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Clark Fork re-visioning meeting

Clark Fork & Kootenai River Basins Council

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CLARK FORK RE-VISIONING MEETING
April 15, 2016

Facilitator's Session Summary

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Come to agreement on the need for, structure and role of a basin-wide coordinating group.
2. Establish shared vision and common agenda; agree on goals for the next 24 months.
3. Assure a realistic funding stream and how those funds will be managed.

OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY

- Set a productive working climate for the group.
- Create envisioning and discussion context.
- Have conversation that explores the need for and possible structure of a basin-wide coordinating group.

AGENDA

Getting Started:

Setting the Process Climate – Discussion Ground Rules

Session participants established the following ground rules to encourage productive and conversationally “safe” discussion in the session and possible throughout the process:

- Respect each other:
 - Allow the other to finish.
 - “Hear” the other person.
 - Practice reflective listening – listen actively and honorably.
 - Know the difference between sarcasm and affectionate teasing.
 - Practice open-mindedness.
- Don't make it personal; don't take it personal.
- Take responsibility for managing your own communication style and behavior.
- Make sure others have the time and opportunity to speak.
- Use facilitative behaviors.
- Care about everyone's concerns – “Float all boats...”
- Offer alternative ideas rather than challenge or rebut them.
- Allow differences of opinion.
- Early in the process, establish a method for coming to decision – consensus... majority rule... what is majority..., etc.

History of the Original Task Force

The Clark Fork Task Force was originally created to provide a forum for all interests to communicate about water issues, advise government agencies about water management and permitting, and make recommendations to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation for consideration in the State Water Plan. Since its inception, many activities have been accomplished under the advice and guidance of the Task Force. Perhaps most significantly, the Clark Fork Task Force served as a “basin advisory committee” for the development of the 2015 Montana State Water Plan. Since the State Water Plan has been finalized, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation largely views the work of the Task Force, as historically defined, to be complete. However, there is an ongoing interest in and need for a collaborative approach to watershed stewardship in the basin. In particular, there are pressing issues like more coordinated drought response planning, which could benefit from the existence of a basin-wide coordinating group.

Members of the Task Force who were available met in October 2015 and ultimately concluded that the group could be used as a launch pad for a new venue to coordinate watershed priorities, information and conservation across the boundaries of individual sub-watersheds within the basin. The group determined that four organizational priorities must be addressed to organize a basin-wide coordinating entity:

1. Shared Vision or Common Agenda - Establish a shared vision for the group’s desired impact on the Clark Fork River Basin with respect to water resource management.
2. Structure and Function - Design the structure (including membership) and function of the collaborative to ensure consistent, predictable, and transparent decision-making and effective and sustainable operation of the partnership.
3. Objectives - The objectives of the Task Force were originally tied to state water-planning processes – and are now considered somewhat accomplished with the finalization of the 2015 State Water Plan. A statement of renewed objectives will be helpful to planning Task Force activities and sustaining the purpose of the Task Force.
4. Funding - Funding was originally provided through the MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, which has since been discontinued. A 2015 proposal was brought to the legislature to fund MT State Water Plan basin advisory committees, of which the Task Force is one, but that funding was cut from the Governor’s final approved budget. A 2017 proposal to the state is expected and may assist in future funding depending on Clark Fork Task Force planning and the outcomes of this project.

Establishing Discussion Context:

Overview of the Pre-Meeting Survey Results

A summary of the pre-meeting survey results can be found on [pages 8 and 9](#) of this document.

Exploring the Operating Environment

The group identified the following as pertinent factors in the current operating environment as it relates to the Basin:

- Most TMDLs/Water Quality Restoration Plans for the Basin have been completed; almost all impairments are related to flow. There is significant reliance on local watershed groups to implement strategies related to those impairments.
- A climate of planning may be shifting to a climate of implementation.
- There is growing interest & efforts in a “restoration” economy.
- Demographics are changing and therein lies a source of more impairments and changes in use. This can help us be solution-oriented with many more groups/interests.
- We’re seeing significant changes in major water users; some water rights are not being used now.
- Out of state interests are looking at the State and its water.
- The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have completed the Water Compact and it is now in the national Congress for final approval – recognizing a continued political arena.
- In a general sense, we could say that the political arena is one part of the decision space related to “water”.
- Kerr Dam ownership has changed as well as Federal, State and local ownership of dams.
- Where are we and where are we not... in water adjudication?
- There are changes in Federal and State laws and in regulations.
- There is a significant increase in recreational use of water resulting in economic benefits as well as conflicts among users and landowners.
- The fishery is changing including: rising stream temperatures; changing flow regimes;
 - Ongoing threats to bull trout (and other species);
 - Fishery systems changing with removal of dams (e.g., Milltown) - changing distribution of fish;
 - A continued threat from aquatic invasive species.
- With climate change, we’re seeing impacts from drought, conflicts among earlier uses, and increases in water use in some situations.
- Water availability and water quality issues remain and those issues are tied together.
- Maintaining water levels is an important issue for many interests.
- It seems that one size may not fit all.
- With the internet, information is more available to all; things can be “tracked” in real time; and everyone can use it. That has a positive side and some downside as well.
- Within the fiscal environment, there is little money to support a “group” – especially for a coordinator.

