

Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council (FWRMC)
Public Meeting of Action Plan Review Workgroup – November 8, 2011

Attendees:

Agency	Name
SJRWMD	Steve Richter
Manatee County	Rob Brown
DEP	Gail Sloane
DEP	Kate Muldoon
DEP	Stephanie Sunderman
DEP	Rick Copeland
FWC	Amber Whittle
SJRWMD	Aiša Cerić
FL LAKEWATCH	Mark Hoyer
Miami-Dade Co.	Susan Markley
NWFWMD	Ken Busen (attending for Nick Wooten)

Introduction, Background Information, and Discussion of History/Strategies for Monitoring Catalog and Regional Councils

Gail Sloane (GS) welcomed everyone to the Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council (FWRMC) Action Plan Review Workgroup meeting, and introduced the two workgroup Co-Leaders, Steve Richter (SR) and Rob Brown (RB).

RB gave an overview of how the existing [FWRMC Action Plan](#) was developed.

- Was designed to conform to the four charges of the original FWRMC (there may be items that were not part of these charges that may be important for the current FWRMC to address – these items could potentially be added to the Action Plan):
 - o Develop water resource metadata standards for adoption by state agencies.
 - o Support development of a replacement for STORET for sharing Water Quality data.
 - o Coordinate Florida's ongoing fresh water monitoring with coastal and marine monitoring networks.
 - o Coordinate Florida's state monitoring efforts with local and federal monitoring programs.
- Items were not prioritized
- Many items could be accomplished simultaneously

SR summarized a few key points from discussions at the 8/30-31/2011 FWRMC meeting, highlighting topics/items that could be addressed as priorities or additions to the Action Plan

- Need to include ground water (GW) in discussions / actions
- Need to work on developing standardized reporting and ways to get the public involved / educated

GS mentioned that the regional Councils can serve as a means to distribute information to local communities, and encourage organizations and members of the public to become involved. GS also noted items to be considered for organizing the regional Councils:

- Where to hold meetings
- Who the audience will be
- Securing travel authorizations / funding for participants

RB followed up by suggesting that a critical part of moving forward with implementing the Action Plan is to start implementing the regional Councils and other parts of the [Recommended Oversight Structure](#) that was developed in 2008.

RB cited the Regional Ambient Monitoring Programs (RAMP) organization in southwest FL, as a great example of a successful structure for regional coordination. RB described why / how the RAMP was formed, following a request for more information on the formation:

- Started ~22-23 years ago, through a need to coordinate water quality (WQ) monitoring for the Tampa Bay Estuary Program
- Held round robins for several agencies collecting WQ data in the same water bodies, to assess (and improve, when necessary) data comparability
- Organizations now coordinate sampling efforts and share equipment
- Meetings provide great opportunities for organizations to learn about issues and types of monitoring that they might not otherwise be aware of
- Meetings can be held at any participating agency w/ space available, and agenda can include business or field components
- Federal, State, WMD, County, Local, private contractors, Universities, etc participate

RB suggested a structure for organizing the FWRMC regional Councils

- Find 3 core representatives for each region (one each from state, WMD, and FLERA)
- Core representatives would be responsible for organizing first meetings and recruiting additional organizations to participate

GS suggested that the Action Plan could be prioritized instead of changed.

Mark Hoyer (MH) agreed and noted that there were many items in the Action Plan, and suggested that the workgroup identify a few key items to focus on instead of trying to work on everything at once.

MH suggested that the Monitoring Catalog (Action Item 1-1) could be the core to getting many efforts started. Once the information was collected about the various monitoring programs, we could use the contact information to encourage people to participate in the regional Councils.

Kate Muldoon (KM) gave a brief summary of the Monitoring Catalog Workgroup meeting held on 10/26/2011.

- Examined existing Catalog efforts to identify structure and features that may work best for desired Monitoring Catalog product
- Possibility of dovetailing with Monitoring Catalog development efforts of Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) and South Atlantic Alliance (SAA)
- Instead of gathering a lot of information from each group / project, effort to populate catalog should just gather targeted set of key metadata elements

Debate continued regarding which effort should be attempted first (Monitoring Catalog vs. Regional Councils):

- Populating Monitoring Catalog to get contact information to form FWRMC Regional Councils' membership
- Form FWRMC Regional Councils with initial set of organizations, then gradually expand network to other organizations through local contacts, and encourage all organizations to put their metadata into the Monitoring Catalog as they become involved
- Debate can be continued at the statewide FWRMC meeting on 11/16/2011

Susan Markley (SM) commented that several previous efforts to create coordination by collecting metadata information have happened repeatedly, but most have dissolved due to lack of resources to maintain the Catalog and keep information updated. Concerns also exist as monitoring efforts are currently changing rapidly due to recent budget cuts. It will be important to keep records current through the transition, especially to aid in demonstrating that duplication of effort in monitoring is not occurring.

