

Notes From Partnership Meeting, March 21st -3:30pm -5:00pm

In attendance:

Lindsay Winkler, Homer Soil and Water Conservation District

Joel Cooper, past CIK Lab Manager

Holly Kent, Anchorage Waterways Council

Sarah Masco, Chickaloon Village Tradition Council Environmental Protection Program

George Taylor, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District

Rick Ernst, Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District

Kara Kusche, Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Dan Bogan, UAA Environment and Natural Resource Institute

Ingrid Harrald, Cook Inlet Keeper

(not present: Kenai Watershed Forum, Palmer Soil and Water, Port Graham/Nanwalek, Seldovia. Other tribes doing monitoring?)

Report on State-wide Meeting in Juneau:

Holly Kent reported on the State-wide watershed meeting in Juneau in February. Sarah Masco, George Taylor, Sue Mauger and Holly Kent attended. The meeting was well attended with over 85 people. One note of encouragement: in the past there were only three watershed councils (Kenai Watershed Forum, Cook Inlet Keeper, Anchorage) and now there are twenty - many in the Southeast. This growth in Southeast was orchestrated by a NRCS, Soil and Water, and Fish and Wildlife partnership that received a big grant from Economic Development to develop watershed councils. Eric Decker and Samia Sevell did the administration. Also, many Tribal Councils have grown (Ex:Yukon Native Tribal Watershed)

There was a feeling of synergy at the state meeting as there are many groups at the same stage. The breakdown seems that there are a few experienced groups, and that these groups should help the newer groups to blossom. Talk about state wide funding was touched on but eventually tabled.

Pros to State-wide organization: more access to funding, more grant opportunities (one big grant vs. many small grants), representation of a large populace/territory, more power for lobbying, and potential for a “hub” for information. Mentoring, employee swap-outs.

Cons: possibility that state funding would end up taking funding away from small groups. Concern that it will just add a level of bureaucracy. Small groups could feel left out with lack of representation and lack of communications when tossed in with larger groups.

Hope to have a state-wide meeting annually. However, no more funding so first step is to look for way to fund next meeting.

Discussion on Direction of Partnership

Possibility that as the partnership grows we can make some noise and talk about our successes and what we are doing. In particular an outreach event for legislatures and an informational event for public on the partnership.

Past annual meetings have been incorporated into outreach events as well. When funding got pulled, meetings became more low-key. Comments on the need for consistency and to get some regular outreach opportunities on an annual schedule.

Homer Soil and Water feels they are no longer involved in partnership as much, and would like to be involved on a more project-by-project basis. After this year's annual report, they would like to pull back from running partnership.

Cook Inlet Keeper said they would take back running partnership with emphasis of supplying continued communication between groups, trainings, annual report, searching for funding sources, and cooperative outreach events. Hopes are to find a way to fund a Partnership Coordinator in the near future.

Partner Updates:

Wasilla Soil and Water: 16 sites and 16 volunteers. Operating on an EPA combo CEMP/Community education-outreach grant. George is only person in office. Participating in a sustainable funding teleconference. Presently working to put data into EPA database (Dasler). Database is set up and they are entering their data and sending it to Juneau. Dianne Dennison is traveling to Juneau to meet with George and Rick and help get the database running. Good that database is funded.

George has volunteers with signs on their car while they sample so that people who pass by see the "CEMP volunteer" sign. Good PR and also makes the volunteer feel noticed. Had tried putting CEMP signs at the monitoring site, but this did not work as well. Shot up and vandalized. Good sign resource: Warning Lights of Alaska in Anchorage makes really cheap signs. Site signs/restoration signs run about 28 dollars a piece 12x18.

Anchorage Waterways: is currently monitoring 26 sites, but has no funding. Looking towards the municipality – promised funding but have yet to see the money. No other funding options. Supportive of state wide organization. Having no problem finding volunteers, and large amounts of volunteers give money. Working on implementing a flow monitoring program. As of now there is no monitoring director due to lack of funding. Looking to partner with resource agencies.

Chickaloon: Monitoring 11 sites on 9 rivers. Presently there is no funding. Unable to recruit volunteers due to lack of funding. Local residents interested in volunteering, but must secure funding for supplies before recruiting. Applying for wetland grant through EPA but that is only potential funding source.

Upper Susitna Soil and Water: Rick is leaving in June. He would like to have the electronic database up and running before he leaves. Currently monitoring 8 sites with 5 volunteers. Organizing training around earth day. Currently have 4.5 years data and baseline for some of the streams and would like 5. There is a new manager, who has good energy. Held recertification a few weeks ago for 4 volunteers. Looking at the possibility

of flow gauges but need more resources. Discouraged by lack of funding by state and their inability to be proactive in areas of growth.

Mat-Su lake program: Lynne Fuller is stepping back. Monitoring 30 lakes. No need to advertise, community members offer to help. Potential to do more lakes. Presently, going out every month. Goal is baseline data. Would like data to be more accessible either through STORET or borough website. Funding comes from Borough budget. It was suggested that it would be a good idea to get a letter from the borough to say how the program helps the borough. Suggested that we look into the possibility of Rick and George's programs to get funding assistance through the borough as well.

Cook Inlet Keeper: 25 sites, 34 volunteers. Water monitoring, bio-assessment, and wetland monitoring. Joel no longer running lab, but contracting to help partnership and CIK through transition. Since Keeper is an older, more established organization, it is able to carry its water monitoring through general funding and general organizational grants. Once the lab is self-sustaining it is set up to put all earnings back into the CEMP program. There is a new lab director, John Plaskett, who will be working towards the potential to help run lab work for partners.

ENRI: Support role. Develops bio-monitoring methods and training. Dan volunteers his time for the partnership. Thanks Dan.

Homer Soil and Water: No longer involved in partnership as much, and would like to be involved on a more project-by-project basis. Involved in wetland monitoring and mapping.

Funding Issues:

Talked about Tri-Borough support as a potential for funding and resolutions. We should, as a group, get these historic documents to show support for these programs from local governments. Discussed frustrations about 319 money no longer being granted for water monitoring.

USGS recertification program.

Joel has organized a method for coordinators to coordinate their own re-certifications through USGS. All chemicals are free and results are within two weeks. Will be once a year, there will be one month time limit to get hold recertification and get results back to USGS. Everyone agree this was a good idea, will start next year.

Annual report:

Please get one page of information with pictures and volunteer data. Get to Lindsay by mid-April. Lindsay will email format to all partners.

Next Meeting: Possible outreach event in anchorage after annual report is done on National Water Quality Monitoring Day (October).