

EcoRA Work Group Conference Call - May 4, 2000, 9 AM - 10 AM

Participants:

Tom Dahl, Dahl Associates
Harry Ohlendorf, CH2M Hill
Brad Sample, CH2M Hill
Don Heinle, CH2M Hill
Merril Coomes, City of Coeur d'Alene
Dana Houkal, URS
Anne Dailey, EPA
Mary Jane Nearman, EPA
Phil Cerner, CDA Tribe
Lloyd Brewer, City of Spokane
John Roland, Ecology

Effect level for the risk assessment

- EcoRA Draft Problem Formulation document (dated Oct. 1999) indicated an initial effect level of 20% had been selected for all assessment endpoints except migratory birds and special status species for which no adverse effect is acceptable (due to statutory protection at the individual level).
- There was discussion about the 20% effect level assumption at the November 2000 EcoRA workshop and the issue also arose during a recent EcoRA call; this conference call provides an opportunity to discuss this issue.
- EPA asked URS/CH to reconsider the 20% effect level assumption in light of the comments raised.
- The 20% effect level is a good rule of thumb for what level of effect is measurable - it is the lowest effect level that can reliably be measured. Lower effect levels generally can be hard to distinguish from background or ambient noise in the data. There is precedent for using the 20% effect level. For the CDA EcoRA, we plan to use the 20% effect level as starting point and where the data supports a different effect level, then the data-specific effect level will be used. Cumulative distribution functions of the effect data will be used to determine whether another value can be used. For certain receptors with robust data sets we might be able to generate a lower effect level.
- Waterfowl exposure to metals in sediment may be the most likely to show effects and be drivers of clean up levels, especially in CSM 3
- For tundra swans the effect level ranges from about 500 ppm to 1700 ppm (from USFWS work); will look at other species but working hypothesis is that tundra swan will be the most sensitive and exposed species in this area
- Plan is to present modeled effect levels and compare this level to the concentrations in media
- It is too early in the EcoRA process to say what the cleanup levels for soil/sediment

will be but if risk-based numbers are below background then the cleanup goals would be established at background (but not lower than background)

- The Eco risk assessment process uses a weight of evidence approach - will include literature values and the site-specific data.

- Given the contamination levels present in the basin, we know that we will likely have long-term remediation goals. The ARARs and EcoRA risk-based goals will be low relative to existing contaminant levels. As part of integration of the EcoRA into the FS, the FS will be developing potential interim benchmarks based upon predicted effectiveness of remedial technologies and guidance from EcoRA team. The present plan is to include draft interim benchmarks in FS Tech Memo 2. The EcoRA team, FS team, and others will work together to develop proposed interim benchmarks.

Westslope Cut Throat Trout

- On 4/14/00, USFWS announced their decision to NOT list the westslope cutthroat trout as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA. The rationale for not listing at this time is that while populations have declined from historic levels, the Service found that viable populations are still widely distributed throughout the historic range.

- Per a conversation with Dan Audet, USFWS, the westslope cutthroat trout will be maintained as a species of concern; therefore, it is still appropriate to maintain the westslope cutthroat as a species to be evaluated at the individual-level receptor in the CDA EcoRA.

Fish Data Inventory

- EPA tasked URS/CH to compile an inventory of available fish data for preparation of the CDA Basin RI/FS and identify data gaps.

- This should be ready for distribution later today and will be shared with the EcoRA work group via a separate email transmission.

- The URS/CH review of available fish data concluded that there is adequate information available about metals concentrations in fish tissue to proceed with the EcoRA. Depending upon the results of the draft EcoRA, it may be necessary to supplement existing data with additional measured fish tissue data.

Schedule

- current plan is to have the draft RI/FS completed by late 2000 and the draft EcoRA schedule is still under discussion but would likely be available for comment in early August 2000

- plan to distribute draft EcoRA on a CD-Rom with hard copies available in the Basin repositories

- will schedule an EcoRA work group meeting in CDA for early September (likely during the next full week after Labor Day)
- definite dates will be provided after the EcoRA schedule is fully integrated with the overall project schedule

Current EcoRA Update provided by EcoRA

- database is in hand at CH2M Hill and is being successfully used!!!
- habitat mapping - continuing to resolve distinction of habitats in which samples were collected
- progress is being made on CSM 5 - revisions to figures done, text sections are nearing completion

Next Teleconference

- Next EcoRA call will be on May 18, 2000 at 9 AM PST (call-in number is 206-553-4557; no pass code required)
- Mary Jane Nearman has graciously agreed to chair the 5/18/00 call - Thanks!!
- topics of discussion will include:
 - schedule and status of the EcoRA
 - CSM 5 update
 - steps that will be used to establish the interim clean up benchmarks or goals
 - other topics as appropriate