

# 2012 Year End Review

San Juan Watershed Group

Volume 1, Issue 1

San Juan Watershed Group

## News you can use - 303 (d) listings

The San Juan Watershed Group aims to improve the quality of the local rivers by relying on the Clean Water Act 303 (d) list of impairments to indicate areas that need more attention. The 303 (d) list is a record of impaired or threatened waters where the current pollution controls are not sufficient to attain or maintain applicable water quality standards. States are required to develop total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) to get the impaired waters in attainment, and a review is conducted triennially by the state.

In our area, the San Juan, Animas, and La Plata Rivers are 303 (d) listed as exceeding healthy levels for multiple parameters. For example, the Animas is

classified as being in non-attainment for E.coli, phosphorus, nutrients, temperature, and turbidity. Many other watersheds in the state are only listed for one or two parameters—we have a lot more work to do here!

The 303 (d) impairments help to tell us where we need to focus our attention. For instance, the Animas is listed for exceeding nutrient standards, but the San Juan is not. The Animas Watershed Partnership (a major partner of the SJWG) thus focuses heavily on creating projects to reduce the amount of nutrients (typically nitrogen levels) entering the river. *(con't on pg 2)*

### Inside this issue:

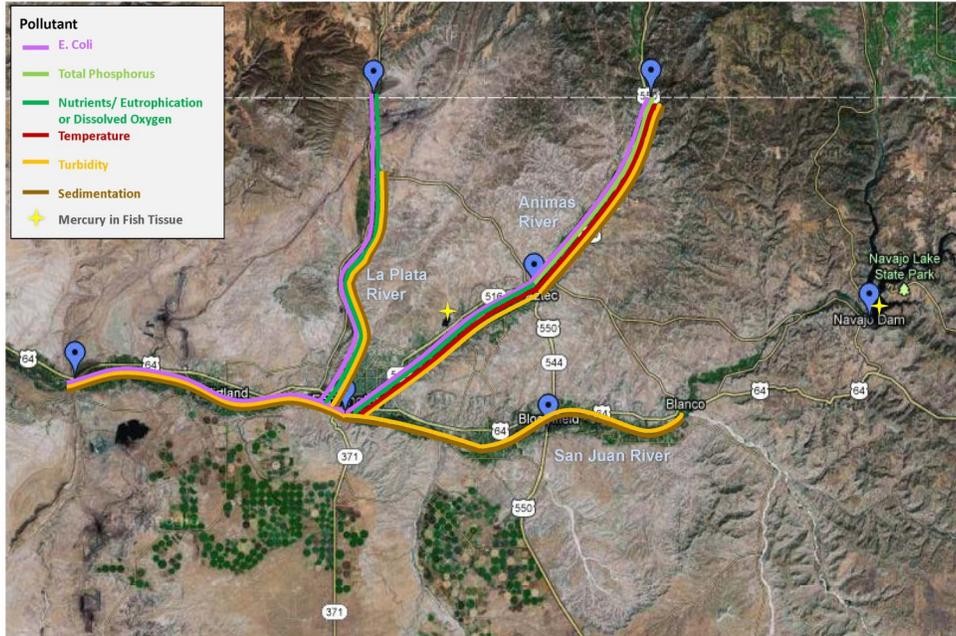
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### Special points of interest:

- SJWG steps up outreach efforts; details on pg 2
- Did you know that *Bacteroides* is a fecal pollution indicator? Pg 3 has all the details
- SJWG partners with EQIP to improve water quality; pg 4

Clean Water Act 303(d) List of Water Quality Impairments for 2012

San Juan Watershed Group



Impairments listing map for Animas, San Juan, and La Plata Rivers (2012).

## 303d listings—cont.

As a federal record of impaired river segments, the 303 (d) list provides an important supplement to the watershed group's interaction with local experts and longtime residents to determine which areas in our rivers need the most urgent attention.

Where bacteria pollution is concerned, the La Plata, Animas, and San Juan downstream from Farmington are all listed for excessive levels of fecal pollution. As you may have heard, the San Juan Watershed Group recently received funding to design and implement a study to identify the sources of fecal pollution that are affecting these local waters.

So, we know what some of the problems are in the area, and our local watershed groups are taking action to help our rivers become healthy, but what can YOU do? Here's a quick list of tips to improve and positively affect water quality in your neighborhood:

1. Don't dump things down the drain. Keep the phrase "We're all downstream" in mind—would you want

someone else's antibiotics in your tap water? Probably not, and drinking water facilities developed 20 years ago are not always equipped to handle the latest compounds and chemicals out there (like antibiotics). Research appropriate drop-off locations or disposal techniques for unused pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and fats/oils (which can clog municipal pipes).

2. Volunteer to be a water sampler for the San Juan Watershed Group's Microbial Source Tracking study. We'll need volunteers at least once per week from April through October to go out with our sampler to four different sites.

3. Plan your own river clean up day. This can be as informal as picking up trash while you're out enjoying Berg Park, or something more complex like organizing your local middle school to get out one Saturday morning to remove a few pounds of trash.

## San Juan Watershed Group Outreach

This has been a busy year for outreach for the SJWG, with online resources developed, contacts in the community made, and presentations to the local community conducted.

Former OSM/VISTA Melissa May developed the group's website, Facebook page, and Twitter accounts, while OSM/VISTA Julia Campus has taken over these pages since August.

The group has enjoyed developing and strengthening numerous partnerships, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Western Hardrock Watershed Team just to name a few. Both Melissa and Julia conducted water quality presentations at Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington.

