

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**10:00 A.M., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2019**  
**METCALF BUILDING**  
**1520 EAST SIXTH AVE., HELENA, MT**

**Council Members:**

**PRESENT**

Trever Selch  
Michael Wendland  
Adam Sigler  
Earl Salley  
Stevie Neuman

**Others:**

Anna Miller  
Lindsay Volpe  
Mike Abrahamson  
Becky Anseth  
Hannah Riedl

**PHONE**

Craig Workman

Tina Christianson  
Scott Buecker  
Keeley Barry

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Selch called the meeting to order at 10:03 A.M.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Selch brought forward approval of the agenda. Michael Wendland moved to accept the agenda and Earl Salley seconded and the agenda was approved.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Selch brought forward approval of the July 12<sup>th</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. There were no changes. Earl Salley moved to accept the minutes. Michael Wendland seconded and the minutes were approved as recorded.

**BRIEFING ITEMS**

**Delivering Local Assistance Program and other Commerce Funding Sources – Becky Anseth, Dept. of Commerce.**

Becky Anseth presented information on funding opportunities for infrastructure projects. See the link below for the electronic versions of the Delivering Local Assistance guidelines and webinar slides.

<https://comdev.mt.gov/Programs-and-Boards/Delivering-Local-Assistance>

**Questions:**

1. Mike Wendland asked if there is a match on the DLA grant? Becky Anseth replied there is no match required on the DLA grant, however it is encouraged.
2. Has the coal board funds always been growth or decline? Becky Anseth confirmed that it has always been growth or decline.
3. Hannah Riedl asked what the likelihood that the Delivering Local Assistance program will be renewed? Becky Anseth replied that it is hard to predict, due to not knowing how successful the initial

program will be. The program was authorized in House Bill 652 and it has multiple programs within it. It is unique in the fact that this is the first time that the State has provided funding through bonding.

**DNRC's Renewable Resource Grants and Loans, SRF and WASACT – Lindsay Volpe and Anna Miller.**

Lindsay and Anna presented information on their funding programs. Below are the links to the materials discussed at the meeting.

WASACT Brochure: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/wasact/2017WASACTbrochure.pdf>

Funding Table: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/docs/resource-development/w2asact-docs/WASACTFundingProgramTableFeb2019.pdf>

Rate Study: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/news/2018-statewide-water-and-wastewater-rate-study>

**Questions:**

1. Hannah Riedl asked if the emergency grant programs have resources/funding for alternative water sources that would fulfill the needs of those impacted by harmful algae blooms. Lindsay Volpe stated that harmful algae bloom wouldn't be considered an emergency, so it wouldn't fit into the types of grants the Development Division has, however it would possibly fit into the DNRC's Renewable Resource grants. A Watershed Management or a RRGL Planning grant which would allow access to resources and funding. She also suggested working with the community and irrigation members to identify concerns and develop a plan to possibly build an offsite water system which could be funded by grant programs. Another option may be to work to fund a project to address the algae and develop a strategic plan to address the contamination issue.
2. Adam Sigler asked regarding Townsend, what the rate increase for wastewater looked like for residents. Anna Miller replied she didn't know as she would have to do the math, but confirmed it will be a large increase.
3. Trever Selch asked if we are seeing increasing revenue for the grant programs that are funded by the coal tax and what are the long-term liabilities? Becky Anseth replied that the changes to the revenues are small fluctuations.

**DEQ's Optimization Training and Additional SRF and WASACT Information – Mike Abrahamson.**

Numeric nutrient standards prevent the growth of nuisance algae in receiving streams to keep our streams in good condition. The general variance process tries to obtain the highest attainable condition based on available technology and affordability to communities. DEQ's first approach in 2005 to help permittees reach highest attainable condition was to educate engineers on better design concepts for removing nutrients from wastewater. However, there was a large cost, and therefore higher rates, associated with building these facilities that were not feasible with smaller communities. DEQ changed focus to optimization efforts, which shifts focus from engineers to operators, and infrastructure to operational strategies.

