

PUBLIC SUMMARY

Kick-Off Meeting

Restoring Flow Regimes through Growing Water Transaction: Basin-wide Case Studies #755

February 28, 2005; 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. CST
Shaw Group Offices, 100 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 1130,
Chicago, Illinois

Participants

Kieser & Associates (K&A): Mark Kieser and Andrew Fang
Shaw Group: Bill Abolt and Erin Doughten
Applied Ecological Services (AES): Steve Apfelbaum
Policy Solutions: Henry Henderson
Sixteenth Street Community Health Center (Sixteenth Street): Ben Gramling
Environmental Banc & Exchange (EBX): George Kelly

The Sixteenth Street Community Health Center

Ben provided a brief introduction to the Sixteenth Street. Its core mission is to provide health care for residents of Milwaukee's near south side. A federally qualified health center, Sixteenth Street serves over 18,000 clients in the urban core of Milwaukee. The service area also has the highest concentration of brownfields in the city. The impact on human health of these brownfields is what drew Sixteenth Street to our project. Sixteenth Street wants to remove barriers and identify needs for brownfield remediation and redevelopment. Ben also stated that Sixteenth Street opposes any Great Lakes water diversions.

Ben added that Sixteenth Street would like to see their redevelopment efforts become a model for other similar urban brownfields. Henry suggested that with brownfields redevelopment as a key component of the Menomonee Valley case study, the team can add human health benefits as one of our project's outcomes for ecological improvements.

General Project Directions

George raised question on the outcome and nature of each case study. Is it a platform study that will identify future growing water projects or a specific project with on-the-ground activities leading to ecological benefits that can lead to a growing water platform? Mark pointed to the description on Page 2 of the composited project Work Plan where such differentiation is made for each case study. It is clear from the writing that the Menomonee River Valley and Miami Conservancy District cases are "platform" studies and the Cuyahoga River and St. Joseph River cases are "specific projects".

It was emphasized that our project is not about “commodifying” water, rather it is about inducing investment to generate water related ecological benefits.

Steve mentioned that AES has continuous monitoring data for over 60 wetland mitigation/banking projects that go beyond regulatory monitoring requirements. Some of these projects even have monitoring data for 10-15 years. George, Bill, and Henry commented that this wealth of data will have significant implications in using GASB (Government Accounting Standards Board) accounting standards for quantifying “ecosystem values”.

Upper/Middle Cuyahoga River Case Study

Steve first briefly introduced the other project that AES has with the Great Lakes Protection Fund under the Growing Water round of funding. That project is primarily a GIS mapping exercise that aims to quantify and qualify “growing water” opportunities in the Great Lakes. Bill noted that some of the mapping that AES has done for the Milwaukee area can provide valuable data to the Menomonee River Valley case study. Further discussion between Steve and Bill on this matter will take place in the near future.

For the Cuyahoga River case study, Steve indicated that there was about 320 acres of horse farm land that the owner wanted to be developed into a town center. The new development will have 1,500-2,000 units of housing with 40-50% open space, completed with a library, schools, and a performing arts center. Currently, a financing plan and design are in place for a unique series of conservation development opportunities.

Another aspect of the case study involves wetland mitigation in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy. This project will restore a drained fen and a 25-30 acre wetland on farm. The engineering design has been completed for the wetland and partners are waiting for the state’s new standards on wetland mitigation.

AES and partners will also pursue state funds for conservation work involved in this project. Specifically, they will apply for the State Revolving Fund under the Wellhead and Groundwater Protection categories. In addition, Ohio’s innovative Water Resources Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) will be examined for potential funding. WRRSP uses the interest payment of major wastewater treatment improvement projects funded by the State Revolving Fund to finance water resource conservation projects. The wastewater project leader must be the sponsor of conservation projects.

This case study provides our project team an opportunity to study how to integrate private projects into the larger setting that has greater hydrological benefits. Specifically, the team will:

- document the transactions,
- assist in the application of the WRRSP and other State Revolving Fund monies by quantifying the multiple ecological benefits brought about by the various aspects of the project, and
- provide policy and economics review.

Resource Inventory for the Menomonee River Valley

Bill shared documents associated with the long term urban re-development plan developed by the Menomonee Valley Partners, which includes the 1998 Landuse Plan. The plan calls for significant long-term redevelopment investment and green infrastructure improvement.

The Resource Inventory will provide information on what's been spent in the valley, conclusions from past efforts, what's the next course of funding, and the relation between the landuse plan and river issues (contaminated sediment and CSOs). The focus area of the Inventory is the 1,200 acres of urban core in the valley. This case study will also look at how upstream water resources improvements can result in more re-developable land in the downstream urban area.

Miami Conservancy District (MCD) Case Study

Andrew gave a presentation of the MCD case study. Copies of his presentation slides and a summary write-up of the case study were handed out to each team member. Andrew introduced the concept of Ecosystem Service District (ESD) and gave an overview of the structure of MCD. Bill and Henry commented on the proposed steps to complete the ESD research.

Mark briefly introduced the Great Miami River water quality trading program. Bill contemplated the idea of introducing the private sector (e.g., the Shaw Group) to the program design in the areas of credit insurance and credit generation.

Monthly Conference Call Schedule

A monthly conference call for the third Friday of each month at 2 ET/1 CT was proposed. The first monthly call, therefore, will be on March 18, 2005. Mark will work out the logistics. Please contact Mark (mkieser@kieser-associates.com) if there is a schedule conflict.