

Notes from Annual Partnership Meeting, February 11, 2008, 2:00-5:00 pm, Anchorage

In attendance:

Brianne Athern, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District

Kathy Ciarimboli, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District

Holly Kent, Anchorage Waterways Council

Kate Malloy, Anchorage Waterways Council

Sue Mauger, Cook Inletkeeper

Tori Lentfer, Cook Inletkeeper

Tim Stevens, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Russ Maddox, Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance

Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District: Kathy Ciarimboli reported that she will be moving away from the monitoring program as Brianne Athern has been hired to assume those duties. Kathy spoke about the problems her group is having with recruiting and retaining volunteers. They currently have sites which are not covered. WSWCD concluded that they are asking a lot from volunteers and are examining how they can simplify what data they are collecting. A proposed plan (not yet implemented) would be to limit the data volunteers collect and have staff go out monthly and collect the missing information (i.e. nutrients, bacteria). WSWCD plans to do a new training/recertification soon and plans to implement the changes then.

Suggestions and words of encouragement for Kathy followed. Holly thought *What's Up* would work well as a recruitment device. Holly can send out information on upcoming trainings to her membership. Enough people in Anchorage know people who live in the Valley or are planning to move to the Valley themselves to make this potentially lucrative. Holly reminded us of the basics. Why do people volunteer? To be connected to something larger; to meet people; to contribute something to their communities. Holly said that AWC holds social events for volunteers twice per year. Tori echoed that in saying that CIK now holds a summer Splash Bash and a Winter Solstice Lunch--each event having the purpose of celebrating volunteers and allowing for the volunteers to interact.

Sue mentioned that the volunteers may not be getting enough feedback on what they are doing. Sue stressed the importance of having clear goals in collecting the data you are asking volunteers to collect. Volunteers need to feel they are more than random-number generators. Sue mentioned that volunteers provide valuable match when applying for grants, and that once a program is cut back, it can be immensely difficult to rebuild.

Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance: Russ Maddox joined us as a representative from the RBCA which is working to establish a new CEMP group in Seward. Russ inquired about using kids in the monitoring program. In Seward, they have 5 streams, each running by a school. Holly reported that she had used school kids with mixed results: need to have a point person, such as the teacher, be CEMP-certified; need to maintain the credibility of the data.

Russ mentioned that there are pollution issues everywhere in Seward, asked about picking monitoring sites. Holly mentioned that AWC started by picking sites as far downstream as possible so that they could pick up everything. The CEMP program is largely focused on non-point sources of pollution.

Anchorage Waterways Council: Holly Kent reported that she has just hired a new monitoring coordinator, Kate Malloy. And has a former intern, Greg, who will be graduating and will be working for AWC as a computer guru. Holly is happy to farm him out to other partners; would be great if they could come up with some funding for him. Sue suggested the establishment of a CEMP Partnership website as a project for him. Holly mentioned that One NW is a great resource with the mission of helping environmental groups with electronic media. They have super-smart computer people who can provide free assistance. TechSoup is a source for discounted software.

Cook Inletkeeper: Sue Mauger distributed copies of the *Data Logger Protocol for Cook Inlet Salmon Streams* which she recently completed. Sue is establishing a program to monitor water temps in salmon streams throughout Cook Inlet. Sue will work with each of the Partners to implement the program. Everyone can be involved as Quality Assurance partners. Volunteers will check the data loggers to verify that they are where they should be and not washed away and that they are recording accurate information. Holly commented that having this protocol is great because it has already been approved by DEC and so can simply be incorporated into the QAPP. It can act as an excellent buy-in for groups because people are recognizing that stream temps is an important issue.

Tori Lentfer who began working for CIK in November reported on the Homer CEMP program, currently running with 15 active sites and 20 volunteers. Tori mentioned that in the fall, she and Sue had prioritized each of the Homer sites and identified each one as belonging to one of three categories: Tier 1 (sites important enough that Monitoring Coordinator will monitor if the assigned Volunteer Monitor is unable to); Tier 2 (sites which are important for various reasons—nearby gravel pit we want to keep an eye on, sites which a volunteer has a particular interest in monitoring, etc.—but which are not so important or too impractical for the Monitoring Coordinator to sample if the volunteer is unable to); and Tier 3 (sites which may have been of interest at one time, but are not now—these are currently unmonitored). Working through the process of assigning each site to a category was helpful in that it forced us to think about what we wanted to gain from the data collected at each site and then be able to articulate those objectives to the volunteers.

ADEC: Tim Stevens from the Monitoring and Assessment Section of ADEC discussed nominating a waterbody for High-Priority Status. The history behind this program is that in 2000, Governor Knowles asked DEC, DNR and F&G to concentrate their efforts in looking at water quality. Individuals are encouraged to nominate waterbodies. Once per year, DEC ranks the nominated waterbodies. This schedule will soon change to twice per year. Agencies are charged with working on High Priority waterbodies. Once identified as a High Priority Waterbody, an Action Plan is developed for the waterbody. If a waterbody has been ranked as Medium, the site will be automatically reviewed every five

years. This could serve as another motivator for volunteers. Tim provided screen shots of how to find the nominating site online.

Funding Issues: Holly mentioned that other states have state-sponsored monitoring programs and argues for each of the partners to gather information together and try approaching Lisa Murkowski about having more money trickle down to the programs rather than being absorbed by DEC. Sue makes the point that we could be better served by working to build a stronger case and identifying the Partnership's objectives. The biggest pot of money coming down is connected to climate change. A working strategy may be to focus attention on temperature and flow and hang the rest of the CEMP program off that.

Annual Report: General consensus was that producing an annual paper report for the Partnership may not be the best use of our time. It raises distribution issues and usually gets stuck on some shelf in somebody's office but isn't actually read or used by anyone. A webpage may offer a better solution. Something that describes the CEMP Partnership which funders can click to individual programs from. Some funders may be more inclined to give money to a Partnership rather than individual partners. This is where the water temp monitoring protocol idea originated. We are wasting time applying for dinky grants; makes more sense to go for bigger money.

Phase IV/V Trainings: Newbies Brianne, Kate and Tori need these trainings. Tori will coordinate with Dan Bogan and possibly Joel Cooper to find a date which will work for everyone and notify the involved parties. The training will be held in Anchorage (despite the superb spring skiing opportunities Homer offers).

Recertification: Partners need to be setting up their recertification programs individually. If planning on using the USGS office in Colorado for standards, you needed to have entered your information in the fall. Holly mentioned that Rusty Meyers from APU prepares their recertification samples. This may be an option for WSWCD and CIK if the Colorado connection doesn't work out.