SM also commented that regional efforts, such as round robins, have been occurring in south FL for many years.

RB commented that regional approaches can also help to identify and define regional priorities.

KM commented on SM's concern regarding previous lack of maintenance support for efforts to catalog monitoring projects, by indicating that one feature desired for the Monitoring Catalog is the ability for monitoring entities to enter their own information into the Catalog.

MH suggested that the upload process be made very simple so that counties and other smaller organizations can upload excel spreadsheets.

GS commented that it may be desirable to divide the information collected in the Monitoring Catalog into historic vs. current efforts, and use the information for gap analysis and coordination among agencies.

SM commented that the goals of past cataloging efforts have been to develop GIS layers, and problems encountered included developing a standard format that all participants could agree on. SM also agreed that building upon existing efforts such as CERP could be helpful.

KM invited SM to join the catalog workgroup to continue the discussion of some of the details of the Monitoring Catalog.

RB noted that local governments have already invested in the Water Atlas (USF maintained). Much of the metadata may already be there and it would be beneficial to include that project in the Monitoring Catalog collaboration efforts.

KM summarized her discussion with a representative from the Water Atlas project, and noted that their framework could possibly be used, but a separate database would still need to be constructed to make metadata searchable.

Ken Busen (KB) commented that DEP & WMDs have sections devoted to drinking water, and suggested that they be included in regional Council efforts and outreach efforts.

KB also suggested using one region as a pilot study for setting up the regional Councils, and then learning from the problems encountered to make startup of other regional Councils more efficient.

Action Plan Priorities

SR and RB suggested that the workgroup focus in on prioritization items in the existing Action Plan, instead of trying to redo the entire plan.

GS agreed and suggested creating a summary document that pulls out priorities from the action plan and develops additional action steps.

Current Priorities will likely focus on Action Items 1 (improve knowledge of monitoring activities) and 2 (improve coordination among monitoring entities).

Need to determine the timeline for implementing the Action Plan. The timeline in the existing Action Plan should be extended, and twelve month (from the start of the new FWRMC) goals and product expectations should be established.

Action Issue 1 – improve knowledge of monitoring activities

- Key element is the Monitoring Catalog (setting up a functional statewide catalog)
- This is still a high priority (perhaps the number one priority)
- Will help to inform other efforts and get other stakeholders involved
- Will help to create contact list that is needed to accomplish other tasks
- How specific do we need to be when defining goals?

- KM noted that the Monitoring Catalog effort has many potential projects to collaborate with, and complying with their timelines will help to ensure timely product development for the FWRMC effort. Through these collaborations Tasks A1 and A2 have already been started.
- FWRMC will be the key for integrating freshwater (FW) and coastal (both Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic) efforts
- Need to address time frame and reassign estimates for completing tasks, now that they are more developed
- The workgroup responsible for this action item should come up with timelines, measures of success, and progress report expectations.

Action Issue 2 - improve coordination among monitoring entities

- Action Item 2-3 includes setting up the regional Councils, which should be elevated in priority
- State & regional members should be in charge of finding local members among their regions (could send out a survey to collect contact information)
- GS will find state representatives in each district
- WMDs & FLERA already have representatives designated to FWRMC for each district
- Can use DEP's BMAP (Basin Management Action Plan) contact lists
- Can make strategizing for building regional councils a priority at the next (~January 2012) statewide FWRMC meeting
- Regional Councils can help to alleviate previous problems that came from political boundaries and inefficiency of communication among groups
- Action Item 2-2 (implement communication among entities monitoring water resources in and adjacent to FL) is also top priority, and is taking place through communication with GOMA and SAA

Action Issue 3 – Increase data comparability and consistency of monitoring strategies

- This is still an important issue, but it is not one of the highest priorities for the current FWRMC

Support Issue 1 – promote and coordinate stewardship among local, state, and federal monitoring programs

- Reporting, outreach, and stewardship is important to involve (and create interest from) additional organizations, stakeholders, and the public
- Water Atlas is useful for showing most recent information – can possibly use as a model for reporting to the public
- Also important to emphasize interpretation of the data – need to present a message that tells the public what the data mean
- Can work to devise a strategy for improved ways of getting information to the public (focus on middle school level of comprehension to reach very wide audience)
- Can possibly add an addendum to Support Issue 1 to include more public outreach tasks
- Can use regional Councils to focus public outreach efforts

Summary

- Workgroup recommends focusing on Action Issues 1 (improve knowledge of monitoring activities) and 2 (improve coordination among monitoring entities).
- Goal is to have select products / tasks accomplished in 12 months
- Will need “champions” in each district to start efforts related to gathering contact information for regional Councils