

WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report

Bruce Golden

November 14, 2008

Planning for Pennsylvania's future in AMR

Since the last WPCAMR Quarterly Meeting in May and after a period where there wasn't that much to report, we've witnessed a number of manifestations of work that has become available for public view. Among those related to the 2006 amendments of SMCRA Title IV are:

- Following our last meeting in August where we discussed proposed comments regarding the rulemaking process for the 2006 amendments of SMCRA, we revised our draft comments as recommended at the meeting and submitted them to OSM. Identical comments were also submitted by the Foundation for PA Watersheds (FPW) on behalf of the AML Campaign and by EPCAMR.
The comments themselves are available on this meeting's webpage. Coincidentally, we understand the resulting final rulemaking from OSM should be available sometime the day of this meeting.
- The Mining Reclamation Advisory Board (MRAB) agreed to take up the issue of taking on the advisory function for PA's AMR program at a future meeting... again.
- I have been invited by DEP Deputy Secretary Scott Roberts to participate in a small work group to gather citizen input to Set-Aside program. Other citizen members are: John Dawes (FPW), Amy Wolfe (TU), and Robert Hughes (EPCAMR). DEP representatives are Scott Roberts, Rod Fletcher, John Stefanko, Eric Cavazza, and Pam Milavec. To date two conference calls have been held. General topics discussed have been:
 - the value of citizen input;
 - discussion of DEP position papers on the set aside;
 - obstacles to reclamation due to permitting issues;
 - the exploration of a future grants program;
 - providing for operations and maintenance for treatment systems;
 - the roles of watershed groups; and
 - developing an overarching goal of the set-aside program.
- Regarding the last point above (developing an overarching goal of the set-aside program), Pam Milavec and I have been tasked with taking that to the next level. What we're hovering around is "Maximizing the number of fishable stream miles in PA." The intention is to set a meaningful

and measurable goal but one that is not overly ambitious or costly. In proposing this, it became evident we need to have a meaningful definition of "fishable". That led us to discussions with DEP folks in the Division of Water Quality Standards who use (and have developed) a protocol measuring the biologic diversity of benthic macro invertebrates for determining stream quality. It makes sense to us that "fishable" ultimately be defined in this context. However, a problem exists in that reclamation projects can only directly address the chemical properties of water, with the biological aspects coming along afterward in their own time. This inconvenient truth may require that chemical properties be an intermediate aiming point with the assumption the biology will follow. No matter what, please realize the work we're doing with developing an overarching goal only represents preliminary steps.

- WPCAMR's Quick Response grant , which provides funds for emergency maintenance needs of treatment systems, has been particularly active in 2008 with 6 projects being funded so far this year. Projects have ranged from a few thousand dollars to around \$50,000. We are generally getting good reviews for providing a valuable service with a minimum of red tape and living up to the name Quick Response.

Participants in the Quick Response Program

ID	Applicant Organization	Max Amt	Authorized
6001	Washington County Conservation District	112,575	9/8/2006
6002	Schuylkill Conservation District	58,038	9/28/2006
7002	Mahanoy Creek Watershed Association	1,410	4/11/2007
7003	Blackleggs Creek Watershed Association	10,200	6/5/2007
7004	Indiana County Conservation District	2,840	6/5/2007
7005	Loyalhanna Watershed Association, Inc.	10,400	6/14/2007
7006	Babb Creek Watershed Association, Inc.	10,000	7/12/2007
7008	Blacklick Creek Watershed Association, Inc.	9,180	10/17/2007
7009	Manor Township Board of Supervisors	48,560	12/21/2007
8001	Dauphin County Conservation District	48,758	5/2/2008
8002	Sewickley Creek Watershed Association	4,824	8/21/2008
8003	Wells Creek Watershed Association	13,069	10/9/2008
8004	Clearfield Creek Watershed Association	12,145	10/1/2008
8005	Toby Creek Watershed Association	13,091	10/10/2008
8006	Huntingdon County Conservation District	<u>12,670</u>	11/7/2008
		367,760	

- Through our FACTS grant, which provides funding for laboratory analyses of water samples from passive treatment systems, two chemistry and flow "snapshots" of many of the publically funded AMD treatment systems in PA is in the process of being organized. One snapshot will be in the late winter, early spring timeframe, the other in June. The purpose is to amass a fairly good data set to characterize these systems' current performance. This will be used in part by DEP BAMR in assessing future maintenance needs.

The Annual AMR Conference

Our activities are winding down regarding the 2008 AMR conference held last August. Mainly tying up loose ends from the accounting end is what remains. Evaluations were generally quite good and a distillation can be viewed at <http://2008.treatminewater.com/PostConference.html>. The lead for next year's conference goes back to EPCAMR, giving us WPCAMR guys a needed break until 2010. The 2009 conference will be held at the University of Pittsburgh (Johnstown Campus), tentatively July 13-16, 2009.

Miscellaneous Notes:

- At the May WPCAMR meeting, board approval was granted to seek an AmeriCorp member to aid in our outreach efforts. Mountain Service Corp approved our application for an AmeriCorp member, and we have successfully recruited a recent graduate of St. Francis University, Rick Thompson of Portage. Rick has a BS in biology and a whole bunch of other talents and interests that we'll save for an upcoming Abandoned Mine Post e-newsletter. Please welcome this fine addition to our staff.
- I've been working on drafting a long-needed policy and practices manual for WPCAMR. Examples of other organizations' policies have been useful to the extent that they apply to WPCAMR's situation. I would like to solicit examples from other organizations in helping me to complete a draft for the board's consideration. Additionally I'd welcome any guidance you may have in helping me with this task.

Happy Holidays
See you in 2009!