

SCRIP Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2020

A SCRIP meeting was held on September 17, 2020 at Greenhouse Park in Johnstown. The meeting was attended by SCRIP Board Members Len Lichvar, Joe Gordon, John Dryzal, Adam Cotchen, Karlice Makuchan, Pam Milavec, Melissa Reckner, Larry Hutchinson, Robb Piper and James Eckenrode, Jr. Tom Clark joined the meeting in progress.

The meeting was also attended by Karyl Shaffer and Randy Buchanan of MLTU, Greg Shustrick of Somerset Conservation District, and Dave Thomas (Ebensburg DMO) and Sam Faith (California DMO) of the PA Department of Environment Protection.

The meeting was called to order at 3:18 PM by Lichvar and introductions were made.

Hutchinson/Eckenrode made a **MOTION** to approve the July meeting minutes as submitted. All in favor. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Jim said there were no changes to SCRIP's holdings and that there is \$2,876.39 in the checking.

Stonycreek River Progress Report

Oven Run

Shustrick said the Oven Run site F (Hawk View) rehab is now complete and they are hoping to run more water through it than the original could handle. The District completed about a 3.5-acre mine land reclamation at Site F in prep for a pollinator planting. Lichvar shared photos and said DEP's work to redo Site B is to start soon. **ACTION ITEM (Reckner):** Request Site B's design from Mike Timcik – DEP – to share.

Bens Creek

Shustrick said the work to remove sludge in the Rock Tunnel system will start soon. He is working to secure off-site disposal for the sludge.

Shustrick said he rediscovered an AMD on the South Fork Bens Creek, upstream of Thomas Mills, above Rock Tunnel. He is considering treating it.

Quemahoning Creek

Shustrick spoke of a TAG grant received to allow Hedin Environmental to compliment SFU CWRS' work to identify a few discharges upstream of the Que reservoir for possible treatment.

Lamberts Run

Shustrick hopes to have permits secured (there are a lot of wetlands) and get construction started next year to treat the last AMD in the watershed that can be reasonably treated. The District has a Growing Greener grant in hand. Hedin Environmental has the design done.

Soap Hollow Run

Lichvar reminded that 18,000 gallons of alkaline iron sludge from a mine site went into Soap Hollow Run in July. We had to wait for a few high-water events and some attempted remediation to take place before surveying macros and fish. The wild brown trout fishery is still there, but concerns over the spawning grounds remain.

Wells Creek Discharges

Lichvar said the WCWA newsletter gave an update on these discharges and read excerpts from it. DEP has preliminarily determined that the Cider Mill Road AMD is linked to the Kimberly Run deep mine operation and continues to flow unabated.

Fallen Timber Run Discharge

Lichvar said InnoH2O Solutions is sampling it.

Stonycreek Riparian Buffers

The Somerset Conservation District has funds to improve buffers in the headwaters of the Stonycreek and no cost share is required; however, finding receptive landowners has been near impossible, so the District may move the project to cooperative landowners around the Quemahoning Reservoir.

Incline Plane Discharge

Eckenrode said research grants were submitted to the USGS, but their status is unknown.

Stonycreek Trust Fund

The SCD is currently setting up an account at the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies that will serve as a trust fund for operation and maintenance of the four Oven Run AMD treatment systems for which the SCD is responsible. The fund is starting with about \$2,600 and the Somerset County Commissioners verbally agreed to donate \$25,000. Clark said SRBC's trust is set up in a typical money market account and that they earned about \$2K on \$80K last year.

Other

Eckenrode said SRI did the AMD treatment system "Snapshot" again this year and encouraged groups to check out the data, which should be on Datashed.

Proposed Shade Creek Active Treatment Plant

Sam Faith introduced himself and Dave Thomas and gave a brief overview of the offices and their roles within the DEP. The California office does permit reviews for coal refuse disposal and bituminous mines and oversees a mine subsidence insurance program. The California office is strictly permit review, not compliance.

SCRIP requested Faith's attendance at today's meeting to discuss the proposed Shade Creek Active Treatment Plant, which hinges on Corsa Coal's Job 12 and its influence on the Reitz #4 AMD, which goes by several names including MD31, USGS16, SP13, and SIS MP60219.

When DEP issued the permit for Corsa's Job 12, it allowed sludge from their treatment system to be pumped into the Reitz #4 mine pool. Corsa had to monitor MD31 under Subchapter F of regulations, which basically states that you can influence a pre-existing discharge, however, you can't make it worse than it was (and there is a baseline) or you're on the hook for treating that discharge.

