

SWAP Core Team Meeting Minutes

January 7, 2009

Present: John Vail, Shannon Rose , Mike Whitehill, Eric Shertz, John Seidel, Chris Aadland, John McCoy, Ellyn Vail, Allan Davis, Sara Wozniak, Jennifer Volk, Jeff Cornwell, Diane Stoecker, Nancy Metcalf, Gail Owings, Amy Moredock, Joe Blizzard, Karen Miller, Charlie Hayes, Kascie Herron, Kim Kohl, Rupert Rossetti

Absent: Mitch Keiler, Jen Jaber, Ken Yetman

Introduction

Kim Kohl welcomed the group followed by a round of introductions.

Operating Guidelines

Team Operating Guidelines were discussed. Wednesday or Thursday mornings were presented as options. By show of hands Thursdays had a slight advantage over Wednesdays although this poses a problem for Kent Planning. Meetings will be 60 – 90 minutes and agendas will be circulated in advance. Kim encouraged all to participate in monthly meetings, noting that as meetings become more focused members may pass when agenda is not relevant to their expertise/issue area. Subcommittees may be developed to address key issues (e.g. agriculture) as we move forward.

Kim noted the Core Team is a critical piece in the SWAP process as members will fill in knowledge gaps and lend their considerable experience to the development of the plan.

SWAP Timeline

Kim reviewed SRA's strategy and timeline for completing the SWAP and elicited feedback. Kim highlighted the fact SWAP is the SRA's key deliverable in 2009 for several funders. DNR's WRAS took two years to complete (one year for data gathering, one year for analysis), but we are committed to doing it in an year and believe our timeline is realistic.

The strategy for completion is based upon concentric circles of participation -- core team, partners and other stakeholders, each playing a vital role. SRA has already engaged other partners in addition to core team (e.g. MCC for the Stream Corridor Assessment).

Kim cautioned SRA does not want to gather data for data's sake and asked the core team members for input on what data/steps in the process were unnecessary. SRA does not want the result of SWAP to be a mountain of unusable data.

Characterization is being written now and will be followed by the assessments in late winter and early spring. By spring the Core team should be analyzing data gathered and beginning to identify restoration opportunities which will continue until the final stages of the project.

Kim called for questions or comments about timeline. Allan Davis raised several questions about sampling and concerns about collection of summertime data. Kim noted that some of what we're doing is filling in the blanks. Kascie Heron added that SRA wants the review to be as comprehensive as possible.

Data Inventory

Kascie presented the data inventory. SRA's plan is largely modeled after the Corsica WRAS. Kascie asked for feedback regarding what's missing as well as what's not relevant.

Gail Owings noted that using "planimetric" data, designed for urban/suburban areas, does not work well in rural areas and may give misleading findings. Mike Whitehill and Shannon Rose explained that they use a different methodology – actual calculation based on topographic studies. Shannon stated this methodology had been tested and proven fairly accurate for rural areas.

Soils. Kascie requested the SCDs help identify soils. Nancy Metcalf responded that Kent has been digitized but that Cecil has not been certified yet. Jennifer Volk confirmed the same for Newcastle County. Nancy suggested we request the data from NRCS and perhaps they'd provide the data for all 3 counties – with an "asterisk" for Cecil and Newcastle (Charlie Hays's suggestion) and agreed to follow up. Charlie agreed to follow up with Cecil's new soil scientist.

Kascie inquired about a GIS contact in Delaware. Sara Wozniak agreed to get back to Kascie with the name of a Newcastle County GIS person from the Planning (or similar office).

KSWCD and CSCD will get back to Kascie with data on acres of BMPs by type – data have to be requested from MDA.

Jennifer V suggested that perhaps Chesapeake Bay Program has the capability of providing a data dump with all BMPs – not just agriculture, but storm water and others. John McCoy recommended we think about the format we want – spatial data (maps) or tables, adding CBP can't provide spatial, just tables.

Chris Aadland stated the Bay Program is currently calibrating latest release of its data and that he's been able to break out data at county level. Spatial data may be available. Chris has input a request to receive data and will continue to monitor availability and keep Kascie informed of progress.

John McCoy noted Governor O'Malley focuses on "I-Map," and if we ever plan to go to him with data or reports, we will need to use that format.

Kascie raised the issue of data regarding Marina/slips/moorings. A suggestion was made to contact the tax assessment office. John Seidel can assist with private slips count.

John S. will provide archeological resource spatial data.

Jennifer will review Kascie's Data Inventory and try to provide Delaware/Newcastle County sources for data by topical area (growth plans, comp plans, impervious services). TMDLs for Delaware have not been completed.

Eric Shertz will speak to Chuck Smyser and will help with Cecil Septics; Cecil is also currently mapping public water users. Kascie will follow up with John Beskid for Kent.

John S. asked about data on hardened shorelines/shoreline protection practices. John M. will provide by type of protection for both counties.

