Big Pine Creek Watershed Steering Committee Meeting April 15, 2015 2:15 - 4:20 pm

Introductions: Jon Charlesworth, Sara Peel, Jessica Ulrich-Schad, Sarah Church, Mike Murr, Mark Jacobs, Karen Scanlon, John Shuey, Matt WIlliams, Shannon Zezula, Jill Reinhart, Mani Phengrasmy, Gwen Erwood, Deb Lane, Chad Watts, Sarah Wolf, Gus Nyberg, Kent Wamsley, Ben Lambeck, Jeff Coats, Cindy Muffett, Sharon Watson, Phil Long, Matt Washburn, Angela Sturdevent, Leanne Whitesell, David Swaim, Jim Moseley, Jennifer Boyle-Warner, Geneva Tyler

Next meeting date: May 27th 4 pm likely at Fowler Government Annex

Woodland Field Day: May 9th at NICHES property. Parking at Illiana Steam Show. Promotional fliers have been developed and Gus Nyberg will forward those to Jon Charlesworth. Please forward those to property owners or others that are interested.

AGree (Mark Jacobs and Jim Mosely): Launched in 2011 looking a broad range of issues domestically and globally through an eight year initiative. They hope to catalyze change in food and agricultural policy. Nine foundations support their efforts to develop socially acceptable policy changes (see website for details). The Big Pine Creek watershed is a very complex system in terms of natural resource management and row crop agriculture and offers great opportunities to identify what we need to do on the landscape to improve current conditions.

Four areas of focus - Meeting future demands for food; strengthening farm communities; improve nutrition and public health and conserve and enhance water; soil and habitat.

Local focus - Working Landscapes Initiative. See attached AGree information sheet for their working model. Producers and landowners form the basis for their future work with input from the public sector; market place and science, data and metrics.

Their Model - Strong local leaders from farmers and landowners. Cooperative and adaptive management of local watersheds and landscapes with a focus on performance at that scale. Local conservation plans and goals that are relevant to producers and local interests, include profitability, and focus on soil health. Includes both on the ground conservation dollars as well as infrastructure and on farm practices. Recognition from regulatory agencies and the supply chain for efforts to marry producer expectations and regulatory goals. Providing the necessary scientific infrastructure to ensure that necessary technical information and resources are available.

Success - Producers and landowners have a method for measuring productivity and benefits for conservation practices. Watershed groups have the tools necessary to plan, adapt and move forward with conservation efforts. Supply chain has what it needs to meet claims about sustainability. Policy makers have consistent and reliable data for their future needs.

Current focus - Corn belt. Seeking 2-3 watershed partners to get started. Want these efforts to be locally led by producers with technical assistance already in place.

Why here? CTIC and TNC's proven track record with engaging producers and providing technical assistance. Indiana is an important agricultural state and AGree has employees on the ground. Great opportunity to learn more about the Wabash basin and influence future work. Commitment to measurable improvement in water quality. Strong leadership.

Role - Help catalyze support and secure future funding; Convene watershed leaders to share achievements and resources; Learn more about best practices for working lands projects; Leverage successes to effort state and federal policies.

What this looks like in Big Pine Creek - See opportunity where an effort where a productive group is already working where they can help build resources and technical assistance. Would like to see how they can influence the supply change and determine ways that producers can be engaged to be more active.

Would like to see the individuals that the watershed program needs (farmers, producers) to reach come together and engage the watershed program seeking help and have these individuals engage with each other to flip the table from top down to bottom up.

Focus should be where the watershed group feels the problem lies coupled with providing the most cost effective solutions. The watershed management plan will help identify these areas. Would like to see how the agricultural community engages and use this as a model for work nationwide.

How will this be different than or mesh with what is already on going in the Big Pine watershed? Really want to focus on empowering the local producers to take a leadership role within the area and the watershed program, have them lead their peers to engage in on the ground conservation.

Project Background: The Big Pine Creek watershed website will be up and running soon. Big Pine Watershed is now on Facebook as well www.facebook.com/BigPineWatershed.

Cost Share: Second round of cost share projects are underway and targeted to be complete within Nina Mason Pulliam grant funding requirements. Charlesworth and Peel will coordinate to complete reimbursement. A map was shared to display projects funded through NMPT funding. A request to show all projects completed using all funding sources was discussed. Peel will discuss options for displaying data with NRCS and TNC.

Water Quality Monitoring: Water quality monitoring is on going at three locations using hydrolabs. Grab sampling is on going for nutrients with samples collected 1-2 times per month with analysis occurring at the wastewater treatment plant.

Conservation Innovation Grant: CTIC is submitting a grant for in field demonstrations of new nutrient management practices specifically looking at conventional and reduced tillage options and their impacts on nutrient dynamics. The full proposal is due April 30th. CTIC is requesting approximately $250,000 with a 1:1 match requirement (cash or in kind). If funded, the project would start in September 2015. CTIC is requesting steering committee members commit to sharing their time and will provide a copy of the form and the pre-proposal for steering committee use.

Watershed Management Plan Update: The critical areas summary has been revised to address IDEM and EPA comments. These have been refined to prioritize watersheds by each parameter (nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, E. coli and habitat). A variety of concerns were identified for each parameter. Priority subwatersheds for each parameter were then identified using a cut off number for each parameter (ie 4 of 9 issues for nitrogen). Priority watersheds by parameter were then scored (1=priority, 0=not a priority) and combined. Priority watersheds were those scoring 1 for 4+ parameters. Using this

method, six subwatersheds are high priority, 4 are medium priority and 4 are considered low priority for implementation. Education will target medium and low priority watersheds. Implementation plan is to target all six high priority watersheds.

MRBI: Big Pine Creek received funding through the second phase of MRBI funding. The state conservationist proposed two subwatersheds within Big Pine Creek - Big Pine Creek Ditch and Little Pine Creek. There will not be any formal contracts or agreements. Nationally $10 million will be available in FY2015 with $30 million available through FY2018. This year, $50,000 is available in Big Pine Creek and $130,000 available annually for FY2016 through FY2017.

Partners: ISDA will run Region 5 model for each practice installed. Local monitoring through Big Pine Creek watershed effort and IDEM fixed station monitoring will be used as match. IN Corn, Soybean, Pork and Indiana Farm Bureau have pledged $12,500 per year per watershed and are flexible in their funding in timeframe and region. TNC, CTIC and SWCDs are also at the table. At a minimum, annual reporting of progress in terms of implementation and meeting match requirements are needed. Targeted EQIP deadline will be June 19th. A list of targeted practices and local ranking will need to be developed in short order to get the first sign up underway. NRCS public affairs has developed a template flier and can also provide template news releases.

Edge of field monitoring may be an option in the future - NRCS provides cost share to farmers through EQIP with NRCS providing 75% and the farmer providing 25%. Requires either paired or upstream-downstream program. Total cost: $400-500,000 with $100-125,000 out of pocket expenses; 6 year commitment. NRCS recommends private funding be in place to offset costs of the farmer prior to committing to EQIP funding. If farmers may be interested locally, submit the watershed to Shannon Zezula, NRCS by April 24th. These funds would be national funds. Practice funds would be Indiana funds.