chief, and Abbie commented that there is currently limited funding and resources, but that DEQ is interested in expanding to include additional lakes and other watersheds in the state and be able to meet the increasing demand for volunteer monitoring requests. Mike encouraged that future trainings consider involvement from FWP to incorporate an AIS component, and encouraged DEQ and WPCAC to interface with WMCC to potentially expand monitoring efforts in western MT.

Amanda Knuteson asked if groundwater monitoring data gathered from engineering firms and private developers is put into a publicly accessible database. Abbie answered that the Bureau of Mines and Geology maintains a database called the Groundwater Information Center (GWIC) where data from a lot of groundwater monitoring projects are stored, and also some privately collected data can be stored. Eric Sivers, DEQ's Water Quality Division Policy Analyst, added that other groundwater data from subdivision reviews and other projects are reviewed for those specific projects, and not typically captured or recorded. Abbie commented that MSU Extension's Well Educated Program helps private landowners with well water testing, and that data is collected and mapped, although it is primarily in the Gallatin Valley.

WPCAC MEMBER UPDATES

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Amanda Knuteson suggested the next meeting could include an administrative discussion about how WPCAC could interface with WMCC. There was discussion that DEQ would not have any rule updates at the November meeting due to the upcoming legislative session.

ADJOURN

Amanda Knuteson adjourned the meeting.