Group volunteers taught science teachers from Central Consolidated Schools to use water quality testing equipment, and now the teachers are taking their students out to local waterways to conduct monthly testing. A special thanks to Jose Pino (NRCS), Steve Austin (Navajo Nation EPA), and Norm Norvelle (former science instructor) for leading efforts.



*Melissa May presents the Rolling Rivers trailer to local children at an outreach event.*

Melissa May, along with Emma Deyo from the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District, dedicated many hours to manning a booth at the San Juan County Fair in August. This outreach effort was greatly enhanced with Melissa's fun activity "Watershed Darts" designed to teach fair goers about what a watershed really is.

Outreach efforts will continue in 2013 with a newly-forming SJWG outreach committee. To get involved, contact Julia at [sanjuanwatershedgroup@gmail.com](mailto:sanjuanwatershedgroup@gmail.com).

## Microbial source tracking study update

### Known Source Sampling

Known source sampling is complete, and 55 samples have been shipped to the laboratory in Florida. Many thanks to our samplers who collected for us; this was definitely a collaborative effort!

The laboratory needed samples from the likely culprits (cattle, horses, humans, dogs, and waterfowl/chicken) as part of their method of identifying the type of bacteria specific to each animal. The MST study plan includes sampling for *Bacteroides* and *E.coli*. While many of us have heard of *E. coli* as a fecal indicator, new technologies can use *Bacteroides* as a more dependable indicator of fecal contribution.

*Bacteroides* is more origin-species unique, and does not survive outside of the gut as long, making it an ideal indicator of fecal animal activity. Measuring for these bacteria, as well as *E. coli*, will give us a clear picture of who's in the water and in what amount.

### Proposed sampling schedule at 4 river sites:

April – October 2013-2014

*Bacteroides*

40 samples/site/year

*E.coli*

25 samples/site/year



### GIS Committee Formed

A newly-formed GIS committee has been recruited to develop a request for proposals for potential GIS database contractors. The group first meets in January, and hopes to agree on which aspects of a GIS database will be most useful for area residents and local conservation professionals.

| Gold star<br>(collected 5+ samples)                 | Silver star<br>(collected 2-4 samples)   | Bronze Star<br>(collected 1 sample)   |
|---|--|---|
| H. Bravenec<br>J. Campus<br>M. May<br>S. Zellhoefer | D. Thatcher<br>D. Tomko<br>E. Bullock<br>M. Bentley<br>M. Luna<br>P. Nylander<br>T. Brevik<br>W. Rider | B. Kerr<br>C. Larrick<br>C. McCold<br>J. Cuthair<br>J. Hubbard<br>J. Lock<br>J. Southworth<br>M. Begay<br>R. Huggins<br>T. Thompson |

*Thanks to all of our volunteers who collected samples!*

## EQIP partnerships move forward in 2012

The San Juan Watershed Group's partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) continued this year, through a collaboration between NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the watershed group's funding to address sources of non-point source pollution (a Clean Water Act Section 319 grant). The EQIP program provides cost share assistance to agricultural producers who want to improve irrigation infrastructure or implement conservation practices on their land. This year, the watershed group's 319 grant provided additional funds to producers whose EQIP projects would have a positive impact on water quality.

Former OSM/VISTA Melissa May attended site visits with NRCS field staff to visit producers with EQIP applications still in progress. Two produc-

ers agreed to add additional elements to their projects to benefit water quality (fencing cattle out of riparian areas, etc.), and thus received extra points on their EQIP application, helping them to get their contracts approved. Their projects will be completed in 2013.

By accepting 319 funds, the producer's cost share will be less overall than with EQIP only, even with the added costs of the extra water quality protection elements. By leveraging our grant money in support of conservation projects which would not be implemented with EQIP funding only, it ends up being a win-win for water quality and the producer's pocket-book.

If you would like to do a similar project on your land, contact Melissa at (505)334-3090 x 116.



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Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/sanjuanwatershedgroup/>

*The San Juan Watershed Group works to improve water quality in the San Juan Watershed by partnering with local, state, tribal, and federal governments, landowners, area businesses, and organizations. Since its beginning in 2002, we have implemented on the ground improvement projects, completed assessment studies, conducted public outreach campaigns, and developed a watershed-based plan.*

To get involved, attend one of our monthly meetings, contact OSM/VISTA Julia Campus at [sanjuanwatershedgroup@gmail.com](mailto:sanjuanwatershedgroup@gmail.com), or Coordinator David Tomko at (505) 632-8008.

## Watershed Forum recap

The 2012 Four Corners River Health Workshop was a huge success! We had over 175 attendees on the October 16 workshop day, and 95 attendees at the field trip the following day. At least 60 different organizations were represented, including:

- o 25 NGOs,
- o 12 federal and tribal agencies,
- o 11 state and local agencies
- o 11 private businesses, and
- o 6 schools/educational groups.

The Forum allowed for collaboration for water quality across the diverse jurisdictions of the San Juan Watershed, and we'd like to thank you all for attending.

Additional photos can be seen on the group's facebook page. For a copy of speaker presentations, email your request to: [sanjuanwatershedgroup@gmail.com](mailto:sanjuanwatershedgroup@gmail.com).



*BHP Billiton mine tour attendees pose at the geomorphically-reclaimed La Plata mine in San Juan County, NM.*

*"So much knowledge in our area and so many people willing to share."*

*"I met a lot of people I wouldn't normally and who knows what those contacts will yield."*

*"Many interesting speakers and great networking opportunities."*