Kim noted Kascie was working towards a first draft of the Characterization by the time of the Stakeholder meeting. Kascie will circulate the draft to the team for comment, including identifying and filling in remaining gaps.

Ellyn raised the point about not inundating people with data; and that perhaps not everything we collect will be used. Mike suggested including an archived appendix in the Characterization where additional data can be stored.

Charlie suggested examination of shoreline regression – good examination of sediment; impact of weather and boat wake. Historical data – digitized maps from mid-19th century forward -- available from Washington College. CZM website has data too, according to Amy. John M. said he can access it.

Amy Moredock recommended we think about sea-level rise – Zoe Johnson in CZM is contact and helped create the Shorelines-on-Line program. Kascie confirmed that she's created a section for this and will follow up with Zoe.

Ellyn asked if there was any data on the effect of the Susquehanna. Jeff Cornwell responded there may be some modeling available if you're willing to accept a level of inaccuracy. John M. distributed "Science of Corsica River Restoration" and "Box Models" for review. Jeff noted for a simple system, the Corsica is pretty complex. Jeff provided insight into his research which addresses how algae and nutrients can actually recycle in the upper portions of the Sassafras and suggested we focus efforts on the headwaters and not the mouth, implying the Sassafras issue was land based and non-point source.

Goals and Objectives

Kim reviewed the overarching goal of SWAP, *to create a scientifically robust assessment of the Sassafras Watershed which meets EPA criteria for funding and includes a list of prioritized projects with cost estimates and funding opportunities.*

Open Issues

Subwatersheds – Kim suggested there may be benefit to looking at subwatersheds when developing restoration strategies as a smaller project may lend itself better to measuring impact. SRA's approach is to look at the whole watershed now, but as we move forward it may be obvious that we need to focus on smaller subwatersheds. Mike noted that many programmatic changes we suggest will be watershed wide, so we should be careful not to lose scope.

Data Management – Kim raised the issue of who will manage/maintain/store the data and asked the Core Team to consider long-term ownership within the context of three counties and two states. John S. noted that Washington College had huge amounts of server space and great GIS capability, and may be a good choice.

Subcommittees – As referenced earlier, Kim reiterated the possible need for subcommittees as we move forward.

Bloomfield – Kim spoke about the Sassafras Natural Resources Management Area (aka Bloomfield) and SRA board member, Wayne Gilchrest's, interest in developing a management plan, in conjunction with DNR, which has current management responsibility. Kim is monitoring these efforts and will decide as time moves on whether the project should be included in SWAP. SRA's board is excited by the possibility of SNRMA becoming a pilot project for SWAP but needs to take caution to avoid possible mission creep.

SWAP Stakeholder Meeting

Kim reported that invitations were sent to all residents in the watershed for the first stakeholder meeting which will take place January 27, 2009 at 6:30 pm, Galena Fire Hall. Kim asked if Corsica had a strong response from mailings. Mike said local access TV was the best source for spreading information about the Corsica Project. The discussion led to thoughts about postings in public places – Pizzeria, Otwell's, etc. John M. also suggested partnering with one of the Fire Companies (or someone else) in a joint event to encourage community involvement.

Next Steps

Stream Corridor Permission

The Stream Corridor permission letter was discussed. Mike made the point that streams have two sides and that you don't need permission from both sides.

Amy reported Chester WRAS picked out riparian borders from property view and suggested that SRA could economize number of permissions by careful selection of properties (e.g. multiple parcels with same owner along stream corridor). Amy also recommended providing a range of dates for the physical assessments to better inform owners. Amy agreed to assist Kascie with Kent and Shannon agreed, for Cecil. Eric suggested SRA may need to get commissioners approval for Cecil letter. Mike will provide Corsica permission letter and mentioned that background information should accompany permission letter. Gail will provide Middle Chester letter. Jennifer will provide landowner file for Newcastle. Alan raised concern about the stream corridor assessment. Members involved in previous WRAS projects for the Corsica and Chester reported that in all cases DNR trained MCC members who did a thorough job without issue. Kim agreed to vet permission letter with a few members for feedback before mailing.

Field Assessment Components

Kascie requested assistance for developing SOPs for project monitoring. Monitoring protocols can be very expensive, according to John M., who suggested SRA may need to wait until projects are identified. Kascie responded that SRA already has a monitoring program in place and would like to expand/revise current program to include non-tidal as well as capacity for evaluating impact. Chris Aadland will provide a copy of an SOP previously used. John M offered to provide a monitoring overview at the next core team meeting.

Meeting was adjourned.

Subsequent Actions

- Minutes will be circulated and posted on SRA's website
- Kascie will follow up with individual members on data issues, permissions, etc.
- If anyone has photos of the Sassafras (old and new) please send via email (kkohl@sassafrasriver.org) or disc by 16 January as SRA is creating a slide show for the Stakeholder Meeting
- Nancy raised the issue of woodland gullies. Kascie to address this with DNR and Center for Watershed Protection (CWP)
- **Next Core Team meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 11, 9:30 at Galena Town Hall**