A couple years ago, DEP hydrogeologists felt that water chemistry from the MD31 discharge showed negative influences from Corsa's injections of sludge and sent a letter to Corsa. Corsa replied with an engineering report (the Foreman Report) that claimed the impacts were driven by high precipitation. The next year had above average precipitation too, and DEP still felt the influences were from Corsa's work. DEP is requesting Corsa stop discharging their sludge into the #4 mine pool and to handle the sludge differently. The DEP's California office and the Bureau of Mining Programs in Harrisburg is reviewing Corsa's abatement and amended sludge management plan. This plan would require Corsa to dry the sludge in drying beds and dispose of it some other way – not in the #4 mine pool.

Corsa feels they are not impacting the discharge and if so, claim the sludge they are injecting is helping more than it is harming, since it is adding alkalinity through lime. They still contend precipitation flows are causing leaching from the mine pool. On behalf of SCRIP, Clark refutes that, saying the highest iron concentrations showed in the year that precipitation was the lowest and stated that it doesn't matter if the pH and alkalinity are better; they are impacting the iron concentration negatively and that is all that matters.

DEP will complete another hydro report for this current water year (October 1 – September 30), which will be reviewed by the Bureau of Mining Programs. They are looking at several constituents and what triggers were tripped. This will be public record. Any documents received by DEP are public record, and only personal information and some analyses of coal seams may be kept confidential.

Faith believes Corsa is still disposing their sludge into the #4 mine pool. It's probably not a continual dump, since they should only pump when their ponds need cleaned out, which should be frequently, given the amount of sludge created.

Who is sampling MD31? Both Corsa and DEP. Faith said there is a complex mathematical formula to show if the discharge is being influenced by Corsa.

If Corsa did impact MD31, then it is no longer eligible for Title IV funds, because it has been impacted by an active (post 1977) mine. DEP has Title IV funds available to treat "abandoned" – pre 1977 – discharges.

Faith said meetings are being set up between DEP and OSM to discuss the status and classification of the MD31 discharge. IF Corsa did not impact the discharge or isn't tripping

triggers, Faith is unsure how OSM will see it. Milavec said, in her experience, if a discharge was impacted by a Title V job then it is no longer Title IV eligible. Faith says he has seen it both ways.

If the MD31 discharge is not eligible for Title IV funds and they did impact it, they will have to treat it but only to baseline or dispose of the sludge in another way. Baseline is probably 1980s water chemistry and does not account for natural attenuation of discharges. Thomas said baseline is based on loadings not concentrations and is part of the permit. The permit was issued around 1991-1992. Jay Winters is the DEP hydrogeologist (California office) who could see from which water years baseline was taken.

A discussion on sampling followed. Are DEP inspections/samplings scheduled? Does Corsa keep a record of when and for how long they pump into the mine pool? When samples are collected is important.

Reckner noted that Corsa must be aware of the value of the opportunity to have DEP use Title IV funds to treat this – the biggest AMD in the Stonycreek Watershed – and improve water quality in 16+ miles of Shade Creek. Is there a way we can incentivize them to be a good neighbor?

Faith said that even for Corsa to bring MD31 back to baseline isn't going to be cheap and that DEP has a few other "tools in their toolbox." Faith spoke of a treatment system along the Yough River that cost \$15 million but utilized taxpayer dollars.

Lichvar asked what would happen if Corsa went bankrupt. Faith said all their assets would go through bankruptcy and dollars made would depend on the value of the remaining assets. There are bonds and trusts in hand, but those are for other discharges.

Lichvar asked how much it would cost for Corsa to build sludge drying beds, and Faith said it would be much more expensive than their disposal into the mine pool. Thomas questioned what we were going to do with the sludge created from a treatment system. Milavec said disposal into a mine pool can be permitted, but there is a risk of recirculation. Lichvar said the original permit should never have allowed disposal of sludge into that particular mine pool.

Faith couldn't give a timeframe but said Corsa's abatement plan is under review. He said the California office is not currently fully staffed and they are working through a backlog, but this isn't at the bottom of the pile. Cotchen questioned the length of the comment period, and Faith said it depends on the complexity of the deficiencies. They will give a reasonable amount of time depending on what is requested.

Faith said DEP is meeting with OSM to determine Title IV eligibility, and no decision has been made yet.

Faith thanked SCRIP for its invitation to speak, and SCRIP thanked Faith and Thomas for attending. Faith and Thomas then left the meeting.

