

# **Middle Blue River (MBR) Steering Committee Summary**

## **JAN 2013 – Steering Committee Formation**

The co-leads (EPA, Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), and Heartland Conservation Alliance (HCA), met to discuss how to get started and how to function. They decided to form a steering committee with members consisting of the co-leads along with the local sponsors of the four core projects, and any federal partners whose mission aligned. We decided to create matrices of each project that identified specific 2 year goals, overall needs, federal resource needs, barriers to implementation, and connection to other projects. The matrices were filled out by the 4 primary project leads and further explored during the June 2013 meeting.

## **JUNE 2013 – First Meeting of Steering Committee; Use Project Matrices to Identify Focus Areas**

The first full meeting of the steering committee with local partners. No feds besides EPA - yet! We decided to connect to other conservation interests in the watershed separately and through the Heartland Conservation Alliance Partnership meetings, but to keep the steering committee small and manageable. Matrices (see under project matrices – before prioritization) were completed by project leads for the 4 core projects (Municipal Farms, Blue River Greenways, Brush Creek, and Upper Blue River Conservation Opportunity Area) before meeting: 2-year implementation goals, overall resource needs, federal resource needs, barriers, and connections to other projects in partnership. Lists of UWFP pilot projects and federal agency involvement were also tagged for interests and benchmarking in two tiers (see benchmarking interests) The matrices were used during the meeting to determine both low hanging fruit (things that could be started now), and priorities for each project looking across each project matrix (see under project matrices prioritized). We agreed to keep the structure of the steering committee fluid and organically adjust as we move forward, and to connect core projects to larger watershed efforts – e.g. Upper Blue River Watershed Plan; Metro Green, MARC Natural Resources Inventory. Ultimately we wanted 3 things to come from the prioritization exercise: to set priorities, work with existing plans, and make specific asks of for resource assistance.

## **JULY 2013 – Follow-up from June 2013 meeting**

This meeting was a follow-up from June meeting outcomes. We further discussed bringing other federal partners in. Roberta's outreach to the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (HUD-DOT-EPA partnership) was not fruitful, and it was decided that the best way to include the Army Corps of Engineers (KCMO is sponsor for their projects on Brush Creek and Blue River) was through sponsor, not directly. There was a brief discussion about the use of mitigation banks from 404 permitting, and that there is a watershed land trust in Kansas City This and how

we might begin to reach out to elected officials (council reps Circo and Wagner thought to be best supports). We discussed the identified priorities and low hanging fruit from June meeting: what could we work on now, what could be better defined (measures like acreage for example), and what places would benefit from leveraging.

### **AUG 2013 – National Park Service (NPS) Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program discussion; Framework for US Forest Service Competitive Allocation application**

Kim Shafer from NPS-RTCA introduced the program and we explored connections with various MBR projects. Since MARC was going to apply for this funding for continued regional planning, it was decided that we should combine efforts and submit an application in which MARC was lead for planning, and there were projects in the MBR area that would demonstrate the operationalization of the planning with various restoration pilots. There was a lot of work following this meeting between EPA (Roberta), HCA (Jill), and MARC (Lesley) to craft this proposal to USFS.

### **NOV 2013 – First meeting following 3 week furlough during October, during which the USFS Application was due.**

During updates, several grant RFPs were announced, and KCMO announced using Technical Assistance to Brownfields \$\$ (EPA) to conduct Hazardous Clearance on several MFs sites. We discussed adding to KCMO parks and Jackson CO parks to steering committee. Since MARC released its newest Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), we began discussions of creating a map for Blue River that shows various layers of interest to those working in Blue River Watershed building on MARCs Green Region Explorer.

### **JAN 2014 – First meeting with new steering committee members from US Forest Service; US Geological Survey; MO Dept of Conservation; and KCMO Parks**

Brian Kelly from USGS, Jeremy Peichel from USFS, Forest Decker from KCMO Parks, and Wendy Sangster from MDC joined the steering committee, and Noelle Morris from Heartland Tree Alliance (HTA) visited for forestry discussions. A summary schematic for the MBRUWFP was presented by Roberta as an organizing document which describes the trajectory of the MBRUWFP in graphic form. Multiple grants were applied for (UW, EJ, Environmental Ed) since last meeting following discussions among partners at HCA table utilizing a collective impact approach to see who would lead and who would be partners on each application, and one more (NFWF with HCA lead) is in development. We began discussions of creating a tour for the NPS in spring, and the need to have a unified messaging for the Blue River (an outgrowth of a conversation between Lara Isch (KMCO Water Services), Lynn Youngblood (Blue River Watershed Association), Jill Erickson (HCA), and Roberta Vogel-Leutung (EPA), and how to organize a MBRUWFP team for the Blue River rescue. Jeremy Peichel described how USFS

programs could benefit MBRUWFP. Finally, we began framing a forest management and restoration planning framework for MBRUWFP COA area.

### **MARCH 2014 – Work on pre-proposal for Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) grant for helping wildlife adapt to climate change through addressing ecosystem / community level need.**

Because so many partners were involved in this the Wildlife Conservation Society grant opportunity, it made sense to work on it during the steering committee meeting. BTG executive director Kristin Riott attended to lead this discussion. It was also announced that the USFS has stood up a beta website for MBR related to climate change adaptation for forests, based on work it was doing with MDC. Continued discussion of last meeting on forest restoration /management planning: discussed HCA as the node organization for looking at the universe of projects in the COA area; the role of MDC as creator of forest management plan with climate adaptation elements; the overarching need for mapping using MARCs green region explorer; and the exceptional value of the NRI which will generate restoration and conservation maps based on a weighting of various factors for the supply of ecosystem services and needs for restoration and conservation (april 2).

### **APRIL 2014 – Visit from Mayor Pro Tem Cindy Circo and mapping discussion**

Mayor Pro Tem Cindy Circo visited with the partnership after a trip to DC as member of EPA's Local Government Advisory Council. She was able to visit with multiple EPA programs in one big meeting. They are very excited about the UWFPs and she encouraged us to package our partnership to be able to be ready to take advantage of federal funding opportunities. We had a lengthy discussion of how mapping tools could assist the partnership and the mission of related partners for the Blue River.

### **JULY 2014 – Discussion about making the partnership more public led to recognition of need for summary strategy document and strategic media planning**

Terry let us know that the MBRUWFP will be presented to the city council via water services (this actually happened in Sept). Two UW grants were awarded since last meeting – BRWA, and HCA. NFWF proposal with Boys Grow not funded. Roberta announced that ambassador will be full time by a national contract. HCA announced they are first on a wait list to receive a VISTA funded by Dept. of Interior (DOI) via Corporation for Community and National Service (CCNS). NPS tour was held in May and went very well. Proposal submitted in early August to NPS. As follow-up to April mapping conversation it was reiterated that restoration and public education are the most important elements. Scott and Tom did an intro to MARC NRI and Green Region Explorer as jumping off point for next steps for mapping. MARC also has new trim grant to expand conservation priority mapping on all transportation corridors. We

freeform discussed making the partnership public and decided that strategic media planning (figuring out who our audiences are, what our message is, and what our plan to get that out is). We also need a strategy document that puts on paper what we done and how, and where we are going for the benefit of all the partner's ability to get support and communicate the work, being able to articulate exactly what the partnership offers.

#### **SEPT 2014**

We reviewed the MARC Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) and Green Region Explorer (interactive mapping tool) to understand how they can be useful in the MBRUWFP. We also received a review and discussed MARCs new EPA Wetland Development grant which will be used for stream asset mapping using the new NRI. Finally we began discussions on message mapping for the MBRUWFP.