

Description of TMDL Advisory Groups & Stakeholder Roles

Otter Creek TMDL Project

May 2013

Project Description & Project Team

This total maximum daily load (TMDL) project includes iron, salinity, and sediment TMDLs for Otter Creek. The majority of the Otter Creek watershed is located in Powder River County; however the lowest portion, including the confluence with the Tongue River, is located in Rosebud County, near Ashland, Montana. These TMDLs will be produced in one document by DEQ and will be available for public comment once a draft document is completed.

There are three primary DEQ project team members:

- Christina Staten, Project Coordinator
- Kristy Fortman, Project Manager for the Sediment and Iron TMDLs
- Erik Makus, Project Manager for the Salinity TMDLs and the Project Modeler

Stakeholder Participation

Montana state law (75-5-703 & 704, Montana Code Annotated) requires DEQ to consult with local conservation districts and to request participation of representatives of applicable interest groups to work in an advisory capacity to DEQ and the conservation districts during the development of TMDLs.

As such, DEQ is forming a watershed advisory group (WAG) for the Otter Creek TMDL project. The goal is to maintain a manageable and efficient feedback process by selecting a limited number of advisory group members who can represent their applicable interest group by attending meetings, reviewing provided information, disseminating information to the group of people that they represent, and subsequently obtaining feedback that can be passed on to DEQ project staff. It is envisioned that the WAG would include, at a minimum, representatives from the following interest groups consistent with 75-5-704, MCA:

- livestock-oriented agriculture
- farming-oriented agriculture
- conservation or environmental interests
- the forestry industry
- affected or potentially affected point source dischargers;
- mining
- existing local watershed groups
- federal land management agencies
- state trust land management agencies
- fishing-related businesses

Description of Advisory Groups & Interested Parties

A description of the role of the watershed advisory group is given below. DEQ may also form a technical advisory group (TAG) for this project. A description of the role of the TAG is also below. All advisory group members participate at their discretion.

Watershed Advisory Group (WAG)

Representatives of applicable interest groups will be requested to work with DEQ and the Powder River and Rosebud Conservation Districts (CDs) in an advisory capacity. Comment opportunities will be obtained from the WAG at varying stages of TMDL development, including opportunities for review of the draft TMDL document prior to the public comment period. During TMDL development, meetings and other forms of interaction will be pursued by DEQ when appropriate to obtain timely WAG advice and comments. Because the WAG provides a consultation role, there is no need for a WAG chairman or similar formalities.

The DEQ Project Coordinator, Christina Staten, is responsible for WAG formation and is the primary contact regarding WAG meeting coordination.

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

The TAG will be comprised of individuals with intimate knowledge about scientific issues, processes, and sampling design, as well as familiarity with the Otter Creek watershed or Otter Creek TMDL work. Individuals may include representatives from state and federal agencies, local resource professionals, or members of local government, including CD members. The DEQ Project Coordinator and Project Managers will work together to coordinate all TAG interactions and meetings during TMDL development. There may be some variances of TAG members for each pollutant category (metals, salinity, and sediment).

The TAG provides technical advice and comment during TMDL development for components such as TMDL target values, water quality assessments, and source assessments. DEQ maintains responsibility for technical decisions applied toward TMDL development.

Interested Parties

Interested parties have requested to be informed and/or involved in the TMDL process. The DEQ Project Coordinator will add them to a distribution list to be kept informed of public meetings. Interested parties will also receive general TMDL schedule updates to be kept aware of project progress and completion status. Anyone interested in the Otter Creek TMDLs may request to be added to the interested parties list by contacting the DEQ Project Coordinator or Project Managers.

How Information about the Otter Creek TMDL Project Will Be Disseminated

DEQ will maintain contact with and provide TMDL updates to the Powder River and Rosebud Conservation Districts, watershed and technical advisory groups, interested parties, and the public in a variety of ways. Methods are summarized below.

Otter Creek TMDL Project Website

DEQ maintains a website with information dedicated to specific TMDL projects that are under development (<http://montanatmdlflathead.pbworks.com>). Pages for the Otter Creek TMDLs will be created and added to this site and will include a project description and location maps; project contact information; status/schedule updates; notices of advisory group meetings and public meetings; copies of meeting agendas, presentations, and handouts; Otter Creek water quality data and source assessment reports; and other pertinent project information. The Otter Creek TMDL project pages will be available to advisory group members, interested parties, and the public.

TMDL Advisory Group Meetings & Email Distribution List

DEQ will maintain contact with the conservation districts and advisory group members via email and through advisory group meetings providing updates on TMDL progress and addressing questions. Some advisory group meetings may be held solely to discuss technical components of the TMDLs. Draft TMDL document pieces will be posted on the Otter Creek TMDL website for advisory group review and comment. Members will be notified via email when documents are available for their review and comment.

Interested Parties Email Distribution List

DEQ will keep interested parties apprised of the project's schedule via periodic project status update emails.

Public Meeting

For all TMDLs developed, a public meeting will be held during the public comment period of document completion. All advisory group members, CD representatives, and interested parties will be notified of this meeting via email or postal service. A public notice will also be posted in local newspapers, on the DEQ website, and DEQ's Otter Creek TMDL project site.