SCRIP discussed MD31 monitoring options. Can we put a data logger in for continuous monitoring? Corsa's injection would influence pH, acidity, and iron and maybe turbidity and temperature, depending on residence time. Shustrick has a Solinst data logger that does temperature and conductivity. Eckenrode might have one that does a few other things. Reckner volunteered to collect samples monthly if the samples could run through Stream Team. After more discussion, Reckner/Hutchinson made a **MOTION** for SCRIP to pay up to \$200 to allow for four samples of the MD31 discharge to be collected by Reckner and analyzed by H2O Environmental between now and September 30, the end of the current water year. All in favor. Motion carried.

Paint Creek Progress Report

Babcock Creek

Clark said he met with the guys at Gallitzin State Forest and will be buying limestone this month. He plans to have the larger part of the project – placement of limestone check dams in the discharge channel – done by end of year to allow for monitoring.

Mine 37 Refuse Pile

Clark read an email from Jim Panero of Robindale Energy Services that said the material from this pile can be burned at Seward but it has a lower BTU and high sulfur that makes it more difficult. The location of the pile from Seward also makes removal more expensive, so the pile is not currently on their list to be removed. They would need a subsidy to be incentivized. Could Pilot Funding be used for that? Milavec said if a surface mining permit is connected to it, then probably not, although it depends on what area the mining permit covers. **ACTION ITEM (Clark):** Speak with Tom Malesky about this.

Shade Creek Progress Report

Reitz #1

Hutchinson said the watershed association had a workday mowing & trimming around the 4-acre site. They found a broken pipe and "country fixed" it. They bought a pump and are pumping sludge from the treatment system into the geobag. They need help monitoring piezometers on site. SCWA is looking to apply for funds to eliminate the VFR, wash stone, add stone, etc. Clark said the open limestone bed should have an auto flusher. Place the big rock on bottom, where iron and aluminum would settle and from which the flush would draw, and place regular stone on top. Don't add compost.

SGL228 Project

The final report is done. Hutchinson said the Army Corps will help move some dirt at the project site if SCWA pays for the fuel.

Other

Hutchinson said SCWA and key partners are meeting on October 1 at 10:30 AM at The Alley in Reels Corner to discuss projects.

Cotchen said electrofishing at limestone dosing sites showed trout at all locations, although not as many trout as was hoped. He's working on the permit to complete the dosing.

Little Conemaugh River Progress Report

Active Treatment Plant

Clark said he has a meeting on October 8 with DEP officials and will ask about the challenges to bring other AMD in the area to the Rosebud treatment plant in St. Michael. Dryzal said after mining was complete, the system would get turned over to DEP and that would be the time to do it.

Saltlick Passive Treatment System Rehab

Eckenrode said FPW asked SFU CWRS to come up with something there, possibly for another discharge though. They will work with BioMost. He believes Pilot Funds are paying for it.

Gallitzin State Forest Reforestation

Clark reminded that this 40-acre project was delayed because of Covid-19 and the lack of available trees, but will continue in 2021. He said if you have any reclamation sites where they can rip and plant trees, call him, because the Arbor Day Foundation is trying to unload a lot of trees and they need locations.

Partner Organizations

Center for Watershed Research and Service

Eckenrode said they are working with CCCD to measure phosphates in the Nanty Glo water supply. They are getting new sondes to finish work at the Que and start work on Elk Run. The mass balance on the Que should be done by the end of the month. It looks like the Gondar discharge might be adding alkalinity and that the Jenners and Boswell systems will need updated, but he'll double check. He said they can do bucket tests on stone to determine alkalinity generated in the proposed waters. Perhaps they can help with Babcock Creek.

Cambria Somerset Authority

Piper and Lichvar said there was a media blitz today to announce that CFA is granting \$135K to make improvements at the Que family campground.

Lichvar reported that DEP confirmed that didymo is in the Que tailrace, but said it is not in the reservoir.

Western PA Conservancy

Cotchen announced that their Canoe Access Development fund is accepting grant applications now.

Public Relations Reports

Education Committee

Makuchan said the newsletter was completed this month and disseminated. The next newsletter deadline is Friday, December 4. Send news to her at karlice@atlanticbb.net.

Makuchan shared that Reckner is to receive the “Woman of the Watershed” award from PennFuture. A virtual celebration will be held October 8. Tickets are available from PennFuture at: <https://pennfuture.salsalabs.org/wic2020virtual/index.html>. Reckner thanked Gordon and Lichvar for nominating her.

Website

Clark and Reckner will work on updating it this winter.

Next Meeting

Tentatively November 19 at 3 PM at Disaster’s Edge in St. Michael.

Adjourn 5:35 PM

Minutes by Reckner.