

## MINUTES

### Selenium Management Program – Joint Subcommittee Meeting

10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Friday, March 25, 2011

USDA Service Center (Natural Resources Conservation Service), 690 Industrial Blvd., Delta

Attendees: Ralph D'Alessandro, Tom Grett, Mike Baker, Ken Leib, Sonja Chavez de Baca, Gabe Lucero, Steve Fletcher, Steve McCall, Dale Woodbury, Rick Krueger, Denis Reich, Frank Riggle, Barb Osmundson, Dave Kanzer

#### 1. Introductions & agenda review

#### 2. Technical Review Subcommittee topics

##### a. Revised planning strategy table; plan for Management Committee review

The Technical Review Subcommittee (TR) discussed the presentation of our chosen strategy to the Management Committee (MC). Some members of the TR thought that rather than present two strategies, we should only discuss the process leading up to our chosen SMP planning strategy with the MC. In other words, the TR preferred to continue to move forward with the "carrot strategy" versus a more "traditional" water resources planning process (which might include some "sticks") heavily focused on a number of pounds to be reduced (e.g. 8,600 lbs target identified in the Gunnison TMDL). The justification / reasoning is that with the recent decreasing selenium trend presentation by USGS, it shows that the carrot approach emphasized and utilized by the Gunnison Basin Selenium Task Force and the Salinity Control Program is working. The TR wanted to emphasize to the MC that our chosen strategy involves continuing as we have in the past but at an accelerated rate and with significant public education and stakeholder involvement. An additional perspective notes that there are other, somewhat differing reasons, for pursuing Strategy 2 and it's also important to present those to the MC. Strategy 2 leaves open the possibility of restarting a traditional planning process at a later time if necessary and utilizing some effective but possibly not-so-popular selenium reduction measures.

The purpose of conference call with the MC is to keep them up to speed on where we are at with our planning activities and to get their blessing for our

chosen approach. The trend line for selenium should be presented as evidence that what we are doing is obviously working. There was a suggestion that we could also present the trend in tons of salt reduced as one of the important factors leading to the selenium reduction we've seen through the Salinity Program.

The TR suggested that potential conference call dates and times along with an agenda be developed and distributed to the group.

**ACTION:** Mike and Steve will work on organizing the MC meeting, proposing potential conference call dates, and distributing information to the group.

b. Effect of new strategy on activities & implementation plan development

i. Status/timetable for report and public involvement

The TR discussed whether we need to do "informational sessions" in preparation for getting comments on the Draft SMP? The group agreed that "yes they need to be done", but the question became "with whom?" The agricultural community, water providers and water users are getting very busy at this time planting crops, delivering water, etc. so we might have to focus right now on other stakeholders (e.g. cities, counties, towns, and general public).

It was suggested that we when we do start to work on outreach with agricultural community (September-October) that we use the conservation districts to help us get people in the room.

It was noted that NRCS puts out a newsletter which we could utilize to get information out about the informational sessions. The current spring newsletter deadline for submission is April 8<sup>th</sup>. The summer issue comes out in late August.

The Shavano and Delta Conservation Districts' Irrigation Water Management specialists can give out informational brochures / pamphlets and BMP information to people they meet with when they are out assisting folks with irrigation water management issues on their property. It was emphasize that the information should be succinct and not complicated.

NRCS staff can also get information to the people they meet with. The Delta Conservation District emphasized again that the messages need to be succinct and not complicated. The TR thought this was a great way to get materials "directly" into the producer hands.

The Gunnison/Dolores Watershed Tour (July) are another possibility where we could get some information in about selenium and salinity. It was noted that this is probably not a good venue for reaching producers. Generally, it is better attended by and targeted to legislature, district conservationist, and conservation district board members. The River District and CSU said yes to helping with in-kind or small cash donations. It may also be possible to use the Lower Gunnison Wise Water Use Program WCFSP grant funds if it meets the grant's goals and objectives.

In the meantime, it was recommended that we focus on a series of newspaper articles, getting materials ready, and meeting with municipalities. We need to be ready by October to find a way to get the draft SMP to folks to get public comment.

Important Note: Be sure to have food - always key to getting people there.

**ACTION:** Sonja will work on incorporating all these suggestion into the upcoming April strategic planning meeting (TBD) of the outreach and education subcommittee.

ii. How does land use study fit in? & how do we proceed?

USGS noted that work on a Reclamation funded land use study is continuing. Due to a shortage of time, the group suggested that we should address this at the next mtg.

**ACTION:** Mike will add a discussion item to the next agenda focused on this.

c. Review of potential Implementation plan components & ongoing technical evaluations

**ACTION:** Mike will add the review of potential implementation plan components and on-going technical evaluations to the next agenda of the TR.

The purpose is to talk about the viability of the candidate implementation plan components (see handout). It was suggested that the group go over the handout at the next meeting, focus on the activities that are most viable, and develop cost and feasibility information for those identified activities and not for everything.