“Envisioning...”

Small Group “Task Sheets”

Those in attendance were divided into 4 smaller work groups and asked to complete a “Task Sheet” that would help determine the level of agreement among the group about the establishment of a basin-wide coordinating body that would replace the original Clark Fork Task Force. A compilation of the completed Task Sheets is on pages 5, 6, and 7 of this document.

“Envisioning... cont.”

Tentative Agreements

- Everyone present agreed to continue to the next step and that they thought that so far, so good in terms of creating a basin-wide coordinating group.
- The compiled results of the Task Sheets indicate general agreement on the value of such a group; what needs to happen to move ahead successfully; how contributions could be made/expected from group members; and group structure. (A few suggestions were also made about criteria for determining goals, projects, etc., and some specific ideas about projects.)

Where do we go from here?

- The facilitator will send the summary of the meeting to the Planning Group early the week of April 18.
- The Planning Group (Erin Farris-Olsen, Jennifer Schoonen & Vicki Watson) will continue with the addition of Barbara Chilcott, Mike Sweet. Verdell Jackson and Ada Montague.
- Erin (MWCC) and the Planning Group will:
 - Review and finalize today's meeting summary and distribute it to all in attendance and those invited who could not attend today.
 - Roughly structure what the group could look like, operate, etc. and send it to those in attendance for feedback;
 - Finalize a draft structure, etc. for the Fall 2016 meeting.
 - Schedule the next meeting in September or November 2016 and they will explore a meeting location. The 10:00 AM starting time seemed best for those in attendance.
 - Prepare an agenda for the Fall 2016 meeting.
- Those in attendance are asked to:
 - Review today's meeting summary;
 - Offer the Planning Group comments when asked.
 - Stay involved.
 - Think about who is missing from the table and send to the Planning Group.
 - Help your own organizations to understand what's happening...

“ENVISIONING” TASK SHEETS - Compiled Answers (4 small work groups)

April 15, 2016

1. What do you collectively think is the value of a basin-wide coordinating group and what might such a group be able to accomplish?

- It could:
 - Involve more stakeholders – have more meaning, impact with collective input; strength in a collective voice.
 - Provide context and a communication opportunity; be a valuable resource for information sharing and education.
 - Leverage resources.
 - Collectively identify priorities.
- It could result in:
 - Broader regional partnerships – coordination of various diverse interests.
 - Information sharing; a collective system leading to understanding and education.
 - Better understanding of larger watershed issues beyond sub-basin boundaries.
 - Cross-pollination of ideas that include all stakeholders.
 - Bring more funding through collaboration.
 - Identifying where we can contribute/gain.
 - Potential political/legislative action.
 - Shared ways to measure results.
- It can lead to tangible improvements in water resource management.
- It can advocate for increased monitoring (long-term).
- It can support large scale studies (i.e., septic systems, agriculture issues, etc.)

2. What would have to happen for the group to be successful?

- It would need to:
 - Have good, concrete focus and tasks leading to tangible results/success.
 - Go beyond conversation to tangible deliverables/action; have reasonable expectations; SMART goals resulting in short and long term successes.
 - Determine how a large group can work on sub-basin scale projects.
 - Have a good, concrete focus leading to tangible results.
 - Have some form of leadership.
 - Have an awareness of current research.
 - Have a good website with background (how we communicate/outreach)
- It needs to:
 - Have a broad range of representation from all key groups (Tribes, irrigation districts, etc.) who cooperate respectfully.
 - Identify/include “missing” groups.
 - Bring proper stakeholders (those who control large portions of water) to the table.
 - Find ways to be recognized as a valid, transparent, problem-solving group.
- Be open to the public with opportunities for public participation. People would recognize us as a source of expertise with transparency in decision-making.
- It should be a workable size; have a dedicated, impartial coordinator and facilitation; financial support; and make good use of members’ time
- Members need to see value back to their group.
- Trust would need to be established by working on easy areas of agreement in the beginning (before tackling harder topics).

3. How might each of us best contribute to the success of the group?

- Commit to attend; show up ready to contribute; be active, informed participants.
- Bring input from where we came and report back.
- Articulate why this group is valuable to “non-group” people.
- Share interests and communicate each time.
- Have an open mind.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Represent agencies and provide needed coordination.
- Represent diverse interests from the watershed and provide needed coordination.
- Link to existing/form partnership in home communities.
- Depending on the task – offer/share data; assist with project collaboration; participate in policy issues that need a different approach, etc.
- Bring task-specific “shovel ready” projects/efforts through knowledge.
- Do and bring research
- Commit to sharing individual expertise and skills. At the same time, recognize different abilities/missions that may constrain contributions (constraints of C.D.’s, WQD’s, etc.)
- Provide resources, money if possible
- Use historical knowledge/background to plan future tasks/goals, etc.
- Recognize a paradigm shift in that we now have different abilities/knowledge/opportunities.
- Be flexible and adaptable – revisit the goals regularly.
- Bring patience and support the idea that process and collaboration takes time.

