

# WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report

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## **WPCAMR 's new PA DEP 319 Funding**

Effective this past July, WPCAMR's funding from PA DEP 319 Program is now for a 3 year period (July 1, 2009 – Jun 30, 2012) instead of the heretofore annual funding. Funding levels are maintained at the annual rate of \$123,500, as they have been for the last 2 years. This comes as great news in these uncertain times. There have been some changes in the scope of work, most notably doing three joint projects with EPCAMR, each involving the production of an educational video (target audience: watershed groups) and an accompanying document. Also included in WPCAMR's new work plan is doing a census of Pennsylvania watershed groups, an outgrowth of previous quarterly meeting discussions acknowledging the out of date information we have on PA watershed groups.

## **Watershed Specialist Advocacy Project: WPCAMR / PACD joint project.**

An action item of February's quarterly meeting was for WPCAMR to take a lead role in elevating the issue of state funding for Conservation District Watershed Specialists, otherwise ending after 2010 if action is not taken. We decided to create an internet based survey to Conservation Districts soliciting information that would be useful in touting the value of Watershed Specialists (WS), specifically worthy projects in which a WS was instrumental. We also approached the PA Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) to also become involved; they did and we thus expanded our survey to all PA CDs and focused on each of the CD's top 3 projects where a WS was instrumental. We used an internet-based tool called Survey Monkey which allowed us to create the survey questionnaire. Survey Monkey also provided the tools for distribution via email and collecting of responses. (More details are available on [this meeting's WPCAMR webpage](#) as links at the topic Watershed Specialist Survey.) Just about half of the PA CD's responded to the survey. We now have a respectable data set so that we can selectively solicit further information from CD's. Andy's report contains related work he's been doing in support of Watershed Specialists.

## **2009 AMR Conference**

July's PA AMR Conference, this year held at UPJ, was again successful in its execution and in attendance. I presented, as part of a funding panel, details of our Quick Response program for emergency repairs. Andy's report contains other specifics of the event.

## **2010 AMR Conference Planning**

We've also been involved in the planning of the 2010 conference, which will be a joint conference held in Pittsburgh next summer. WPCAMR will represent PA's Annual Conference as a convener along with the American Society of Mining and Reclamation (ASMR), OSM's Technical Transfer program, and OSM's

Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI). WPCAMR has also been charged with the lead role in the conference's web site development. We've also insured that a section devoted to the types of issues normally covered in our PA annual conference will be a part of the 2010 conference. Andy's report contains other specifics of the planning and event.

### **Chemical Snapshots for PA's Passive Treatment Systems**

Our FACTS grant is being used to organize two chemical snapshots of PA's publicly funded passive treatment systems. Logistics challenges have caused the first snapshot to be postponed repeatedly. The first snapshot is now just getting underway and will last through September. DEP BAMR has agreed to perform a significant portion of the sampling and enabled the logistics logjam to be broken. Among other entities doing sampling are the Stream Restoration, Inc. (contractors for the grant), the Stream Team, individual watershed groups, and the senior environmental corps. To get the biggest bang for the buck and keep sampling times down, the sampling points within a treatment system are now generally limited to system influent and effluent, and effluents of alkalinity producing ponds and no in-stream sampling. Efforts will be made to acquire flow measurements for each treatment system sampled. No inexpensive analysis lab could be identified in the anthracite region and these samples will be shipped to or picked up by commercial labs in western PA. The results of the sampling and analyses coming from that will be posted in Datashed.

### **Ad-hoc SMCRA AMD Set-Aside Advisory Committee:**

#### **Overarching restoration goals**

DEP BAMR's Pam Milavec and I were tasked with exploring what an over-arching goal of the AMD Set-Aside program may be. From those seeds, and the work by many others, are the fruits now contained in BAMR's [AMD Set-aside Program Guidelines \(Revised \*\*DRAFT\*\* 7/15/2009\)](#). Quoting from page 3:

*DEP has decided to use a two-tiered approach that relies on the level of biological restoration that can reasonably be achieved. The goal for the upper tier is to reach full biological attainment for aquatic life uses and remove the targeted stream or stream segment from DEP's Impaired Waters List. ...*

*The goal for the lower tier will be a lesser level of biological recovery, focusing primarily on the attainment of a recreational fishery where applicable.*

#### **Future support for watershed groups:**

The ad-hoc committee decided to weigh in on possible directions for the future support of watershed organizations. The following is excerpted from the draft:

