TRI-COUNTY LAKES
ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION

SML Sedimentation Task Force
Wednesday, August 26, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

Minutes

Members Present:

Barb Ferrell	Neil Holthouser
Roger Fritz	Chekka Lash
Keri Green (remote)	Bob Pohlad
Randy Hodges	Rob Sanders

Members Absent:

David Byrd	Liz McKercher
Tom Hardy	Jennifer Serafin
Daphne Jamison	Robert Weld
Dave Johnson	

Staff Present:

Kristina Sage	Lorie Smith

Guests Present:

Jennifer Jen	Joel Reger
Rick Lester	Will Snipes (remote)
	Ron Steinmitz

The meeting was called to order by Barb Ferrell, Co-Chair, at 3:00PM.

The meeting commenced with self-introductions by all who attended.

Randy Hodges moved to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2024 meeting. Rob Sanders seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Barb Ferrell reviewed the charge:

> *To research, study and develop sedimentation mitigation and preventive strategies through collaborative approach with stakeholders to promote access, safety, and protection of SML waterways and shoreline. This initiative is required to promote the short and long-term viability and sustainability of SML for residents, businesses and communities at large.*

Two short videos were viewed by the Task Force and discussion of the causes of sedimentation ensued.

The Task Force then discussed the National Reservoir Sedimentation & Sustainability Team White Paper. Chekka Lash reviewed the introduction noting that as proposed in the introduction of the paper: sedimentation is not considered when building reservoirs, is accelerated by human activities, and can be reduced through implementation of BMPs.

Roger Fritz reviewed “Changes to US Reservoir Storage Capacity Over Time” reinforcing the concept that the potential for additional reservoirs has significantly reduced and the focus to maintain capacities should be catching sediment prior to it being released into the main reservoir. Mr. Fritz also noted that waterways downstream from a dam are often sediment starved due to sediments settling out in front of dams.

Neil Holthouser explained that in the case of the Smith Mountain Project, no sediments pass through the reservoirs at SML or Leesville—which is not to say that the water itself that passes through the dam is totally devoid of suspended sediment, ie somewhat “turbid”—unlike dams that are considered “run of the river” dams. Mr. Holthouser also noted that in addition to the sediment that flows through the dam, sediment is introduced into Leesville Lake via the Pigg River and other intakes downstream of Smith Mountain Lake (SML). As a result, in contrast to those projects in the white paper, Leesville Lake, downstream of SML, is not sediment starved.

Mr. Holthouser reviewed the “Sustainable Sediment Management Planning” section of the white paper. He assured us that the ability to generate power will last beyond our lifetimes, as was the purpose of the Project. Barb Ferrell noted that Dr. Fong stated the Smith Mountain Dam was engineered to last 200 years. Mr. Holthouser stated that divers regularly examine structure integrity and observe the sediment levels at the base of the dam as well and that he would check on what those measurements are. He also explained that the Project encompasses a fairly small watershed that began as one that was heavily vegetated. The most notable change since the completion of the Project is changes to the types and density of vegetation in the watershed. A primary question at this time is whether we have enough riparian buffer to intercept stormwater runoff. A second question is whether community partners would work to extend those buffers in the future.

“Conclusions and Recommendations” were reviewed by Rob Sanders. Mr. Sanders noted that the white paper was primarily focused west of the Mississippi River where reservoirs are not entirely comparable to the Smith Mountain Project. The primary difference is that the lakes reviewed in the paper have heavy sedimentation at the base of dams whereas sedimentation in Smith Mountain Lake is currently impacting the upper reaches and inlets to the lake. If removal were considered, placement of the sediment would be a large consideration. At this time better monitoring of sources should be conducted as well as the addition of structural modifications, such as traps for mitigation.

Barb Ferrell noted that the next meeting, September 23, 3PM, will include a speaker recommended by the President of the Eastern Chapter of WEDA, the Western Dredging

Association (One of 3 associations within the World Organization of Dredging Association- WODA). The meeting will be recorded for future reference.

Lorie Smith interjected that the group may consider using a white board or flip chart to categorically develop a work plan or guiding document, using the details learned from the white paper, to create “to dos” as they relate to various arms of the mission. We need to identify, categorize and prioritize a process to achieve the charge. Ms. Smith emphasized that SML is an anomaly and that it must be understood prior to discussing viable approaches to mitigation. She noted that the upcoming presentation at the September meeting provides an opportunity for the group to clarify questions and variables to be considered in building a process.

Randy Hodges reminded the Task Force to come to the meeting with specific questions for the presenter in order to clarify information and options to address sedimentation in our lake. He summarized, stating after the next meeting we should have enough information from the presenter to move forward using known planning methods to achieve the charge.

Neil Holthouser noted that we need to consider that the problems affect some lake residents more directly than others. Most areas of sedimentation in SML are acute and chronic.

Chekka Lash then noted the need for a map of sedimentation so that we understand the most critical areas impacted. Lorie Smith will request Franklin County GIS produce a map to help visualize sedimented areas with slopes and land use information if possible. Ms. Smith agreed such a map will potentially help identify where a pilot project could be instituted.

Rob Sanders offered to send APCO’s 2021 Five -Year Sedimentation Survey Report, October 31, 2023, to Barb Farrell.

The meeting adjourned at 4:28PM.