

Summary Notes of De-Briefing from EPA on our GLRI Proposal from July 23rd, 2010

Thurston Nature Center Committee

Our proposal, EPA GLNPO-2010-NS-8-1373-1113, entitled “Thurston Pond Restoration and Stormwater Management”, for \$297,000, was one of 234 proposals submitted to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) “Watersheds Best Management Practices, Planning and Implementation” program area, part of the “Nearshore Health and Nonpoint Source Pollution” focus area. Of these 234, 24 were funded. Each proposal was reviewed by three reviewers from the EPA, organized out of the Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO). Each proposal was graded on a 100-point scale, under criteria described in the EPA GLRI request for proposals that closed January 28, 2010. The 24 awarded proposals had scores of 70.17 or above. Our proposal scored a 50.67. We were given our average scores of the three reviewers for each of the evaluation criteria, as well as specific comments from reviewers. Our de-briefer focused on the criticisms of our proposal to help us prepare better future versions. They were:

A. Strategic Approach: 11.67 / 25

Our EPA de-briefer, Tom Davenport, said that reviewer comments mentioned that our proposal did not have a clear connection to Great Lakes priority issues, such as TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Loads), and that the project did not seem “shovel ready”, a priority for the GLRI. Connecting our proposal to Lakewide Management Plans (LaMPs) and Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) for Areas of Concern would have helped. Getting it done in under 3 years was a plus. If we had talked more about how we're already controlling what's going into the Huron River through Thurston Pond, that would have been good. Emphasizing “accelerated implementation” of restoration plan priorities helps as well.

B. Technical / Scientific Merit: 12 / 20

The two main points emphasized were that we did not talk about treating the sources (of issues such as upstream phosphorous loads – which were beyond the scope of what we're trying to do!). One reviewer mentioned that we did not have a disposal plan.

C. Measuring Progress: 4.33 / 10

One reviewer emphasized how we could have talked more about improving the pond into a better public amenity.

D. Programmatic Capability: 6/15

We did not describe any previous capability to implement projects of this size. If we had at least noted that we did not have this previous experience, we would have received a neutral score rather than the zero score we received in that sub-area.

E. Appropriate Budget: 4/10

Our dredging costs were felt to be “unclear”.

F. Project Efficiency: 2.33/5

There was concern expressed about long-term maintenance issues for our proposed pond improvement work.

G. Collaboration / Partnerships: 6.67/10

We got a reasonably good score on this point.

H. Education/Outreach: 3.67/5

Our plans were “more than satisfactory”.

Other comments that our de-briefer made were that we didn't appear to communicate well how Thurston Pond was near the head of Millers Creek watershed, which could have helped; tying it more into Huron River and western Lake Erie issues of concern to the EPA would have helped too. He

mentioned that this project might be a good fit for a state DNRE 319 grant (Non-Point Source Pollution) – note that the next RFP for this is due to come out in late August 2010! (http://michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3682_3714-198563--,00.html).

There will be one more small RFP this year under the existing GLRI funding for new topics, and a FY11 RFP of hopefully similar size to the first one that we could possibly fit into. We were encouraged to think about re-submittal, as we had a reasonably good proposal that could have benefited from clearer communication and linking to EPA priorities, and it was better than a substantial number of other proposals.

Our project summary from the proposal:

6. **Project Description:** This project will reconfigure the water level regulation structure of Thurston Pond, an 8.4-acre hypereutrophic stormwater retention pond; accommodate new stormwater input to the pond from high-density residential land; manage the pond's recently restored hydrologic connectivity to Millers Creek, the Huron River, and western Lake Erie; institute BMPs to remove nutrient-rich sediments that have accumulated in the pond for over 40 years; manage the pond level to minimize nutrient loading to the pond by roosting waterfowl; and minimize nutrient loading from the pond to Millers Creek.