#### **Developing an adequate support system for WG effectiveness and sustainability**

For a watershed group (WG) to be capable of entering into a Qualified Hydrologic Unit (QHU) partnership with the DEP implies a certain robustness on the part of the WG. WGs have a wide and variable spectrum of strengths and abilities. A vital characteristic of the watershed

movement in Pennsylvania has been access to a loose assemblage of support services that bolster these strengths and abilities. An enhanced support system will be necessary for most WGs entering into a partnership with the DEP for the goal of comprehensive restoration in a QHU. A support system will have costs, most of which may *not* be borne by Set-Aside funds. Other funding will necessarily come from other sources including the DEP, other state and federal agencies, philanthropy, and perhaps another incarnation of the Growing Greener Program.

Basically, a WG support system should consist of the following generalized assistance types:

- Technical assistance – existing examples include those provided by TU, PACD, WPC, and C-SAW through Technical Assistance Grants.
- Organizational assistance – best existing example are the services provided by County Conservation District Watershed Specialists. Also envisioned are a host of enhanced standardized practices bringing efficiencies and cost cutting measures to WG operations.
- The Foundation for PA Watersheds is embarking upon a Capacity Building initiative with the Bayer Center for Non-profit Management in order to produce models of excellence in the delivery of prioritized on-the-ground projects.
- Financial assistance – small annual grants to WGs to assist with organizational administration and operations costs.

These multi-faceted types of assistance and service providers are critical to strengthening the short-term capacity of WGs and ensuring their long-term sustainability. A robust, capable WG partner will be far more successful in the long-term and will greatly extend the DEP's reach toward accomplishing the goal of comprehensive restoration in QHUs.

*The DEP should be an active partner and financial contributor to the technical, organizational, and financial assistance programs to ensure there is an adequate support system for WGs that will result in capable, robust WGs.*

### **Grants, grants, grants**

Since the February meeting, these WPCAMR held grants have been or very soon will be completed.

1. 2008-09 DEP 319 funding for WPCAMR operations.
2. Quick Response Program (I) - GG
3. FACTS (I) - GG
4. South Sandy Watershed Association Startup Organization and Support - GG
5. In-situ Sulfate Reducing bacteria - IT
6. Activated Iron Solids treatment system - IT
7. Limestone Upflow Pond Optimization - IT
8. Lasaire Iron Oxidation / Removal - IT
9. OSM Rattlesnake Run, Clarion County - WCAP

Collectively, they have represented a significant amount of my time and energy in that time period.

A summary of the Quick Response (I) projects is available on [this meeting's WPCAMR webpage](#). We've started to tap into Quick Response (II).

It will be nice to be down to 3 active grants:

1. 2009-12 DEP 319 funding for WPCAMR operations.
2. Quick Response Program (II)
3. FACTS (II)

And two presently inactive grants:

1. Quick Response Program (III)
2. Iron Oxide Recovery: Statewide Implementation

It will be several months before we hear if we've been successful in our recent Growing Greener Plus submission of Quick Response( IV) for an additional \$100,000.

### **Mining Reclamation Advisory Board**

I attended my first Mining Reclamation and Advisory Board meeting as a newly appointed member. At the meeting I extended my desire to also be on the Reclamation subcommittee and was accommodated. Of particular note were the following items:

- OSM will apparently follow through on its recommendation to phase out emergency funding for abandoned mine issues. That responsibility will fall to the Commonwealth ostensibly with use of annual Title IV AML grants. On average, OSM provided about \$10 million annually to PA for emergency projects.
- EPA is considering changes in how Coal Combustion Byproducts (a.k.a. coal ash) are classified. Among options being considered is one that would classify CCBs as hazardous waste. If carried out, that in turn might have very significant negative implications for both PA's use of coal ash as a beneficial material in mine reclamation and for the waste coal power generators in PA. A resolution was passed for MRAB to write a letter to EPA recommend against such a reclassification.

The Reclamation Sub-Committee Mining Reclamation and Advisory Board's Reclamation Sub-Committee met in Ebensburg where DEP BAMR's Rod Fletcher and Brian Bradley gave the group a thorough briefing on the mechanics of administering the annual funding associated with SMCRA Title IV from the Commonwealth's perspective.

- The sub-committee also worked on a first draft of a letter to EPA recommending against a possible re-classification of coal ash as a hazardous waste. The committee focused on the Commonwealth's effective regulatory program for the beneficial placement of coal ash in mining reclamation and the tremendous value the waste coal power generators provide to PA's reclamation efforts .