

Mille Lacs County Water Plan Activities

Priority Concerns discussion – Committee members were asked if they agreed with the proposed language the sub-committee developed to clarify the four broad topics previously identified by the WMAC (listed in parenthesis).

1. (Protect the clean water we have)
Concern = Cumulative negative impacts of improper land management and continued development on the Rum River
2. (Restore impaired waters)
Concern = Impaired or degraded waters in the Upper Rum River and West Branch of the Rum River sub-watersheds
3. (Localized assessments of the impacts of development)
Concern = Adverse impacts to water quality, infiltration and flow caused by changes to land use as a result of development
4. (Adverse impacts of “improper: surface flows)
Concern = Adverse impacts of detrimental surface and sub-surface water management practices on existing investments and economic development potential

With discussion the committee edited the concerns to read as follows:

1. Cumulative negative impacts of improper land management and continued development within the Rum River watershed
2. Impaired or degraded waters in the Upper Rum River and West Branch Rum River intermediate sub-watersheds
3. Adverse impacts to water quality, infiltration and flow caused by land use conversion or development
(The committee noted it may be important to define what is meant by development. Mr. Oman noted that bench marking BMPs should be considered as an action item for the Water Plan.)
4. Adverse impacts of detrimental surface and sub-surface water management practices on existing and future development
(Dave Oslin noted that jurisdictional/statutory relationships and oversight/inter-relationship of County, State and Federal lands should be noted in the Water Plan.)

Water Plan Priority Concerns Scoping Document (PCSD) draft 2

The committee had opportunity to review the document prior to the meeting in order to provide feedback on the draft document. Members noted that Figure 1.8: Percentage of Land Area by Land Cover indicates wetland cover at 16%, while Figure 1.9: Percentage of Land Area by Type indicates wetlands to be 1%. Text will be added to both figures to clarify the intent of the graphics. Members also noted that Figure 1.9 labels County and Non-Saleable Forfeited land as 0%. It was suggested that changing the labels to <1% may better describe the small values. The final comment from the committee was that the four shades of yellow used to depict the intermediate sub-watersheds in Map 1.13 were too close in hue. It was suggested to choose colors of greater contrast. The committee will have another opportunity to review the PCSD before the July 11 meeting at which time the document should be finalized and approved.

Buffer Law – Other Watercourses map and statement

Ms. Shaw reviewed the BWSR policy documents noting the requirements for SWCDs to identify ‘other watercourses’ which are not found on the DNR Buffer Protection Map but which may benefit from installation of buffers or alternative practices to protect or improve water quality. A resolution must be adopted by the SWCD establishing the summary of watercourses in map or list form and it must be submitted to all local water management authorities within their jurisdiction and to BWSR by July 1, 2017.

Ms. Shaw shared a draft resolution with the committee for comment. The SWCD board will review the draft resolution April 12, 2017. The SWCD board will not need to act on the resolution until June 14, 2017. The

committee discussed the option to create a list versus a map of 'other watercourses' before finally deciding to support a map format. The committee asked for an opportunity to review the final draft resolution before it is to be proposed for SWCD Board action on June 14, 2017. The deadline for the WMAC to incorporate the SWCD summary of 'other watercourses' into the local water management plan is July 2018.

Sub-committee outcomes/notes: February 14 and March 14, 2017 documents were provided for review.

Jolene Foss inquired about the Fields to Streams handbooks identified as being a good reference in the notes. Ms. Shaw explained that the handbook was developed by the Freshwater Society and University of Minnesota Extension and is designed to assist rural landowners, land managers, and conservation professionals in protecting rural streams. The handbook describes in simple terms how water flows on the landscape, its impact to agriculture and its effect on water quality from erosion or by picking up and carrying nutrients. Ms. Shaw and Ms. McPherson will provide the handbooks to the Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, SWCD Board and any land use planners and committee members that are interested.