4. How might a group be structured (membership, roles/responsibilities, logistics, etc.)

- Review the current structure (Section 5 of Clark Fork Water Plan) and look forward.
- Develop a “Charter”.
- Demonstrate inclusiveness with all users represented – assuring a diverse, balanced membership that reflects the basin.
- Plan for a coordinator. It’s important to have structured coordination, facilitation, administration and resources to be successful.
- Do/share meeting minutes; make materials available; educate each other.
- Allow for subgroups that are responsible/do “staff work” for the whole group.
- Determine what role the “Clark Fork Task Force” should serve?
- Use the coordinator from MWCC for clear tasks
- Involve agencies to provide connection to resources, training...
- Determine who should be at the table – less than 50. Make sure size of membership doesn’t make it impossible to get things done. Be clear about who represents who.
- Have quarterly meetings; consider moving them around the basin.
- Keep Kootenai “separate”; clearly determine what that means in terms of this new group.
- Use the ground rules from today. Revisit for additions. Add to the ground rules to determine whether consensus or voting would be used for coming to agreement/decision. If voting is used, determine how voting would be used considering the numbers of people at the table representing same organizations, interests, etc. This should be done as the group gets started.

5. What criteria would you suggest be used to determine goals, actions, projects of such a group?

- Does it affect a broad range of players and sub-watersheds?
- Is it “low-hanging fruit” with easy areas of agreement?
- Is it attainable, measurable, tangible, realistic, achievable, executable, SMART?
- Are we being pro-active rather than reactive?
- How does it relate to water or the basin plan?
- How does it work to attain integrated water resource management?
- Are we biting off something we can actually accomplish?
- Do we have consensus? Do we have a high degree of consensus based on our ground rules related to decision-making?
- Is there a model we can use?
- Is it “needs-based” – do our members report it as a need (e.g. should we do a survey of needs?)?
- Possible topics/projects – Sub-basin plan identified impairments; Forest management and water supply; meta level toward legislation; getting basin advisory groups reinstated... more functional... achieving collective goals, etc.

Pre-meeting Survey Results
Clark Fork River Basin-wide Coordination Meeting
April 15, 2016

What are the potential strengths of a basin-wide coordinating group?

- Identify concerns and common challenges, and develop solutions.
- Get stakeholders together to develop a vision and implement a common strategy to meet different needs.
 - For the Blackfoot Stakeholders, it is important to work with neighbors on drought planning, especially with CSKT water compact requirements.
- Share resources, ideas, and information beyond communities or subwatersheds.
- Secure funding through partnerships and collaboration; less likely to duplicate efforts
- A basin-wide group can be large enough with diverse and influential membership to shape policy.
- Citizen-based group to promote the State Water Plan.
- None, no need for basin-wide group.

What are the potential weaknesses of a basin-wide coordinating group?

- Large geographic scope; might be difficult to focus on a few common issues.
- Lack of connection and participation from landowners and water rights holders.
- None; the challenge is to take the time to understand different interests and identify common interests.
- Time and funding to coordinate the group.
- Too much focus on broad planning initiatives versus local project implementation.
- An additional coordinating group might make action on-the-ground less efficient; could generate ideas that are not implemented.
- Over representation of some groups.
- Coordinating the different objectives in the basin; differentiating basin-level from watershed-level interests.
- Group too large to effectively coordinate management or restoration activities.

In the best-case scenario, what do you think a basin-wide coordinating group could accomplish in the next 5 years?

- Education about drought and drought resiliency strategies.
- Create a regular system for communication and education throughout the basin.
- Improve capacity of the local participating organizations.
- Comprehensive understanding of the challenges we face.
- Understanding of the design and implementation of instream flow projects that protect natural resources and other stakeholders.
- Assess and prepare a basin-wide plan.

- Policy changes.
- Would not accomplish anything.
- Report and advocate for progress on implementing state water plan.

What are the challenges that may interfere with the success of a basin-wide coordinating group?

- Funding- the group could become a 501(c)(3).
- The time it takes to understanding each other's interests.
- Conflicting/differing local interests of the participating stakeholders.
- Lack of participation; keeping people motivated to participate.
- Including proper representation without becoming too large of a committee.
- Lack of input to governor and legislature.
- Lack of common vision, focus, unproductive meetings.
- A basin-wide group could distract from on-the-ground work.
- Duplicating efforts already in action.
- Additional work for the representatives participating, travel time.
- Lack of DNRC support.

What are the potential opportunities for a basin-wide coordinating group?

- Collaborative fundraising.
- Identifying common issues/challenges from diverse stakeholders.
- Information sharing, increase communication.
- Task Force has a successful history, proposed legislation all passed.
- None.
- A place for agency agendas to play out.
- Opportunity to inform, advise legislature; change policy.
- Create common strategy for the future.
- There are lots of issues, this group can pick one and make progress.
- Work on key recommendations of the basin water plan.
- Vast resource of volunteer leaders in the watershed community.