

Little Calfpasture Water Quality Improvement Plan Community Meeting

August 2, 2016

Goshen Volunteer Fire Department

Attendees

Ann Olson	Jay Gilliam	Spencer Suter
John Pancake	Paul Bugas	Buster Lewis
Jim Manley	Chris Wise	Dustin Ambrose
John Coffman	Kip Brooks	Steve Smiley
Clarence Byram	Barbara Walsh	Don Buck
Doug Thompson	Phil Walsh	Sammy Vest
Kent Burtner	Charles Rowe	Elaine Simpson
Jerry Higgins	Sonney Thompson	Robert Simpson
Roosevelt Rowe	Norris Campbell	Lila Davidson
Rudy Bazzrea	Donald Vess	Phyllis Vess
Winston Campbell	Janet Campbell	Gene Sours
Harold Thompson	Brenda Thompson	Richard Meeks
Sandra Stuart	Anthony Stephens	Margaret Spencer
Lee Cummings (NBSWCD)	Charlie Simmons (NRCS)	Tara Sieber (DEQ)
Don Kain (DEQ)	Nesha McRae (DEQ)	Julie Jessup (DEQ)
Gene Yagow (VATech)	Brian Benham (VATech)	Mike Jolly (Boy Scouts-Goshen)
Paul Bugas (DGIF)		

Summary

Nesha McRae welcomed attendees and provided background information on the benthic (biological) impairment to be addressed through a water quality improvement plan for the Little Calfpasture River watershed. The impaired segment is located just downstream of Lake Merriweather and extends 0.82 miles downstream to the confluence with the Calfpasture River. The water quality improvement plan will include implementation actions that can be implemented both upstream and downstream of the lake in addition to lake management strategies. The 2008-2009 study of the watershed completed by DEQ was reviewed including the primary benthic stressors identified in the process: sediment, dissolved oxygen, and a change in available food supply immediately below the dam. Nesha explained that the low dissolved oxygen problem was addressed by putting a 3 foot riser on the cold water dam outlet to ensure that highly oxygenated water is discharged from the dam. In addition, a special standard was implemented for the benthic monitoring station immediately downstream from the dam to allow for a zone of recovery for the benthic community. This special standard was adopted due to the fact that a change in available food supply is expected to occur immediately downstream from a dam, resulting in a less diverse benthic community at this location. This is what was observed downstream from Lake Merriweather. Consequently, the study focused on sediment sources in the watershed and the reductions needed. DEQ staff explained that reductions from Lake Merriweather are called for in the study in order to restore the benthic community. This will be a challenge since it places a large portion of the workload on one property owner. DEQ staff explained that while the agency has a past history of regulatory action surrounding the dam and lake beginning with a fish kill in 1992, the implementation of

the plan to be developed will be voluntary and incentive based. Landowners will not be required by DEQ to implement BMPs including those related to lake management.

DEQ staff explained the process that will be used to develop the plan and the role that the local community can take in this effort. There will be an agricultural working group as well as a lake management working group, which will discuss specific management strategies to be implemented to address these sediment sources. A steering committee will also be formed in order to review the draft plan and potentially assist with future implementation efforts following completion of the plan.

DEQ staff shared some of the expected challenges that may be encountered during the planning process and during implementation. Building trust within the local community can often be challenging, especially when the water quality problem is very complex in its nature. Livestock exclusion will also present a number of challenges within the agricultural community.

The group reviewed some of the things that have happened in the watershed since the initial DEQ study was completed in 2009 that could impact water quality. A number of best management practices have been implemented since 2009 including 8.5 miles of livestock exclusion fencing. The consent order held by DEQ and the amendment to this order regarding operation of the dam on Lake Merriweather were terminated in 2014, so the Boy Scouts are no longer required to keep the lake at full pool. Concerns were expressed regarding the operation of the lake and how lake lowering events would impact sediment levels in the Little Calfpasture River. DEQ staff responded that turbidity is typically higher when the lake is lower, and that is something that will have to be addressed through BMPs in the water quality improvement plan.

Several participants noted that they have observed high levels of turbidity in several tributaries of the Little Calfpasture River in the past two years. They explained that they thought these problems are due to recent logging activities. DEQ staff offered to follow up on this. Failing septic systems were noted as a real concern in the community. While this issue isn't related to sediment, it is a problem. Nesha responded that DEQ has grant programs that could be utilized to provide BMP cost share to help landowners repair or replace failing systems. It was noted that there is a 30 day public comment period following the public meeting during which participants can send written comments to DEQ regarding content presented at the meeting.