Water Plan timeline: The timeline was reviewed noting that the committee will need to review and approve a final Priority Concerns Scoping Document at the July meeting.

County, District, State, Federal and Civic Partner updates

Soil & Water Conservation District, as well as County projects and activities updates are attached as *Exhibit A*.

NRCS District Conservationist Sean Johnson inquired about committee interest in providing demonstrations of the Rainfall Simulator at the Mille Lacs County Fair again this year. Ms. Shaw showed a video of the simulator in action. The simulator demonstrates the effects of simulated rainfall on trays of soil representing differing management practices such as no-till, cover crop, residue management or cultivation. The committee was interested in the simulator if Sean is able to reserve it for the County Fair. Ms. McPherson noted that if reserved, demonstration times will be included in the printed brochure and the simulator can be located near the south end of the commercial building.

Next Regular Meeting

The next Water Management Plan Advisory Committee Meeting will be Tuesday, July 11, 2017 at 10AM at the Historic Courthouse.

Next steps/agenda items:

- Approve the Priority Concerns Scoping Document

Meeting Evaluation –

Participants at the meeting noted the meeting was good overall with interesting viewpoints and good input from participants. Appreciation was also expressed that documents were written and explained in a format that can be understood.

Motion by Kathy Stoeckel and second by Dave Oslin to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Shaw, Water Plan Coordinator, Mille Lacs SWCD

Exhibit A

Partner Update – Written Report

April 11, 2017 Meeting

County Activities, Water Advisory Committee

County Ditch Systems

Televising of County Ditch 14 was completed on March 2nd. Televising showed that, while there are some areas of concern along the ditch system, the system appears to be functioning properly. Findings from this inspection were presented to the Drainage Authority on March 21st.

The inspections of County Ditch 4 and County Ditch 7 were recently completed. Findings from these inspections were presented to the Drainage Authority on March 21st.

In accordance with Minnesota Statute Chapter 103E, County Ditch 2 requires the establishment of a perennial vegetative buffer extending 16.5 feet on either side of the ditch system. Accordingly, after giving the landowners an opportunity to seed the system on their own, the buffer areas will be staked and seeded by the Drainage Authority.

Soil & Water Conservation District project/activities updates

MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)

Mr. Field went on three site visits in February for the MAWQCP. All three landowners are looking to use NRCS's Reginal Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) which partners with MDA's MAWQCP. RCPP financially assists landowners with BMP implementation. One of the site visits was a follow up from 2016. The landowner is working toward doing more no-till agriculture and is considering a nutrient management plan. The other two site visits were with new landowners. One of the two is looking to implement multiple grassed waterways or water and sediment control basins. The second landowner has a 17 acre farm field which he wishes to take out of production. The landowner would like to plant all 17 acres in native vegetation and pollinators.

MN Buffer Law

Outreach

Mr. Field spoke with four (4) new landowners in February. Three of the four landowners will need to widen their current buffers. One of the landowners has land on County Ditch 3, another was on Jurisdictional Ditch 3 and the third is on the County Ditch 11 portion of Vondell Brook.

Mr. Field understands that 8:00-4:30 office hours are not convenient for landowners that work day jobs. He has decided to hold a Princeton Township Hall Open House Q&A at the end of March. It will be an opportunity for landowners to stop by anytime between 5:00-8:00 PM to ask questions about buffers and to review their parcels with Mr. Field. This buffer outreach will be partnered with Mille Lacs County. Mr. Hayes, with land services, will be present to answer questions regarding wetlands.

Enforcement

Ms. Shaw and Michele McPherson, Land Services Director met with the Mille Lacs County Board to review enforcement procedures and implications should Mille Lacs County decide to enforce locally. The County Board has a "soft" deadline of March 31 to decide on local or State enforcement.

Other Waters – SWCDs are required to:

1. Consult with the local water management authorities within its jurisdiction.
2. Consider watershed data, water quality and land use information.
3. Assess the water quality benefits that buffers or alternative practices could provide to local water resources that were not included on the Buffer Protection Map.

