

**St. Joseph River Watershed 319 Project
Technical Subcommittee
July 9, 2003 Meeting Summary**

Attendees

Sandra Nordmark, FOTSJR
Dennis Haskins, USDA NRCS Hillsdale County
Steve Blumer, USGS Water Resources Division
Todd Kesselring, Elkhart County GIS
Jim Coury, Potawatomi RC & D Council
Elizabeth Moore, Great Lakes Commission (via conference call)
Christine Bauer, MDEQ (via conference call)
Mark Kieser, Kieser & Associates
Nicole Ott, Kieser & Associates

The meeting was led by Mark Kieser and was held at the FOTSJR office in Marshall, MI. The tables depicting watershed concerns, draft designated use, draft goals and desired uses, and draft pollutants and sources were presented to the subcommittee for their review, prior to a presentation to the full Steering Committee the following week.

The data for the designated use tables were divided into five geographic regions (River Valley Segments) in order to create a manageable geographic scale for identifying impairments. The committee discussed the utility of this division technique. Chris Bauer indicated that the divisions must represent ecological and/or hydrological distinctions within the watershed. It was explained that they were based upon the MDNR Michigan Rivers Inventory and was decided that a description of that methodology would be presented with the tables. Other methods of dividing the watershed, such as distinguishing headwater reaches from larger (i.e., second order and higher) streams, were discussed. For example, the perimeter of the watershed could be identified as headwater regions (including headwaters of tributaries) and distinguished from the main stem and major tributaries. It was agreed that the River Valley Segment method was appropriate for dividing the watershed. Jim Coury indicated that much of the identification of needs/concerns and development of goals/recommendations would be watershed-wide and would not require divisions. The River Valley Segment divisions were considered suitable for identifying site-specific impairments. They allow determinations to be made on large geographic regions that do not isolate people from their sense of place. It was suggested that the middle segment could be divided into a north and south region with the river main stem as the dividing line. If needed, that further division will be made in the future. It should be made clear that the segments represent divisions of the *watershed* and not just the *river main stem*.

It was noted by Steve Blumer that public water supply had been considered non-applicable in lieu of groundwater protection as a desired use. This was due to the fact that no surface water supplies are present in the watershed. He noted, however, that drinking water intakes are located in Lake Michigan to supply water for St. Joseph and Benton Harbor, MI. The quality of the water entering Lake Michigan from the St. Joseph River must be ensured so that these drinking water sources are not impacted. Even though that designated use is not strictly in the watershed, the health of the watershed potentially impacts this use in the Lake Michigan Basin. Steve indicated that he would attempt to locate information from the USGS Source Water Assessment reports. However, these data have become problematic to obtain because there is concern over divulging the locations of drinking water intakes (due to potential terrorist threats).

The draft designated use tables (Tables 1, 2A-2E, 3 and 4A-4B) were distributed to the Technical Subcommittee prior to the meeting for participant review. Specific comments regarding edits to the tables were made during the meeting. These edits were to be incorporated into the tables before they were distributed to the Steering Committee. Specific comments included:

- Table 1, list designated uses vertically at the top of each page instead of simply a number which refers to a footer.
- Table 1, indicate that the concerns are not presented in any particular order and have not been prioritized.
- Table 1, change “deforestation” to “deforestation/fragmentation”.
- Tables 2A-2E, Tables 4A-4B, list designated uses in the same order that they appear in Table 1.
- Tables 2A-2E, Table 4A, include 3 rivers which were removed from the 2002 Michigan Non-attainment List due to dredging. These water bodies should be listed as impaired or threatened.
- Tables 2A-2E, indicate the size of each segment.
- Tables 2A-2E, explain all acronyms in accompanying text.
- Tables 2A-2B, eliminate abbreviations.
- Table 2B, change first bullet from 9 to 7, list all cities where CSO’s are located.
- Table 3, add Natural Resource Inventories and Index to Track Improvements to Goals list.
- Tables 4A-4B, indicate which pollutants and sources cause impairments in which water bodies.
- Table 4A, clarify pollutant impairing agricultural water supply.

Prior to the tables being distributed to the full Steering Committee, written summaries of the purpose of each table should be prepared. These will be used to introduce the tables. After the tables are finalized, written summaries should be prepared to explain the content of the tables in a narrative format. The required water quality summary will partially address this need.

It was noted that FERC relicensing documents could provide an invaluable source of impairment information. As a part of the relicensing procedure, hydropower utilities are required to identify natural features, archeological features and impairments in the study area. The USGS CMI Lake and Streams Program was also identified as a source of data. Water quality analysis is conducted two years prior to the renewal of NPDES permits (on a five-year cycle). These analyses allow trends within the watershed to be evaluated. Elizabeth Moore indicated that the Great Lakes Commission published a report which identifies organizations which collect analytical data in the watershed.

A handout illustrating the maps currently on the website was distributed. The committee members were asked to provide suggestions on additional maps which could be created to help the Steering Committee identify impairments and goals in the watershed. It was noted that the maps could be used to illustrate where high quality watersheds exist and where impairments are found. Land use mapping could aid in the assessment of areas of concern. The Conservation Tillage Information Center in Indiana lists acreages of conservation tillage by county. Agricultural herbicide and fertilizer information is also available on a county by county basis. Both of these resources could also aid in the identification of critical areas.

Kieser & Associates indicated that they would provide a written summary of the meeting with an agenda and outline prior to the next Subcommittee meeting set for August 21, 2003.

Prepared by Nicole Ott, Kieser & Associates