



**Minutes**  
Water Quality Advisory Council  
February 9, 2016  
Missoula City-County Health Department  
301 West Alder 7:00 p.m.

**Present:**

Bev Young – WQAC	Travis Ross - MVWQD	Peter Bierbach – WQAC
Brett Rosenberg – WQAC	Jen Harrington – WQAC	Kali Becher – WQAC
Ron Russell – WQAC	Casey Ryan – WQAC	Don Latham - WQAC
Bruce Sims – WQAC	Rachel Helmer – UM	Mike Sweet – MT Climate Office
Patrick Doyle – UM	Jon Harvala – MVWQD	Ian Magruder – WQAC Chair
Kascie Herron – Lolo Watershed Group	Vicki Watson - WQAC	

**Kascie Herron , Lolo Watershed Group and Mike Sweet, Montana Climate Office – Montana Land Information Act Grant (MLIA)**

Lolo Watershed Group (LWG) has been awarded \$10K from DNRC for capacity building; hiring a watershed coordinator to create strategic and fundraising and annual work plans and being work on drought management. LWG was recently approached by UM Climate Center to build on the work being done by the Bureau of Mines and Geology through the groundwater investigation program. The [Montana Land Information Act](#) grant program supplies \$250-300K for competitive grants. One of the emphasis areas of the program is Rural Government Entities. The State Library and MT Climate Office and Montana Watershed Coordination Council (MWCC) are interested in coordinating a project that would identify watershed and climate data gaps in a couple of watershed through this grant program. Musselshell County is the sponsoring entity. Troy Blanford of the State Library is in charge of the [Water Information System](#) and is a partner in this program. The Bureau of Mines is leading DNRC’s supplemental stream gauge program (SWAMP) in Lolo Creek. MWCC will hold day-long workshops in Lolo and in Musselshell County. The goal of the meetings and the overall project is to determine if the right data is being produced and how it should best be conveyed. This funding (around \$20K) would primarily fund MWCC to put these meetings together. In addition there is approximately \$100K in in-kind services being committed from grant partners. Montana is one of the lead states in how we manage geographic data and this project is intended to bring us further in how we collect and disseminate watershed-specific data. Program starts July 1 2016 and goes for one year. The work done by the Blackfoot Challenge has inspired some of this project.

This project covers 3 themes within the [Montana Data Spatial Infrastructure](#) (MSDI):

- Water Information System & Hydrography
- Stream gauging & Groundwater
- Climate

The advisory council voted unanimously to support the project through a letter of the support for the grant to MLIA. The Missoula Valley Water Quality District (MVWQD) has committed to being a project partner through staff support as well. MVWQD and Water Quality Advisory Council will send a joint letter of support.

## Smurfit Remedial Investigation Comments

The Water Quality District has prepared and sent a comment letter to DEQ and EPA – Comments primarily focused on the effects to the groundwater flow regime in the area due to the tremendous amount of groundwater pumping that has ceased since the last flow models were developed. During mill operations, they were pumping around 24 million gallons of water per day. Since this pumping has stopped, groundwater levels around the sludge ponds and landfills may rise. Pumping was presumably pulling infiltrated wastewater backwards. Perhaps there were preferential flow patterns that were realized through the oxbow channels that are present under the leachate.

Ian has prepared a letter highlighting a couple of key points that were discussed at the last meeting. Those points include a more complete characterization of the landfills as well as investigation of the stability of the berms along the river.

The council agreed to add a few items to the draft:

- Breaking the landfills into a separate Operating Unit.
- Stress that the landfills should ultimately be removed from floodplain
- Change terminology of landfills to Industrial Waste Dump
- Add language about a contingency plan that would include time-critical removal of waste during a flood event.
- Further sample downstream river sediments in order to make dioxin sampling comparable to the number of samples being taken upstream (i.e. likelihood of finding dioxin samples with a higher concentration may be more likely if one is taking a greater number number of samples upstream than downstream).

Depth Integrated Sampling - Vicki mentioned stratification of dioxin in the sludge. There should be clearly delineated layers in the sludge ponds indicating years of operation prior to bleaching, during bleaching and post-bleaching. Bev says, sludge levels can be measured and sampled at different intervals. This type of comment will be helpful when reviewing the first round of sampling.

This final letter will be mailed to EPA/DEQ as soon as it is prepared. No need to wait until the next meeting.

Next Meeting: On February 22<sup>nd</sup> at Blackfoot Community Church, the Kennecott Mining Company is holding a public meeting in Potomac to discuss copper mining exploration in the Potomac Valley– Jen Harrington will attend and report back on this

Public comment on items not on the agenda: None

Submitted by: Travis Ross