Columbia River Basin Restoration Program
Ad Hoc Toxics Monitoring Steering Committee
Proposed Approach

Background

Previous work efforts identified multiple monitoring-related needs in the Basin. The 2009 State of the River Report, 2010 Columbia River Toxics Action Plan and 2019 Status Update (available on EPA's Columbia River Website) reiterated the following needs:

1. Baseline monitoring to identify sources, locations, and inform reduction actions;
2. Development of a multi-agency monitoring effort; and
3. A data management system to share information.

This Ad Hoc Toxics Monitoring Steering Committee grew out of a request for more focused discussion at the October 2020 Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Working Group meeting. Following that meeting, EPA hosted two webinars (in February and June of 2021). The goal of these collaborative meetings was to provide a flexible forum for grantees to share monitoring activities, discuss analytical methods, ask questions of EPA and other grantees, and share information and best practices. This Steering Committee will build on these past meetings and establish an ongoing conversation about monitoring in the Basin.

Ad Hoc Toxics Monitoring Steering Committee Goals

The Steering Committee will promote collaboration to improve the baseline data on toxics in the Basin and understand trends for priority contaminants. Specific goals of the group could include:

1. Providing a forum to exchange toxics monitoring information, discuss challenges, and coordinate monitoring activities to complement existing CRBRP working group meetings.
2. Developing a strategy for coordinated monitoring activities across tributaries, compatible with emerging mainstem monitoring and existing estuary monitoring efforts.
3. Working to develop a shared data management system.
4. Identifying priority constituents for future monitoring efforts.
5. Holding an annual meeting to discuss and identify research needs.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee will focus on refining and confirming the goals for this group and identifying next steps.

Roles & Participation

EPA and USGS will co-lead this Steering Committee. Participation is voluntary and will be open to any interested stakeholder including Tribal governments, members of the public, non-governmental organizations, industry, agricultural producers, local governments, state agencies, or other federal agencies.

This Steering Committee will not make formal recommendations to federal agencies. Rather, the group will ask participants to provide individual input and feedback to improve monitoring efforts across the Basin.

Meeting Approach
Initially, EPA and USGS are proposing monthly meetings to refine the goals of the Steering Committee, identify short-term actions, and discuss how to connect toxics monitoring across the Basin. After these initial conversations, the Steering Committee will hold topic-specific meetings.

Meeting 1. Confirm the goals, scope, and limitations of the Steering Committee, based on past webinars and the needs articulated in the three EPA reports.

- *Meeting 1 Objectives:*
    - Confirm overall goals of the Steering Committee;
    - Discuss the scope and constraints of the effort; and
    - Identify next steps for the Steering Committee.
- *Discussion: Linking monitoring efforts across the Basin*. How to connect efforts in the mainstem with the tributaries and the estuary? Two potential paths forward could include:
    - *Monitoring priorities*. What should monitoring efforts prioritize? How to include contaminants of emerging concern? This could be an annual meeting to be scheduled six months prior to the next RFA.
    - *Inventory existing monitoring activities*. How to ensure efforts are compatible and scalable? One option is to inventory existing monitoring methods and crosswalk QAPPs.
- *Next Steps:*
    - Brainstorm topics for future meetings;
    - Identify other partners that should be included in future conversations; and
    - Agree on a schedule/timeline and format for activities and future meetings.
- Meeting 1 Format:
    - 2-hour webinar in March 2022.

Meeting 2

- Continue discussion of path forward from meeting 1.
- Begin planning for data sharing and management. How can entities across the Basin store, share, and communicate data efficiently?

Future Meeting Topics
Potential meeting topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Data needs. Identifying key data needs or gaps across the Basin. What do you wish you knew?
- Lessons from other geographic programs (e.g., Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay) or other coordinated monitoring efforts (e.g., PNAMP, PSEMP).
- Connecting monitoring efforts beyond toxics to include other types of monitoring (e.g., temperature, habitat, fish populations).

Additional background materials

- 2010 Action Plan calls for establishment of research, monitoring, data management
    - Monitoring, research and data management actions excerpt
- 2019 Action Plan Status Update
- Compilation of Columbia River monitoring resources (Arthur Preston) as of June 2021
- 2020 grant program funded 7 projects w monitoring objectives (slides), Summary of Grantee Monitoring Work (table)
- February 11 2021 meeting for these 7 projects; summary of next steps

- Brief history of monitoring; "Continuous, system wide monitoring for priority toxics and contaminants of emerging contaminants must be developed"
- Participants asked to discuss how to make sure that data from current projects will be useable to assess the condition of the broader Columbia River Basin. Discussion questions include:
    - 1. Can the data to be collected be used in conjunction with historic data to evaluate status and trends? Will choice of method affect ability to assess trends in contaminant levels?
    - 2. Will the results be usable for comparison with regulatory criteria to evaluate this aspect of status and trends? Do regulations specify analytical methods that must be employed in order for data to be relevant for assessing compliance with regulations or criteria?
    - 3. Can the group reach consensus on appropriate analytical methods? (Might not be of concern where standard analytical methods are employed.)
    - 4. What is the appropriate timescale/frequency of monitoring? What role does seasonality play?
    - 5. What is the percentage of replicate samples to be collected for QA/QC?
    - 6. Are analytical methods sufficiently sensitive to detect levels that pose ecological and human health risk?
    - 7. Are analytical methods sufficiently sensitive to detect background levels of contaminants?

- June 10 Columbia River Basin Long Term Toxics Monitoring Strategy Webinar
    - Notes; presentations
    - Participants asked to address these questions to inform development of a long-term toxics monitoring strategy for the Columbia River Basin:
        - 1. Are there other documents that provide background or context in the history of monitoring in the Columbia River Basin?
        - 2. In the opinion of federal/state/tribal entities, what are the monitoring gaps of greatest concern?
        - 3. Should there be a document describing agreed upon sampling and analytical methods and concerns for Columbia River Toxics monitoring? Who would prepare it and where would it reside?
        - 4. How/where can data (including GIS shape files be housed) so that it is readily available for