

Regional Council Planning Workgroup
Wednesday, February 22, 2012 (1:30pm – 3:30pm)

Attendees (X indicates present):

Agency	Name	In Person	Webinar
DEP	Gail Sloane	X	
DEP	Kate Muldoon	X	
DEP	Rick Copeland		X
DEP	Stephanie Sunderman	X	X
NWFWMD	Nick Wooten		X
SJRWMD	Aiša Cerić	X	
SJRWMD	Steven Richter	X	
SJRWMD	Tom Mirti	X	
SWFWMD	Roberta Starks	X	
SWFWMD	Catherine Wolden	X	
SWFWMD	Dave DeWitt	X	
USEPA	Dave Melgaard	X	
Manatee Co.	Rob Brown		X
Miami - Dade Co.	Susan Markley		X
Lee Co.	Keith Kibbey	X	

Introduction

Gail Sloane (GS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated that the meeting will focus on discussing the effort to form Regional Councils, building on much of the information that was presented and discussed at the Statewide FWRMC meeting on the morning of 2/22/2012.

GS and Rob Brown (RB) indicated that the Regional Councils will help to increase communication between the Statewide FWRMC and local partners, and to facilitate data comparability and metadata sharing efforts. The Regional Councils can also play a very valuable role in helping to provide more opportunities to discuss regional topics / issues of concern.

Discussion: Logistics for Starting Regional Councils

GS indicated that she will initiate a request to get a letter of support for the Regional Councils sent from DEP to the WMDs and FLERA representatives. RB agreed that the letter from DEP will be important to get support from local and regional elected officials. Steve Richter (SR) asked if RB had any documents from his experience with the southwest FL RAMP that might help with the organizational effort. RB indicated that he can share outlines from the RAMP meetings and prepare a few suggestions for starting the Regional Councils to present at the next Regional Council Planning Workgroup meeting. In order to get the effort started, we will need to get the right people involved in the Planning Workgroup, to identify common goals and interests for each region.

SR commented that a big issue / common goal for all of the regions will be populating the catalog, and asked if the list of information to be included in the catalog has been finalized. Kate Muldoon (KM) indicated that the Monitoring Catalog Workgroup has developed an idea for the catalog structure but stills needs to identify the categories, analytes, etc. that will be associated with the programs and stations.

KM asked RB and Keith Kibbey (KK) if it might help to identify regional issues other than the catalog. RB indicated that the catalog could be one item to focus on, but it would help to have more region specific

goals and interest (e.g. round robins or GW-SW interactions). GS agreed and indicated that establishing a clear mission and goals for each of the Regional Councils will be important.

Nick Wooten (NW) suggested that the Regional Council effort start very simply. It would be helpful to develop a list of the reasons that the Regional Councils will be established for, and to identify the type of information we will expect to gain from the Councils. This could possibly be accomplished by sending out a questionnaire to all of the entities that we expect would participate. The questionnaire could include information on what the FWRMC is about and ask about the information they are collecting and the type of resources they are monitoring. (For example, northwest will be primarily oriented toward surface water (SW) resources). We could use the list of the top contributors to STORET, which Stephanie Sunderman (SS) prepared, as a starting point for agencies to contact.

GS indicated that the document detailing the recommendations for the FWRMC [oversight structure](#) described the tiered structure (Tier 1 = Statewide FWRMC, Tier 2 = Regional Councils) and suggested tasks that could be accomplished at each of the tiers. This document could be sent out with the letters to upper management, to describe the intent of the Regional Councils.

GS suggested that the letters for the Regional Council be sent to the same person at each organization that received the letter about the formation of the statewide Council. The Regional Council letter could identify the statewide Councils members for each organization and suggest that the letter recipient contact them or GS for more information.

NW asked how we would identify the letter recipients for many of the local partners who are not yet FWRMC participants. GS indicated that FLERA could help to identify appropriate local contacts, and we could ask Richard Tschantz to mention the FWRMC Regional Council effort at the next statewide FLERA meeting.

