

NEW JERSEY CLEAN WATER COUNCIL
February 14, 2006
Meeting Highlights

Location:

NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust, Building 6, Suite 201, 3131 Princeton Pike, Lawrenceville, NJ

Attendees

Members: Ferdows Ali, Jim Cosgrove, Ella Filippone, Russ Furnari, Pamela Goodwin, Tony McCracken, Sr., Lou Mason Neely, Ray Nichols, Pat Pittore, James Requa, Dan Van Abs, Ray Zabihach

Others: Helen Heinrich, Rick Kropp, Ken Najar (DRBC)

Meeting convened by Pamela Goodwin, Chair.

GUEST PRESENTATION BY DEP STAFF:

Alyse Greenberg, 319h Grant Program Coordinator, in the Bureau of Watershed Planning, Division of Watershed Management, presented a PowerPoint Program about the Section 319(h) Grant Program, and answered questions from Council members.

In accordance with Section 319(h) of the Federal Clean Water Act, and guidance from USEPA, the DEP, through the Division of Watershed Management (Division) provides grants to local and regional entities that address nonpoint source pollution on a watershed basis. In previous years, this program was used to fund broad, large-scale watershed planning efforts, many of which are still in the process of being completed. As of February 6, 2006, two watershed-based implementation plans had been approved by DEP. They are:

Pequannock River Temperature Impairment: Characterization, Assessment and Management Plan, prepared by the Pequannock River Coalition, and

Delaware and Raritan Canal Tributary Assessment and Nonpoint Source Management Project Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan, prepared by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority

A number of others are currently being reviewed and may be approved soon. Alyse described how in the just published Request for Proposals, for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2006, potential applicants are notified that priority to receive funding will be given to proposals that call for focusing on smaller geographic watersheds with the intent of implementing a project that will have a demonstrable effect on improving water quality. Such proposals should be based on previously approved watershed management plans and restoration plans. Such projects may take into account existing studies done in-house as well as TMDL studies.

In addition, the Division is encouraging applicants to leverage 319 funds with other sources of funding for these implementation projects. For example, using programs sponsored by USDA to put Best Management Practices in place on existing agricultural lands, riparian corridors along streams can be established.

During the discussion prompted by this presentation, Council members put forward the following suggestions:

After learning that there were just two DEP approved Watershed-Based Implementation Plans, several CWC members were interested in the status of the other watershed-based plans, which DEP had funded in previous years. Being new in the position of 319h Grant Program Coordinator, Alyse was uncertain about exactly how many plans are somewhere in the pipeline between conception and approval and where they might be. She noted that there are several regional grant managers, and many of the grants run multiple years. Some of the Council members were interested in learning more about the status of the plans still in the plan development pipeline.

Several of the Council members noted that they had been involved with Watershed Management Advisory Committees in the past. They also recognized that most of those committees were either inactive or had been disbanded. It was suggested that the CWC establish a NPS advisory committee as sub-committee of CWC, with outside members.

Council members suggested that DEP publicly identify some successful projects, especially implementation plans, but also watershed plans. This would better enable potential grant applicants to learn from others experiences.

There is a need to learn about examples of projects where NPS control measures were retrofitted into existing developed areas.

Members were very interested in the subject of maintenance agreements. What should go into a good one? Questions needing answers include: who, what, when where, how and how much will their implementation cost?

They suggested that applicants should be required to identify what DEP-Land Use Regulation Permits will be needed during pre-proposal phase of the application process.

Members had heard complaints that when a project proposal was undergoing its final review, DEP reneged on commitments that had been made by staff members during pre-proposal phase. It was suggested that DEP needs to clarify the extent to which an applicant can rely on comments or commitments made by DEP staff during pre-proposal phase.

Have CWC look at and evaluate some projects that have been funded.

Have CWC host a pre-application workshop on the grant application process. It was noted that the current process requires applicants to submit a pre-proposal document before DEP staff will meet with them. Furthermore, DEP staff will only meet with consultants if the applicant attends the meeting also.

Have CWC suggest ways to help set funding priorities for SFY 08 funding cycle.

OLD BUSINESS:

REPORT FROM THE PUBLIC HEARING COMMITTEE

Dan Van Abs reported that he had received very little in the way of comments about the draft that was circulated after the last meeting. Thus, the recommendations reflect the hearing record.

Decision: The recommendations were unanimously approved and adopted.

COORDINATION WITH WSAC AND PRESENTATION OF JOINT REPORT TO DEP

Pamela noted that since the WSAC had been invited to co-sponsor the public hearing with the CWC, it was desired to submit the recommendations as coming from both councils.

Ella Filippone noted that the WSAC was supposed to have met on January 20, but that meeting was cancelled because there would not be a quorum present. The next WSAC meeting was set for February 17. It was noted that the Chair of the Water Supply Advisory Council (WSAC) had sent an e-mail comment that the recommendations lacked "technical details." However, he was unable to attend the next WSAC meeting. It was noted that during the public hearing most of the comments dealt with policy recommendations, not technical recommendations. Dan indicated that as a designated Advisor to the WSAC, he would attend that meeting and, on behalf of the CWC, would seek the approval of that Council for the recommendations.

Decision: The Chair was also authorized to do whatever was necessary to get the recommendations to the Commissioner Jackson.

NEW BUSINESS:

SETTING COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES FOR 2006

Council members discussed possible topics for the CWC to focus on during 2006: It was agreed that a list of possibilities would be distributed before the next meeting and considered further at that meeting.

ADJOURNMENT