

TRI-STATE IMPLEMENTATION COUNCIL

Sandpoint, Idaho

The Tri-State Implementation Council came into being in 1993 to oversee, review and educate the public about the three-state water quality management plan developed for the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille watershed which encompasses roughly 26,000 square miles in northern



Sixth grade students perform a dance, which they created about the Clark Fork River, at the Clark Fork Water Festival.



Idaho, western Montana and northeastern Washington.

This plan was the outcome of a series of steps that grew out of citizen concerns over the increasing amount of algae and aquatic weeds in the Clark Fork River and Pend Oreille Lake in the late 1980s. In response, additional language was added to the 1987 Clean Water Act directing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct a three-year study of pollution in the basin. The result of this study was the development of the tri-state management plan. Seventy different control measures were identified and categorized, resulting in a condensed list of the top priorities.

The Tri-State Implementation Council, a citizen-led group, was formed by the

EPA and the three states' water quality agencies in October 1993 to oversee implementation of the plan. The Council is staffed by a project coordinator at its headquarters in Sandpoint, Idaho. It meets biannually at different locations throughout the three states.

The Council consists of 28 individuals who represent major stakeholder groups such as industry, municipalities, counties, businesses, utilities, Native American tribes, timber, agriculture, and environmental groups. The members, all volunteers, take an active role in building support for implementation activities through both the formal work of the Council as well as its subcommittees which work locally. Each Council member sits on one

of the local subcommittees which meet at different times and frequencies depending on the needs of their local projects. They are each responsible for raising funding to support these activities.

The Council helps coordinate policymaking and the work of local committees. It provides assistance to those working on specific aspects of the management plan. Information and updates on committee activities are compiled and circulated by the Project Coordinator. After five years the Council will review and evaluate the progress made on the plan.

Pollution control and prevention

Initially, the Council listed the following as its most immediate goals:

- the reduction of phosphorous and nitrogen pollution in the Clark Fork River

and Pend Oreille Lake through a nutrient allocation system;

- the introduction of alternative wastewater treatment at the municipal facilities in Butte, Deer Lodge, and Missoula;
- the development of a coordinated approach for wastewater management in the Pend Oreille watershed;
- the design and implementation of a nonpoint pollution control strategy beginning with the Pend Oreille River and Lake and the Bitterroot river valley;
- the establishment of a coordinated water monitoring network; and
- the promotion of citizen education programs to educate them about their role in protecting the watershed.

Integrated planning

During the first 18 months of its existence, the Council has worked to make the most efficient use of its members and resources to collaborate with other organizations, primarily at the grassroots level, in an integrated process. It began to address the most pressing needs first as initially defined. These include:

- **Nutrient targets:**

The first meeting of this committee was held in early 1994 to review current data and reports

and to develop consensus among dischargers and agencies on nutrient target levels. The committee held a briefing workshop to better understand target levels and how they might be incorporated into a lake nutrient allocation strategy for the rivers and the Lake. Strategies are currently being developed for state and federal approval.

- **Wastewater treatment:**

Deer Lodge and Butte jointly agreed to obtain a declaratory ruling on water rights issues as they relate to the proposed application of wastewater on land. For Missoula the committee researched and compiled alternative wastewater treatment options and is participating in a facilities planning effort with the city.

■ **Pend Oreille Lake Sewers:**

Several information sessions have been held for local sewer district officials to identify issues, problems and concerns, as well as existing regulations and technical options for dealing with operational problems. The subcommittee is working with the county on possible land use planning alternatives.

■ **Nonpoint Source Pollution:**

The Bitterroot River valley is one of the five heaviest nutrient sources in the Clark Fork Basin. For this reason, the Council has been working with a local grassroots organization, the Bitterroot Water Forum, to develop a nonpoint strategy. They began an extensive inventory of water quality data to use in identifying priorities for additional information needs as well as developing a management strategy. The Council is also working informally with the Pend Oreille County Watershed Coordination Committee, an independent group in northeastern Washington, on a broad-based community education plan.

■ **Water Quality Monitoring:**

Charged with developing a tri-state monitoring plan, the subcommittee enlisted the services of a consulting firm to help with its design and evaluation.

Public education

Some of the greatest progress has come in the area of public outreach to all ages. In Idaho the subcommittee developed three project concepts: a Natural Resource Center for a new county library; a citizen monitoring program on the Pack River featuring an intergenerational (student and landowner) monitoring/streamwalk emphasis; and a primer for newcomers on water quality.

In Montana, a series of events and educational activities has begun to spread the word about individuals and their impact on the watershed. In June, the Missoula Water Festival was held to celebrate the Clark Fork. In partnership with the Montana Natural History Center, one of the members of the Council's subcommittee worked with sixth grade teachers to plan two days of educational and entertainment programs including hands-on projects de-

How To Get in Touch with Tri-State Council

Contact: Ruth Watkins
Project Coordinator
Tri-State Implementation Council
206 No. 4th Avenue, Suite 157
Sandpoint, ID 83864
Tel.: (208) 265-9092
Fax: same
Email: N/A
Web: N/A

Scope: Regional

Inception Date: 1993

Participants: Federal and state agencies; representatives from industries, municipalities, counties, utilities, Native American tribes, timber, agriculture, and environmental groups

Project type: Regional watershed management, public education, restoration/cleanup

Methods used: Public outreach and participation, coordination of implementation activities

Lessons learned: Importance of broad representation of stakeholders in planning and policymaking. Effectiveness of collaboration with local and state agencies. Necessity of ongoing public education.

veloped by the students. This effort brought together local volunteers who had not known each other previously and who were successfully able to raise over \$20,000 for the project.

The Council has helped prepare a traveling watershed educational program designed for elementary schools. When completed the *Paddle to Pend Oreille Watershed Trunk* will contain puppets and other entertaining educational presentations. In order to introduce the general public to watershed protection, the Council will distribute a basinwide publication to report on the management plan and establish a "sense of place" for watershed residents.

Challenges

One of the ongoing challenges is obtaining the funding needed to staff the Council and to carry out the work of the subcommittees. Some support has come from local sources, businesses and government grants. The Council is not

incorporated as a nonprofit organization. It has found that it can carry out its mission by working with and developing partnerships with local organizations and by complementing the work of public agencies.

The Council is playing a key coordinating and educational role in this watershed and has been effective in gaining widespread support for its protection.

—CONCERN, Inc.



UPDATE

December 1997

The Council continues to work toward several goals, including organizational stability, pollution control, and public education. The attainment of nonprofit status enabled the Council to apply for and win an Environmental Protection Agency grant that will partly fund a pollution reduction program along the Clark Fork River in Montana. The Council passed a major milestone when the diverse stakeholders on the Clark Fork River committee, including the four largest dischargers (the communities of Missoula, Deer Lodge, and Butte, and the Stone Container Company), agreed on target levels of nitrogen and phosphorous for the river. All towns and industries along the river are devising innovative and long-term strategies to meet the new targets.

The tri-state water monitoring plan has been completed and should be underway in early 1998, pending funding from the various stakeholders. The success of the Missoula Water Festival has spawned similar events in Idaho and Washington. The *Paddle to Pend Oreille Watershed Trunk* education kits, renamed *Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Watershed Kits*, have been distributed in pilot form to area schools and are now in the final stages of revision.

Major obstacles for the Council continue to be funding and bureaucratic processes. Even so, the Council continues to function as a truly grassroots, communal endeavor that voices the concerns of citizens who value the health of their local watershed.

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