NW asked if the letters should be sent to the people who would be participating in the Regional Councils instead of upper management. SR and Susan Markley (SM) disagreed, indicating that the effort will not be supported unless the letters go to the higher levels of the organizations first. We must make participation in the Regional Councils an important policy level message and send it to the policy makers.

SM suggested that the letter should be very general, and indicate that the State thinks that the FWRMC Regional Councils are an important effort. GS added that including information about the opportunities that could come from the Regional Council effort, especially leveraging resources in tough economic times, would be beneficial.

Roberta Starks (RS) indicated that mailing lists for the WMDs have most likely drastically changed since last year when the initial letters about the FWRMC were sent. The Executive Directors from all of the WMDs have monthly calls (and may have calls with DEP Secretary's Office), and we could ask that the FWRMC Regional council effort be included on the agenda for one of those calls.

RB suggested that each Regional Council could have three representatives that would serve as the leaders, one each from DEP, the WMD, and a local agency. This would help to provide coordination among the Regional Councils because the DEP representatives could work together, the WMD representatives could work together, and FLERA could help the local representatives to work together. To make this work, the first step will be to send the support letter from DEP. After the participating agencies have agreed to support the effort, the core representatives can be selected. The core representatives will work together to identify issues of concern and contact other agencies within their respective regions.

GS indicated that the list of top contributors to STORET and the DEP BMAP contact lists could help to identify those members.

Tom Mirti (TM) indicated that having a unifying common goal from DEP, such as the catalog, would be preferable (instead of having region-specific goals), so that the WMDs could better justify providing

support. When the WMDs coordinate with counties and other groups, the communication department needs to be involved and support must come from the top to make those resources available. The WMDs will need to look at the costs and benefits to being core representatives of the Regional Councils.

KK agreed and indicated that the first question agencies will have about the effort will be “How much time and how much money?” Therefore the letter requesting support should include an estimate of the resources that would be required to participate. (e.g. RAMP required 6 days of member’s time and processing 12-15 samples in the laboratory per year.)

KK suggested that DEP could use MS4 permits (nonpoint source discharge permit) to encourage participation in the Regional Councils / monitoring catalog. RB indicated that tying the Council participation to the permits is a good idea, but there may be issues with that approach because the requirements and funding for permit monitoring are different than ambient monitoring. RS indicated that it may be beneficial to bring in all types of monitoring.

GS reviewed the recommendations for the FWRMC oversight structure, including some of the suggested tasks for the Regional Councils, and noted that most of them focus on data quality and information sharing.

NW indicated that one of the main goals of the Councils is finding out who is doing what where. Some of the more detailed items may not be of interest to smaller organizations with less funding.

KK indicated that holding quarterly Regional Council meetings with an educational or training component may help to encourage participation.

SR suggested that the Regional Council Planning Workgroup put together a timeline for accomplishing some of the items discussed. Ideally the letters could be sent out by June 30th and the first webinar could be held before October 1st.

KM suggested that the Regional Council Planning Workgroup have a few more meetings to continue developing strategies for starting each of the Regional Councils. RB and RS agreed.

GS indicated that we will need to determine the members of the Regional Council Planning Workgroup after sending the letters to the participating agencies.

GS will draft the letter and send it out for the Council to review, before requesting that it be sent out by DEP upper management.

SM indicated that federal agencies will likely be a major player in the southeast. For example, parks have nationwide vital signs monitoring. GS agreed and added that those partnerships also include a lot of university work. SM indicated that a similar effort is underway as part of the CERP program, looking for better ways to collaborate & find more partners, and noted that it is important to consider the diverse objectives of monitoring that is being conducted in the same areas.

KK and RB indicated that some of the infrastructure for forming these Councils many already exist. For example, HCEPC and other colleagues from RAMP had been monitoring for many years prior to the start of RAMP. RAMP allowed for coordination and standardization among these groups so that data could be comparable.

RS indicated that groups like the Regional Council will help to ensure that knowledge is being passed down from one generation of environmental professionals to the next.