

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Memo

To: See Addressees Below
From: Jeffrey Bratko, Environmental Scientist, U.S.EPA Region 5
Date: 6-10-99
Subject: Steele County XLC Meeting of June 9, 1999

A public meeting to discuss the Steele County XLC meeting took place on June 9, 1999, at the Steele County Administrative building boardroom in Owatonna, Minnesota. This memo summarizes the discussion that took place at the meeting.

Agenda of Meeting

A draft agenda was mailed to interested parties prior to the meeting. A final agenda was distributed at the meeting. The final agenda items are listed below.

Purpose of meeting- to inform interested members of the public concerning the development of the Steele County XLC project.

1. Overview of the Steele County XLC Project
 - Phase 1 Pilot
 - Other Phases
2. Overview of the Steele County XLC Phase 1 Process
 - Kick-off- today
 - Draft Final Project Agreement (FPA)- late July 1999
 - Public Meeting 2- Late July 1999
 - Finalize FPA- September 1999
 - Public Meeting 3- Late September 1999
3. Question and Answer Session

Attendance at the Meeting

A sign-in sheet was passed around during the meeting. Most of those in attendance were representatives of government agencies or representatives of the direct participants. However, there

were at least a few new participants and their presence was notable and they contributed to the value of the meeting. Allene Moesler, Executive Director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership attended the meeting and contributed much to the discussions that took place. It should also be noted that attendance at the meeting might have been a little low due to the time of the meeting, mid-week at 1:00 PM, and due to the fact that a very large public meeting took place on Tuesday night concerning a very controversial expansion of the DM & E rail operations in Owatonna.

U.S.EPA Representation at June 9, 1999 Meeting

Jeffrey Bratko, ARD
Abeer Hashem, Water
Robert Thompson, ORC

Summary of Meeting

The meeting opened with a brief overview of XL and XLC given by Andy Ronchak of MPCA. Dennis Sershen, of Truth hardware then spoke about the Steele County XLC project. Dennis pointed out that the project is only a starting point. Companies are over regulated and they want to demonstrate, through the Steele County XLC project, that they can regulate themselves. Dennis stressed the fact that the opportunities are unlimited. He noted that the first phase of the Steele County XLC project may not be as much fun as future phases of the project but the first phase is only a starting point. Andy Ronchak of MPCA pointed out that the first phase is for those companies who want flexibility in water regulations. A primary goal is to improve the quality of the water in the Straight River.

Questions came up throughout the meeting and I've summarized those questions, as well as the responses, below.

Q- A question was raised about the timing for the project and a point was made that we can't allow things to fall behind schedule like they did before or the project will die. A point was also made that, should further delays occur, it is important to explain the reason for the delays.

A- Andy Ronchak went over a proposed schedule for future meetings of the workgroup and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Workgroup meetings are currently scheduled for 6-22, 7-13, 8-10, and 8-24. CAC meetings are planned for 7-27, 9-16, and 10-7. That discussion eventually led to a broader discussion of the issue of when meetings should be held and how to obtain more public involvement. One suggestion that arose was that we should try out a 7:00 PM meeting for the July 27, 1999, CAC meeting. There was a fairly broad discussion of the issue of seeking additional public involvement in the project through broad public notice. Among the suggestions were to do a mailing to individuals and groups followed up by some personal calls to seek involvement, contacting the local media to get them to do a series of articles or stories on the project especially since

the name of the project doesn't really give people a good immediate sense of what the project is all about, putting notice of the meetings in newsletters like the local chamber of commerce newsletter, the safety council announcements, a local agriculture newsletter of some kind, etc.. Andy Ronchak agreed to take on the task of seeking additional public involvement by sending out individual letters to local groups but he was reluctant to commit to do that for every meeting. Others who were present promised to spread the word through the groups they represent and through the newsletters with which they are associated. Allene Moesler of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership emphasized her view that people have to be notified repeatedly about the project and meetings before their attention and interest will be obtained.

It was also agreed that information concerning the work being done by the workgroup would be e-mailed to people and put on the MPCA web site for the project. Andy Ronchak explained where the information could be found on the MPCA web site.

Q- What role can the public, environmental groups, etc., expect to play or be offered if they participate in the meetings ?

A- Although there are no specific defined roles for such groups at this time, Dennis Serphen pointed out that involvement in the project could lead to many opportunities. For example, he feels that the educational system could benefit by becoming involved and through that involvement they could be exposed to the many educational tools EPA has developed that are free. G. Allen Jenkins of Federated Insurance said that one reason for his involvement is that he drinks the water in town and so the issues being addressed by the Steele County XLC project are of interest to him. Allene Moesler pointed out that there are many efforts underway that are directed at the Cannon River watershed and involvement in the Steele County project could result in better coordination among those who are working on the watershed.

G. Allen Jenkins (Allen), who will be acting as a facilitator for the group also discussed the roles that different stakeholders can play in the FPA development and negotiation process. Allen went through a series of overheads that explained the operating guidelines for stakeholders, for CNC members, for the drafting workgroup and the goals for our present meeting.

Allen also went through the Abbreviated Convening Report prepared by Denise Madigan under an EPA funded contract. Allen cited each of the concerns and recommendations cited in the report. Those participating in the meeting were told that copies of the report would be made available to them.

Close of the Meeting

As the meeting drew to a close there were a few issues discussed with the whole group and in side discussions. Allene Moesler commented on her enthusiasm for the project and her thoughts that the project is a great initiative. She noted that her group has focused more on non-point contributors to

the pollution of the Straight River. She noted that the Straight River is a “disaster” and is, in some respects, in worse shape than the Minnesota River. She also pointed out the vital importance of the Canon River Watershed because it eventually feeds into the Mississippi River and, as such, it is the starting point for sources of pollution that impact a huge amount of the country. She also noted that TMDLs are coming soon for fecal coliform and phosphorus for the Straight River. She noted the need to coordinate work on that effort with the work being done on the XLC project. Someone pointed out that, at a workgroup meeting the previous day, MPCA pointed out that 60 to 80% of the stuff going to the POTW is not coming from industries but is coming from sources such as individuals. There were comments made that indicate that some participants in the project are recognizing that something needs to be done to educate people about how they can change their individual behaviors to improve the quality of water going to the treatment plant and into the river. There were also some comments made about the need to educate people and make them aware of the steps local industry has already taken to address pollution. Some brief discussion took place concerning the financial benefits that are possible through projects, like the Steele County XLC project. Both companies and communities can achieve cost savings through projects that reduce pollution and prevent problems from occurring.

There was also recognition that, at this point, the project has many positive aspects and no major negative aspects.

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