

Minutes from the Indiana Water Monitoring Council General Membership meeting (6/11/2014)

Shawn Naylor called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

The InWMC Strategic Plan

Overview of the InWMC's Recent Strategic Planning Efforts

In February 2014, the InWMC Board began a strategic planning effort to guide the InWMC activities for the next five years. During this process, the board revisited the vision and mission of the InWMC, identified three primary goals for the InWMC and developed strategies to meet them. The board is now developing work plans with timelines to begin implementing the strategies that will help the InWMC meet its goals.

The new InWMC mission:

The Indiana Water monitoring Council (InWMC) is a network of water professionals and volunteers dedicated to communication, coordination, and sharing of monitoring information to support stewardship of Indiana waters.

The specific goals of the InWMC include:

- To improve data sharing, accessibility, data quality and standards
- To foster communication among water professionals
- To be a strong organization that provides future-focused leadership

Key components of the board and committee work plans, which are still under development include specific strategies for meeting each goal and timelines for their implementation. The work plans will also identify those responsible for leading the effort and any resources needed to get the work done.

Member Discussion Regarding the Strategic Plan

A member asked if the Committees could also develop a statement of purpose. Sara Peel suggested that new projects should be evaluated within the context of the council's vision and mission.

Siavash Beik suggested that new projects could be incorporated into work plans so that the board can determine if the work fits within the mission and vision of the InWMC.

Planning for the InWMC 2014 Fall Symposium

Shawn told members about the board's decision to hold another symposium this fall/winter and presented for member discussion the potential topics that the board came up with at its last meeting:

- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)
- Bio-concentrating of Contaminants
- Endocrine Disruptors
- Point Sources versus Nonpoint Sources of Pollution

Relative to HAB topic, Scott Morlock said there is an explosion with conservation practices that we could tie into that discussion cited the School Branch study and work being done in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Jody Arthur said that choosing a topic that is too broad can make it difficult to develop a cohesive theme for the conference.

Siavash said that in trying to be specific to a subject, though, you risk not being inclusive enough. He said that the topic needs to be expansive enough to interest potential new members.

Sara said that topic titles really matter, too. “Harmful Algal Blooms” is too technical.

Scott said a topic focusing on ag and water would draw a large audience, too, and mentioned a study in the Cicero Creek watershed that is doing holistic ecosystem planning.

Shawn said he likes broader topics because they are more likely to draw more participants and more variety in the types of participants we might expect (e.g. a legislator).

Siavash said a scientific symposium is fine. But, it needs to tie into InWMC's monitoring-related mission. He said that the conference needs to have a goal, for example, that legislators walk away with a better understanding of the issue. Someone [one/more presenters] needs to say how monitoring supports that. You want the audience to think about the value of data. Scott added that one goal could be to inform policy makers.

Randy Bayless thinks that these annual symposia could target the hottest topics with regard to water, e.g. HAB or water use and availability, hypoxia.

Shawn called for a vote on the symposium topic. The members voted in favor of an agriculture-related topic and continued to discuss the focus in more detail and potential speakers.

Someone suggested the impact of agriculture on ecosystems and the importance of getting the data needed for good decision-making.

Ashlee Haviland suggested a nested watershed approach to presenting information, starting with the larger picture (e.g. Gulf of Mexico) and working our way down to successively smaller watersheds.

Shawn said an agronomist might be a good speaker. Scott said that he has some contacts from the Gulf Hypoxia work group he could ask to speak. Ashlee suggested we highlight the challenges associated with conservation practices.

Someone added that the Water Monitoring Inventory should be a standard part of all symposia because they bring together in one place both potential users and additional contributors.

Jody will send out a call for volunteers, and someone offered to mention the symposium topic and planning at the IWRA business meeting.

Committee Updates

Ground Water Focus Committee Update

Randy provided the following update on the Ground Water Focus Committee.

The committee has been meeting regularly to discuss current events, collaboration. Randy said that the meetings also include an educational component. The committee meets at the USGS offices on the second Tuesday of each month just before lunch, which allows members to also attend the USGS ground water webinars, which are also held on the second Tuesday of each month immediately after lunch. Randy said that rather than having a chair, the committee instead uses a rotating facilitator to run the meetings.

Randy said that people are starting to bring up issues and asking the committee for advice on. Recent committee activities include:

- Development of a brochure for arsenic in ground water for homeowners
- Participating in a monitoring network analysis project in School Branch
- Drafting a position paper on the state of Indiana ground water resources
- Looking into surface water-ground water interactions.

With regard to surface water-ground water interactions, the committee has compiled existing data but has not found time to analyze it yet. They are waiting for a student to come along that needs a thesis project. The committee has looked into grant opportunities to move this work forward. As was discussed at the last board meeting, the InWMC's does not have the capacity to sponsor a grant at this time. However, Shawn said the InWMC can provide a letter of support for the project if the committee can find an organization to sponsor it.

Sara suggested that one of our partnering with one of our member organizations to potentially fund the work, noting that it would require less overhead. She cited Indiana Lakes Management Society and Upper White River Watershed Alliance as examples.

Shawn suggested that the InWMC could develop a list of member organizations that have the 501(c)(3) status and the infrastructure to support grant funded work so that when projects are proposed, we can know if it makes sense to apply for funding. Jody added that since we are an organization of member organizations, identifying these should not be a big job.

Network Optimization Committee

Siavash asked if there has been any progress on conducting a monitoring network analysis. He said it is important to identify where we need additional monitoring stations for different needs. He said we first need to recognize the different monitoring needs, then assess the state of monitoring relative to those needs and identify where gaps exist.

Jody said that Jeff Frey (USGS) is leading this effort through the InWMC Network Optimization Committee work. Shawn added that the White Paper Initiative attempts to address some of these questions.

Scott mentioned that Jack Whitman (Enterra) is currently working on a stakeholder driven statewide water planning framework (a 10-year plan) funded by the Chamber of Commerce. This is not a plan but a framework document that would map the path toward developing a plan. Jack has asked the USGS for a White Paper on the water monitoring network in Indiana. Shawn suggested that Indiana would benefit from a a National Streamflow Information Program (NSFIP) type of monitoring. Jack said he will present this idea and suggest that it needs to be built. Scott said that Jack will likely need some group or body to make the recommendations [perhaps the InWMC]. ETA on the framework document is later this summer. The last stakeholder meeting will be held in late June.

Siavash, Randy, and Scott agreed that Indiana could use a surface water analysis similar to what the Ground Water Focus Committee is doing with ground water.

Other Updates

Shawn presented an update on the InWMC Water Issues Papers along with examples of how similar papers are being used in other states. Shawn explained briefly the process for their development and requested that members volunteer to assist if there are additional topics they would like to see covered.

Business Meeting

Treasurer's Report

The InWMC began collecting dues in late 2013 and now has more than \$900 in funds to support Council Activities.

Balance as of June 19, 2013 = \$440

Income = \$605 (all from dues)

Expenditures = \$110 (PayPal fees and symposium refreshments)

Current balance = \$935

Our Growing Membership

The InWMC currently has 59 general members and 37 affiliate members and is still growing. Based on our current service agreement with Wild Apricot, which allows only 150 members, the InWMC will need to upgrade its service to accommodate additional members.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.