Agriculture and Water Quality Advisory Committee

Update on Watershed Evaluations

Meeting #8 (June 2015)

Past Committee Meetings

- March 2014 Meeting-First meeting we presented information on the Watershed Evaluation Process.
- July 2014 Meeting-Asked for feedback on process.
- October 2014 Meeting-Presented the key changes to the watershed evaluation process based on committee feedback.
- December 2014 Meeting-Outlined our plan for 2015

Ten Key Changes to Ecology's Watershed Evaluation Process

- **1-Increase education and outreach** in watersheds.
- **2**-Increase communication with willing **conservation districts**.
- **3**-Ecology will increase engagement with **producer groups** when conducting education and outreach.
- **4**-Letters will include **specific information on the pollution problem observed** at the site.
- **5**-Letters will include a **clear timeline for producers to contact Ecology**.
- **6**-Letters will include an offer for the producer to **access the documentation** related to their operation and an **offer for Ecology staff to make a site visit**.
- **7**-Ecology will **send within sixty days of observing the site**.
- **8**-Ecology will provide 30 days for individuals to contact Ecology and/or set up a site visit.
- **9**-After 30 days Ecology will send second letters to producers who fail to contact Ecology and/or set up a site visit.
- **10**-Ecology will send the first communication to the lessee if we can verify that the land is being leased.

Key Themes

- Better Upfront Communication.
- Engage Producer Groups.
- More specificity in Letters.
- Increased Clarity Around Nonpoint Pollution Problems
- Promote Consistency Between Regions.

Upfront Education and Outreach (Changes 1-3)

- **Public Workshops:**
  - Fairfield-January 27, 2015
  - Pullman-January 29, 2015
  - Walla Walla-February 4, 2015
- **Meetings with CDs:**
  - Walla Walla-January 12, 2015 & May 6, 2015
  - Palouse-December 11, 2015
  - Whitman-January 8, 2015 & May 7, 2015
  - Asotin-December 11, 2015 & April 30, 2015
  - Pomeroy-February 10, 2015 & April 30, 2015
  - Spokane-January 13, 2015 & May 7, 2015
  - Columbia-January 7, 2015
  - Palouse-Rock Lake-January 13, 2015
- **Blog, CD newsletters, and updated Ecology webpage**
- **CD hosted workshop-**Asotin; February 11, 2015

Watershed Evaluations: Overview

- Performed evaluations -March 16-25.
  - Blue Mountain Streams, Hangman Creek Watershed, North & South Fork Palouse River, Snake River Tributaries in Whitman County and Walla Walla River Watershed.
- Observed extensive stream protection and restoration efforts, and identified sites to send thank-you letters.
- Identified 262 sites with site conditions of concern (range of severity).
- Will be sending technical assistance letters to the owners/operators of 20 sites.

Watershed Evaluations: Overview

Watershed	Count
Blue Mountain Streams	45
Hangman Creek Watershed	42
North & South Fork Palouse River	55
Snake River Tribs. Whitman County	54
Walla Walla River Watershed	66

Conservation District	Count
Asotin	16
Pomeroy	30
Spokane	35
Pine Creek	7
Palouse	59
Whitman	49
Columbia	17
Walla Walla	49

Description	Count
Livestock Grazing	153
Livestock Feeding	75
Feedlot	2

Common Site Conditions Observed in Riparian Area	
Bare ground/Exposed Soils in Riparian area	Absence of woody riparian vegetation
Livestock paths and trails	Overutilization of grasses
Slumping streambanks and erosion	Livestock access to surface water
Contaminated runoff (evidence of past run-off, active or foreseeable future)	Manure deposited near surface water/ accumulations

Contacting Landowners

- Ranked sites on severity of issues.
- Briefing Agriculture and Water Quality Committee.
- Send technical assistance letters to twenty sites.
- Send thank-you letters to ten sites where we saw protective management practices implemented.
- Follow-up on 2013 sites.

Watershed Evaluations
Next Steps

Original Timeline

- ☑ **Late January-Early February** – Complete workshops.
- ☑ **March** – Complete field work.
- ☑ **Early April** – Prioritize sites.
- ☑ **April** – Meet with CD managers and available board members.
- ❑ **Late April - Early May:**
  - ☑ Develop final list of contacts.
  - ❑ Send technical assistance letters.
- ❑ **May -June** –Work with CDs and perform site visits as requested.
- ❑ **Early July** – Follow-up Workshops.

Next Steps

- Follow-up Workshops:
  - July? Fall?
  - Subcommittee?
- Making Information Available

Why Did We Build This Tool?

- Constantly trying to improve our methods
  - Increase efficiency
  - Faster response times
  - Improve record keeping
  - Increase use of mapping technology
  - Less equipment to configure
- Make data accessible to public
  - <u>Producers asked for easier access to our data</u>
- Precision Agriculture uses similar tools (e.g.)
  - GPS/aerial photos
  - Auto steer
  - Variable rate application

Mobile GIS Technology

Piloted in Eastern Region

- Field:
  - iPad Air with Collector for ArcGIS app – easy to use and low cost
  - Data goes directly into GIS – all digital no paper forms
- Office/Internet:
  - ArcGIS Online – easily share data with public

Expanding Statewide

- Currently using in:
  - Samish Watershed
  - Whatcom County
  - Eastern Region
- Testing in all Ecology Regions
- Testing in other Ecology Programs

Information in the Web Map

Included

- Base Map
  - freely available to public via Google Maps, Bing Maps, etc.
- Ecology Photos - date & time stamp
- Ecology Field Data
- Breadcrumb Trail - where we went
- Example BMP Sites
- Streams
- Watershed Evaluation Areas
- Conservation Districts
- Counties
- Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs)
- Township, Range, & Section

Not Included

- Names
- Addresses
- Phone Numbers
- Email Addresses
- Parcel Data
- Ecology Followup Status

Questions?