4. Prepare a rationale for inclusion or exclusion of waters that were not included on the Buffer Protection Map prior to adoption of the summary of watercourses.
5. Adopt a resolution establishing the summary of watercourses in map or list form and submit it to all local water management authorities within their jurisdiction and to BWSR by July 1, 2017.

Ms. Shaw participated in a meeting with local water management authorities representing Aitkin, Isanti, Anoka, Sherburne and Benton counties. The discussion resulted in a preliminary consensus to propose using the DNR 24K Streams GIS layer as the base map for recognizing the presence of other waters not recognized as either public waters or public ditch under the buffer law. There was also consensus that there would likely be no support from any of the local governments to propose any type of enforcement of the other waters. Other waters would be addressed by encouraging voluntary BMPs. The next step is to discuss such proposals with SWCD boards and Water Management Committees.

Clean Water Fund FY13 - Agricultural Outreach Technician

Encourage Ag BMPs

Mr. Field is working with NRCS's Mr. Johnson to assist landowners with multiple Ag BMPs. In addition to the three Ag BMP projects mentioned regarding the MAWQCP, Mr. Field and Mr. Johnson are working with a landowner on a stream crossing and heavy use protection trail requested by the landowner to cross an unnamed tributary of Estes Brook with Ag equipment.

Reduced Till – No Till Program

Both interseeders are still in storage but Mr. Field has already been receiving questions about the no-till drills. It is still too early for anyone to reserve the drills but it may be a busy rental season.

Feedlot Manure Management

As mentioned in the MAWQCP, Mr. Field and Mr. Johnson are working with a landowner to get a Certified Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) for the landowner's feedlot. The landowner is currently checking with certified planners on the cost of doing a plan.

NRCS Coordination

Mr. Field, Ms. Shaw and Mr. Johnson from the NRCS have decided to do monthly meetings. The purpose of the meetings will be to keep the both agencies informed on what the other is doing. February's meeting focused around County Ag Inspector noxious weed meeting, WCA outreach, Mille Lacs Water Plan, Buffer Law, Buffer meeting, MAWQCP update.

Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS)

Ms. Shaw met with a middle school student who prepared a science fair project on the Washburn Brook water quality impairment. Ms. Shaw was able to share sampling results from the WRAPS assessment with the student and compare the information she had collected with her own sampling. The student competed in a regional competition and has been invited to the national competition.

General BMP implementation/citizen assistance

The owners of the property on the Rum River for which staff have been working to develop a shoreland restoration project have decided to sell the property. The current property owners have stated that they will inform prospective buyers of the resource concern and pass on SWCD contact information. Staff will contact the future owner to offer assistance.

TSA3 has provided recommendations and cost estimates to address resource concerns on a stream re-meander and shoreline protection project on the Groundhouse River and a culvert replacement in Page Township. The landowner on the Groundhouse River has expressed willingness to move ahead with the project but he has no cash to contribute to either project. The meander portion of this project will cross over to a neighboring property to the south. The landowner feels that his neighbor will also be willing to move ahead with the project but the neighbor also has no cash to contribute. Staff have contacted MN DNR to inquire about possible funding for this project. Staff have also discussed this project with Mille Lacs Public Works. The meander project would

move the stream away from the County Road where it currently runs alongside the County Road. Public Works is in favor of the project and would consider including supporting funds in their 2018 budget.

TSA has provided a recommendation and cost estimate for the Page Township culvert replacement. The landowner will be financing the project through an Ag BMP Loan but will still need a design to correctly install the new culvert. TSA will survey the sight as soon as they finish up current spring design work.

The Project Committee met with the Conservation Technician for a discussion on Board policies relating to project installation and an up-date on projects being developed. Staff felt that the policy that limits the use of cost-share funds for well sealing to 25% of available funds was no longer necessary due the state's current focus on groundwater protection. Administration and record keeping for this policy is complicated and time consuming.