The goal of optimization is to produce low-cost, or no-cost, changes to operations that improves treatment performance. Operators often lack the training needed to do this type of work, so technical experts were brought in, funded by the SRF, to offer them a free 2-day advanced operator training: Grant Weaver from Connecticut (for mechanical treatment plants) and Steve Harris from Arizona (for wastewater lagoons). The training offers operators the knowledge, support and confidence to try new things. Management support is also critical to success.

DEQ has two staff members that accompany Grant Weaver and Steve Harris to site visits and trainings to learn the techniques and processes to help optimization. As the contracts phase out with the consultants, the hope is that DEQ will be able to lead these efforts in the future. DEQ provides regulatory support by offering a regulatory discretion letter for communities that offers support and reassurance to communities who want to try this out.

Optimization is funded mainly through a 0.25% special admin fee on SRF loan's interest rates. As these loans are paid back, the money goes into a pot and can be used for Clean Water Act projects. \$45,000 has been allocated for the technical experts, and additional costs staff are also associated with this, so it ends up costing approximately \$90,000 total.

### **Questions**

1. Adam Sigler asked what fraction of operators or facilities have undergone the training? Mike replied that he doesn't have specific numbers, however he estimates between 42 to 48 facilities.
2. Scott Buecker wanted to add about talking to the municipalities about expectations of operators and salaries.

### **Nonpoint Source Program's Focus Watershed Update and State HAB Program Update – Hannah Riedl**

The non-point source program has implemented a strategy where a majority of financial and technical resources are focused in a given watershed for 2 to 3 years. The remaining resources can still be dispersed across the state. Funding may still only be used in watersheds with watershed restoration plans, but the program still looks to support communities without watershed restoration plans, through mini-grants.

In the first year, the watershed that has been designated as the focus is the Bitterroot Watershed in Ravalli and Missoula County. There is a call for 319 applications and the deadline is in November. 50% of that funding will go towards high quality projects in the Bitterroot.

Major goals of this focused approach - it is recognized that Montana is a large state with limited resources and by focusing our attention for a short time period on a watershed, it can support increased community involvement to generate water quality improvement actions or projects. We also want to evaluate trends, to demonstrate future success and to document water quality and landowner successes.

In 2019 alone, the program will distribute about half of the funds that have been distributed there in the last 12 years. The program has also provided small grants to help develop shovel-ready projects for 319 funding. Also working on TMDL implementation evaluations – TMDL's are a plan that identifies pollution sources in streams that are not meeting water quality standards and defines the reduction needed to come from the sources to achieve those standards. As of this summer, the Engineering Bureau has provided optimization training with all the wastewater treatment plants in the Bitterroot. Long term nutrients monitoring is being conducted on the Bitterroot River, working closely with the Clark Fork Coalition and the Bitterroot River Protection Association. The Nonpoint Source Program held a symposium, in July, with stakeholders in the Bitterroot Watershed to summarize projects they have been working on and had a great turn out. The Nonpoint Source Program is in the process of selecting the next focus watershed.

### **Harmful Algae Bloom**

Hannah showed and talked about a map of reports of harmful algae blooms. She stated she relies on Trevor and his Fisheries Biologists in the regional offices to check things out. She said that last summer the majority of reports came out of Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter reservoir, however this summer, more reports are coming from around the state (43 reports this summer).

Adam Sigler commented that something to put on the radar for next year is the extension has an Ag agent update in the spring to educate the county agents about relevant topics, based on the number of calls he receives, he believes it would be well received.

### **General Public Comment**

No comment from any member of the public.

### **Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings – Hannah Riedl**

2020 schedules

State TMDL Advisory group (STAG)

Watershed Restoration Plan Development around the State

**Next meeting is Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn at 11:53 AM by Earl Salley. Adam Sigler seconded.