

**Tongue River Watershed Planning Meeting**  
**March 12, 2015**  
**Ranchester Town Hall, Council Chambers**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Present:

Travis Cundy  
Amy Doke  
Doyle Fritz

Karl Kukuchka  
Rick Pallister  
Carrie Rogaczweski

Emerson Scott, III

Emerson Scott, III called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

***Open and Introductions:***

Emerson Scott, III local watershed representative from the Sheridan County Conservation District and Tongue River Watershed Group chairman, opened the meeting with introductions.

***Bacteria Load Reduction Needs/Requirements:***

**Progress Registers/Completed Projects:**

The Tongue River Watershed Group started the concept of Progress Registers in 2000. They wanted to have a way of documenting/showing water quality progress on the watershed since standard water quality monitoring doesn't reflect water quality changes in the short term. The Progress Registers are maps showing where water quality projects have been completed, demonstrating work within the watershed. The Tongue River boundary, as it relates to water quality monitoring, was expanded in 2013. The expanded boundary now includes the lower portion of the watershed to the Montana State line. The Progress Registers show that work down in the upper parts of the watershed have a cumulative effect on downstream areas.

**Priority Areas:**

Carrie showed the group two maps that outline priority areas of concern within the Tongue River Watershed. The priority areas were developed from a process adapted from the Goose Creek TMDL. The maps show low, medium, high and very high areas of bacteria concern. These areas are based off of water quality data collected in 2012 and 2013. The maps were not developed to show trends necessarily, but rather to help the District prioritize projects from year to year. The data used to build these maps helps us guide programs and projects and helps us keep tabs on what's going on within the watershed. After each monitoring season, a new map will be developed to see if there are any changes to the priority areas.

***Plan Progress Review and Update:***

**Completed and Upcoming Action Items:**

The Tongue River Watershed Plan was approved by WDEQ/EPA in 2012. Most of the action items in the plan have been completed or addressed. Right now we are working on completing the Goose Creek 2012 Final Monitoring Report, which has put us behind on the Tongue River

2013 Final Monitoring Report. We have held off on working too much on the TR Report to make sure that the changes made in the GC report would get approved so that we can incorporate them into the TR report. We hope to have both of them completed later this spring/summer.

**Modification/discussion on outstanding items:**

Carrie wanted to talk with the committee about the “Discussion Items” located on the back of the agenda. These items include:

- Increase membership/include topics of interest
- Follow-up monitoring/documentation
- Survey subwatersheds for bank stabilization (How do we do this?)
- Determine subwatershed for projects (Use Load reduction priorities)
- Riparian education through tree program/brochure (Not just through tree program; do we need another?)
- Horse management brochure (Extension has one; do we need to repeat?)
- Septic Fact Sheet/Homeowner packets (More distribution?)
- Small Acreage Workshops/Separate mailing (ok with the ones we’ve done?)
- Streamside stewardship workshop (have had others that talk about stream issues)

These are the items within the plan that have not yet been addressed or completed. The Plan is voluntary and is just a guideline that can be limited by participation. The group agreed to continue implementing the Plan as is, realizing that public participation may limit the completion of some action items. If there are things that others are doing, such as the horse management brochure, there is no need to repeat this effort.

The group did note that Small Acreage Workshops could be used as an umbrella for other discussion items. They felt like topics of lesser interest, but just as important from a resource standpoint, could be incorporated into a workshop of a more popular topic. They also felt that a good way to attract people’s attention is to provide a raffle item.

The group also suggested providing the Septic Fact Sheet/Homeowner packets to realtors. They felt that this information would be very beneficial to anyone purchasing a home with a septic system.

***Tongue River Canyon Survey Project Update:***

**Completed Final Report:**

Carrie has been working with Travis Cundy and Paul Starkey to prepare a final report for homeowners. The actual final report submitted by the consultants was rather big and involved. It has way more information that the landowners would need or benefit from. Carrie, Travis and Paul are working on condensed summaries for each of the individual reaches within the project area. These summaries will provide specific alternatives and recommendations, and be a tool to understand why rivers behave the way they do, as well as provide a list of funding

options. The summaries will be published in a little book for landowners and will be sent out to them once completed. Overall the project was really good. Some of the folks were hopeful it would go faster.

### ***SCCD Cost Share Program Update:***

#### **Program Changes:**

The SCCD Board and staff decided to make a few changes to the cost-share programs. For the past few years, the programs have been a revolving door. The District was reviewing applications at every meeting and sometimes reviewing the same application multiple times. The Board will review applications in April and August, so participants need to have their applications turned into the District by March 1<sup>st</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>. This allows District staff to look at potential projects prior to the Board meetings. The staff felt like these two dates still allowed plenty of time for summer and fall construction, which is typical for most projects. The Board did request for an emergency provision to be included for septic systems that failed outside of the batching period, but would otherwise qualify for funding. The staff is working on getting the process up on the District website, along with project applications.

#### **Grant/funding opportunities; including RCPP:**

The District/NRCS along with The Nature Conservancy and the Sheridan Community Land Trust were one of 2 applicants in Wyoming that were awarded a Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This grant is for 1.9 million dollars to be spent on projects in Sheridan County over the next three years. It will function very similar to the EQIP program, but participants in the program will not have to compete for funding against Johnson and Campbell Counties. It will follow the EQIP timeline for sign-up dates and deadlines. We don't have an official agreement yet, but expect to have one soon.

### ***Public Information and Education:***

#### **Watershed Newsletter:**

Amy explained that the most recent watershed newsletter was just sent out. We continue to do these on an annual basis to help keep people up to date on what's going on with water quality work within the watershed and to announce upcoming meetings, program sign-ups, etc.

#### **Pollinator Workshop:**

For the past couple of years, the District has held a workshop or series of workshops in conjunction with Soil and Water Stewardship Week. This year the theme is "Local Heroes: Your Hardworking Pollinators". The District has lined up guest speakers from the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute. They are also having people who preregister enter into a drawing for a preplanned pollinator garden. The garden will consist of \$150.00 worth of regionally native plants to attract pollinators. The workshop will be on Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the Sheridan Fulmer Public Library in the Inner Circle.

**Septic Folder/Inserts:**

Amy also explained that the SCCD recently revamped some information to be distributed to homeowners who apply for septic permits through Sheridan County. In the past, the District had supplied the County with “Homeowner Folders” through the Small Flows Clearinghouse out of West Virginia. The assembled folders are no longer available for purchase, but the information in the folders can be downloaded from the Small Flows Clearinghouse website. The County ran out of folders and was downloading the information for people when they came in to apply for their permits. This process was a bit cumbersome, and the information, while good, was a bit redundant and more than was necessary. Amy and Carrie went through all of the information that was included in the original folders and condensed it onto a front and back, full color, septic fact sheet. They also had new folders printed through Quick Printing. The County is now distributing the folders with only the septic fact sheets inside. If the group is interested, these fact sheets could also be mailed out to homeowners living in the Tongue River Watershed. As previously mentioned, the group felt that these fact sheets could be a good resource to distribute to realtors.

**Watershed Signs:**

Amy informed the group that the District has been working on two informative signs to be placed along the City of Sheridan pathways system. The information is intended to be positive and help engage people in why they should care about water quality in our area. The signs are almost complete and should be installed later this spring or early summer. The District also has plans to develop and install one or two signs in the Tongue River Watershed—possibly at Connor Battlefield and/or the Dayton town park.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 2016.

Submitted by Amy Doke, Program Specialist