Snake River Watershed (SRW)

Mr. Field attended the regular February meeting of the watershed board. The heavy use animal trail in Mille Lacs County will likely be on hold until the land dries out in the late summer/fall. Aaron Johnson, Snake River Watershed Outreach Coordinator, and Jacquelynn Kelzenberg, Kanabec SWCD Technician, continue to work on projects in Kanabec County. Along with the current projects, Aaron Johnson is actively working on outreach but there were no new projects identified in February.

Administrator Shaw met with key SWCD, SRW and BWSR staff regarding grant management for the Snake River Watershed. SWCD managers are concerned that BWSR CWF grants are being adequately budgeted and tracked by the SRW Coordinator. SWCD Technical staff also needed to discuss their own reporting needs. A more detailed grant budget was requested by SWCD managers, however the SRW coordinator was unwilling to commit to maintaining a detailed budget. Deanna Pomije of Kanabec SWCD volunteered to develop the detailed project budget which is critical to track multiple project funds being encumbered throughout the watershed by different partners.

Stream Sampling

Ms. Shaw and Mr. Field did some field reconnaissance to collect GPS coordinates and confirm stream sampling sites on Bogus Brook and Estes Brook.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Mr. Field has been working with Mr. Sanoski from Benton County to encourage landowners to take part in the CRP. Mr. Field and Mr. Sanoski have a site visit set up for early March. The landowner is looking to turn a 6.5 acre field along a stream into wildlife habitat.

Youth Education

Milaca and Isle 5th graders and Princeton 4th graders have confirmed that they will be attending Conservation Awareness Day on May 17th at Rec Park. Ten presenters have been confirmed including MN DNR Fisheries, Mille Lacs Land Services, ECE, Sherburne Wildlife Refuge, NRCS, Hayland Woods Native Nursery, Wolcyn Trees, Jim's Mille Lacs Disposal, MLBO Fisheries and MN DNR Watercraft Inspection.

Water Management Planning

Priority Concerns Scoping Document (PCSD)

The draft PCSD was sent to the water plan committee membership for comment. The committee will be asked to confirm the top local priorities at the April meeting.

Fields to Streams: Managing water in rural landscapes

Ms. Shaw feels this document does a great job of presenting what can be challenging and complex hydrologic information in an easily understandable format. Ms. Shaw would like the information available for staff to easily reference when working with land use planners to describe the complex interaction of rainfall, soil infiltration, evapotranspiration and stream flow. Michele McPherson is planning to provide copies to the Planning Commission, Board of Adjustments and County Board. The publications can be ordered from the U of MN for \$3.50 each.

Mille Lacs County Landfill (Milo Township)

Ms. Shaw asked the Pollution Control Agency to provide information about sampling currently done to monitor groundwater contamination that originated from the old landfill before it was sealed. Citizens expressed concern about the contaminated groundwater reaching the Estes Brook and wanted assurance that Estes Brook was safe. Ms. Shaw would like to explore how groundwater quality information might be made available publically on the County GIS WebApp since the site is used regularly by citizens researching residential land.

Public Outreach/Media

Mr. Weimann continued to make minor updates to the website in accordance with the public media committee's requests. Staff made 11 Facebook posts during the month on a range of topics including: a student science fair project on Washburn Brook, soil health/livestock, citizen water monitoring, DNR forestry cost-share, Senator Franken's visit, and the tree sale. Ms. Shaw responded to Mille Lacs Messenger staff questions about Emerald Ash Borer, its potential effect on the Rum River Watershed and referred them to Sherburne SWCD and DNR Forester specialists.

Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

The final restoration order out of four total 2016 wetland violations has been completed. Each violation included multiple landowners so eight total restoration orders were developed and served pertaining to 2016 violations.