### 3. Joint Technical Review/Science & Research subcommittee topics

#### a. Review BMP recommendations; need for discussion with Montrose & Delta Counties

The Gunnison Basin /Grand Valley Selenium Task Force recently had an educational work-session with the Montrose County Planning Commission where they presented potential BMPs that could be used to address new sources of selenium loading. The BMP document was not presented as a product from the Selenium Management Program Work Group because it had not gone through any formal review and approval process. The TR thought that the document was a good start to a more formal BMP document that could be used by the Selenium Management Program. The following suggestions were made to improve and or revise the document for SMP purposes:

1. The document should be edited to also address salt;
2. In order to address our changing state of knowledge regarding the selenium, the group recommended that we put a disclaimer in the document.

Discussion focused on our outstanding concern over our state of knowledge with the science. For instance, by drying up soils do we make the potential oxidation of selenium greater by aerating the soils? The TR group's response was that we don't know everything, we suspect some things, and that's why we continue to study the problem.

3. It was emphasized that the information we give in the BMP document should be defensible. For instance, the NRCS has provided significant comment on the draft BMP document and recommended some changes. They would like to continue to formalize the document, along with any data or references made to/by NRCS and send it through an internal review

process so that if the document were ever challenged they could say they supported the information presented in it.

3. Because Montrose County is in the middle of trying to propose BMPs to address selenium loading, the group thought it important to try to schedule a meeting with Dennis Murphy.
4. The TR group suggested taking out any recommendations concerning stormwater detention ponds. They thought that the cost-benefit associated with the potential load contribution would be periodic and small compared to other loading sources.

**ACTION:** Sonja will incorporate the above recommendations into a new draft of the BMP document along with comments provided by Mike Baker.

**ACTION:** Sonja will contact Dennis Murphy to inquire about his availability.

**ACTION:** Frank Riggle will send Sonja his comments via email.

- b. Field trip re: septic systems & potential questions for investigation

**ACTION:** Sonja will incorporate input from TR committee and revise the list of questions. She will also continue to work with Montrose County and the NRCS soils scientist to organize the field tour. The tour was set for April 27<sup>th</sup> and would be a portion of the regularly scheduled Selenium Task Force meeting.

- c. Upper Colorado River Basin Fund MOA - status & opportunities

Steve Miller indicated that up to \$5 million dollars to be used for CRSP-related projects in Colorado could be available under the MOA annually. This money could be directed to help address PBO efforts. A committee will be set up at the State level to come up with criteria/recommendations on how to spend \$5M. . The SMP group needs to develop a list of how we might best use some of that funding. This money would be available sometime in 2012.

**ACTION:** Mike will facilitate efforts to develop a list of recommended activities to fund.

- d. Species Conservation Trust Funds

Steve Miller updated the group on the status of the Species Conservation Trust Fund. Right now there is legislation which identifies \$500,000 for lower Gunnison selenium projects.

**ACTION:** Steve will find the bill number and tell us where it is at in the legislature.

e. Funding priority list for activities and studies

The group discussed a preliminary version of the "Current Priorities for Funding Assistance" document and ranked the entries from high to low.

**ACTION:** Mike will edit the document as suggested and provide a revised version to subcommittee members before the next meeting.

4. Science & Research Subcommittee topics

a. Monitoring program (e.g., WQ, fish, fish food) - existing Recovery Program activities; proposed additions; next steps/assignments

The group asked Barb Osmundson (FWS), "How important is the collection of fish food studies/data?" Barb indicated that fish food collection would be more important once we meet water-quality standards. She already has "baseline" data from samples collected in early 2000's.

**ACTION:** Barb was asked give a monitoring program write-up.

b. Status of Canal2Wash proposal; potential selling points, partnerships, & funding

**ACTION:** Agenda item tabled until the next SMP TR meeting.

5. Outreach/Education Subcommittee -- SMP/PBO pamphlet review

Feedback was given to Sonja and included the following:

- Include a write-up on the goals of the SMP (standards and fish recovery) (No more than 2 paragraphs).
- Describe the relationship between the SMP and the TMDL (Brief). Consider putting a link to the SMP website with "more" information - longer version.
- Also work on developing a brochure which would be a shortened more condensed version. The Pamphlet would serve as the longer version.
- Work on language. For instance, we will lose people with words like "take" and "jeopardy".

- Put something in the header indicating that the material is meant for "XX" audience. For example, "this document was developed for the benefit of land and water use decision makers such as county commissioners, water commissioners, city council members, planners, etc."
- Future BMP documents can be geared for the individual water users in terms of water management.
- Suggestion for outreach committee - decide who stakeholders are, group, determine what outreach we've done or materials we have, and where there are gaps.

**ACTION:** Sonja will continue to try to address feedback in future versions of the SMP. She will also attempt to address their feedback when she has a strategic planning meeting of the education and outreach committee in the next couple of weeks.

On another note, Frank Riggle asked Tom Grett (president of Shavano Conservation District) about what the Salinity Program needs in order to get more people coming in the door. Was it an issue of the program being maxed out or a need to do more outreach? Tom said he felt that it wasn't so much that the program was maxed-out, it was more an issue of NRCS going to an incentive payment system to try to simplify things. The result is that landowners don't have a clue what they are going to end up paying for the BMP they wish to implement.

6. Review old (see next pages) and new assignments
7. Set next meeting(s) dates and times
  - a. April 15<sup>th</sup> - presently scheduled (10 - 3)
  - b. Dates for next 2 month period  
April 27<sup>th</sup> (part of Selenium Task Force regularly scheduled quarterly)