

Root River One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P)
Public Hearing
Wednesday, September 7, 2016
7:30 PM
Stewartville Civic Center, Stewartville, MN

In attendance:

Root River 1W1P Policy Committee: Duane Bakke (Fillmore County), Jim Kellogg (Mower SWCD), Matt Flynn (Olmsted County), Rod Peterson (Dodge County), Jerry Mueller (Winona SWCD), Tim Gabrielson (Mower County), Glenn Hahn (Dodge SWCD), Leonard Leutink (Fillmore SWCD), Steve Connelly (Olmsted SWCD)

Root River 1W1P Planning Work Group: Adam Beilke (BWSR), Skip Langer (Olmsted SWCD), Adam King (Dodge SWCD), Sheila Harmes (Winona County), Tim Ruzek (Mower SWCD), Jennifer Ronnenberg (Fillmore SWCD), Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD)

Others present: William Sullivan (Friends of the Root River), Nathan Redalen (BWSR), Dale Heintz (Olmsted County), Jerry Finn (farmer), Chris Gunderson (farmer), Tim Gossman (Fillmore SWCD), Lori Feltis (farmer), Nick Feltis (farmer), David Erickson (Dodge County), Ted & Wanda Olson (farmers), Michael Sheehan (Olmsted County Public Works), Karen Reisner (Fillmore County Journal), Nicole Lehman (MN DNR), Dave Copeland (BWSR), John Helmers (Olmsted County), Jerry Cleveland (retired).

Following the Open House from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, the Public Hearing was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chair Duane Bakke. The Policy Committee members present introduced themselves. Chair Bakke also named the remaining Policy Committee members that were not present. Jennifer Ronnenberg, Fillmore SWCD Water Management Coordinator, provided an overview of the Root River 1W1P process including the next steps involved in approving and implementing the plan.

After explaining the ground rules for the hearing, the public was invited by Chair Bakke to provide their comments.

Dave Erickson, Dodge County Commissioner, asked what the difference is between what is discussed here and a watershed district and if there is taxing authority. Chair Bakke explained that this is a watershed-sized plan. Watershed districts could be formed. 1W1P does not replace existing entities and that it is just a collaborative effort at this point. Funding sources will continue to be Clean Water Funds and other state funds already coming into the counties and SWCDs with the difference being that the funds will be used on a watershed boundary versus a county boundary. There is no plan to expand the local taxes going into this.

Ted Olson from south of Fremont in Pine Creek watershed asked about conservation practices on state land where nothing is being done, such as dams, diversions, etc. (This was also a written comment submitted by Mr. Olson.) Chair Bakke said that an answer will be sent later, and to ask the DNR since they own the land. He added that we would expect that they would

be part of the effort in the watershed because DNR and other agencies were part of the planning process.

Nick Feltis, Stewartville, remarked that the plan includes information about where nitrogen and sediment is coming from with regard to nonpoint pollution. Soil nutrients and natural soil bank erosion doesn't seem to be characterized in this data. Nitrogen cycling in the soil, organic matter and natural soil materials may be contributing a higher percentage than is being considered as a natural source through the natural cycling of nutrients. Depending on the parent material of the soil and the size of the soil particles will influence water quality. Some of this is naturally there. So much of the nitrogen applied is tied up in the breakdown of carbon, and that needs to be taken into consideration. Chair Bakke responded that these are good comments and a response will be provided by staff. This plan will not eliminate the use of nitrogen.

Lori Feltis, Stewartville, asked for clarification if this program is voluntary or mandatory. She also noted that the plan mentions landowners and residents, and asked if it includes municipalities to follow this plan. Chair Bakke replied that this is no different than existing programs. If an erosion problem exists, you may be required to fix it but there are voluntary programs for cost share available. There will be no increase in the use of so-called "soil erosion or farm practices police". There is still access to SWCDs to get funding voluntarily.

Dave Erickson spoke again and asked the Policy Committee what they thought this meeting would result in and what they were hoping to receive from the audience for comments. Chair Bakke responded that he anticipated that we get good comments, such as those offered by Mr. Feltis. There has been good acceptance by people who have knowledge of the plan and have looked at the plan. The hearing is a requirement, and there will be another tomorrow night in Caledonia.

Jerry Cleveland, retired ag teacher and citizen of Spring Valley, commented that the committee deserves praise for doing this and taking an entire watershed to make it work together.

After a call by Chair Bakke for further comments with no response, he closed the public hearing. Jim Kellogg moved to adjourn the public hearing at 8:01 pm; Matt Flynn seconded; motion carried unanimously.