Drinking Water Supply Management Areas/Wellhead Protection

Lynn Gallice attended the Onamia Wellhead Protection Plan meetings in Onamia on February 8 and March 1. The Well Head Protection (WHP) Plan was reviewed and received final approval on March 1. A copy of the WHP Plan will be sent out to Local Units of Government for review during a 60 day public comment period. A public hearing will take place on May 10 at 5:30pm at the Onamia City Hall. The public comment period will be noticed in the City of Onamia newsletter and Mille Lacs Messenger.

County Ag Inspector - Non-chemical Weed Management

The SWCD IRVM Committee met February 10 to confirm the purpose and goals for supporting non-chemical weed management. The committee discussed effectiveness of the current management techniques, past management techniques and future options. A number of goals were explored including increased time spent working directly with townships to facilitate better timed, targeted weed management. The type of seed mix planted following right-of-way work could be investigated to identify seed mixes that might complement weed management, as well as pilot projects to investigate intensive management on specific roads. The current work plan identifies 300 staff hours to implement all the County Ag Inspector roles for MLC. Support for an expanded effort may be explored with the full County IRVM Committee.

BMP: Non-chemical veg management

The Project Committee also discussed the District resolution concerning non-chemical site prep and maintenance on cost-share projects. Staff were looking for clarification of Board intent on the use of non-chemical techniques when installing projects.

Nitrate Clinic

SWCD staff have confirmed plans for two well water testing clinics for nitrate to be conducted on June 1 in Milaca and on June 8 in Wahkon in conjunction with Mille Lacs County Household Hazardous Waste Days.

Civic Engagement/Civic Organizing

Administrator Shaw continues to meet monthly with the MN St. Croix Civic Governance Organizing Agency. Members are working to develop the civic leadership capacity needed to organize sustainable partnerships between government and community grounded in civic principles and standards. Organizing is a form of efficiency. The district will be able to get more done (for water quality) if staff can organize stakeholders, versus the district/staff trying to do everything and treating stakeholders as consumers. Ms. Shaw hopes to work with

the board to identify measurable outcomes (for water quality) to companion the general goals identified during strategic planning. Identifying measurable and the people we need to do them will facilitate tracking district progress in achieving the overall goal (water quality).

Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group (MLLWMG)

Compass lawn signs have been printed and rack cards have had final design approval. A draft Lake Health Survey was developed and sent out to MLLWMG members for comment. A second draft has been created that has incorporated suggestions and comments from MLLWMG members. A rough draft of a layout for a Shoreland Stewardship Plan has also been developed and was reviewed at the February 28 meeting. Comments and suggestions on the draft Lake Health Survey will be incorporated into the document to ready it for sharing with legislators during the MASWCD Legislation Day on March 20. The 2017 Lake Health Conference will likely be on August 7 or August 14. The 2017 Conference will be a one day event with dinner and a featured speaker on an early evening launch trip.

Urban Stormwater Management/Outreach

The City of Wahkon is ready to move forward on developing a Stormwater Management Plan. Lynn Gallice has spoken in conference call with the city Administrator and a representative from S.E.H. Engineering to determine what the next steps would be to pursue a Clean Water Fund Grant for developing a comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan. Gallice has been asked to address the Wahkon City Council on April 10 to outline the benefits and scope of a Stormwater Management Plan along with an estimated grant request budget and required match from Wahkon.

Workshops

Aitkin County Planning and Zoning and the Aitkin SWCD are hosting a Contractors Workshop at the Long Lake Conservation Center on April 6. The workshop sessions will address earth moving, patio and boat ramp construction, site and stormwater management, ditch buffers, ordinary high water determinations, rip-rap requirements, sand blankets, Aquatic Invasive Species, alternatives to rip-rap, shoreline planting, soil lifts and product information. Contactors working in Mille Lacs County are welcome at the workshop and staff have sent information on the workshop to known area contractors.