

Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Root River, One Watershed One Plan

Thursday, March 9, 2017, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Room 108, Fillmore County Office Building, 902 Houston St. NW, Preston

In attendance: Dan Wermager (Root River SWCD), Jeff Hastings (TU), Sheila Harnes (Winona County), John Beckwith (Hiawatha Valley RC&D), Daryl Buck (Winona SWCD), Tim Connolly (US FWS), Jason Wetzel (Friends of the Root River), Justin Watkins (MPCA), Shaina Keseley (BWSR), David Schmidt (The Nature Conservancy), Jeff Weiss (DNR), Tiffany Schauls (MPCA), Caleb Fischer (Fillmore SWCD), Nathan Redalen (MN Association of Twps), Pat Bailey (MDH), Adam Beilke (BWSR), Justin Hanson (Mower SWCD), Isaac Martin (MPCA), April Andrews (MPCA), Jennifer Ronnenberg (Fillmore SWCD), Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD)

1. Open meeting: The meeting was opened at 9:08. Jennifer provided an overview of the agenda.
2. Introductions were made.
3. Roles of the Advisory Committee in the Root River 1W1P Implementation Phase: The roles of the Advisory Committee are shown on page 5-31 of the plan in Table 5-9. The meeting today fulfills the task of reviewing the annual plan prior to submitting it to the Policy Committee for approval. There is also information about the Advisory Committee role in section d. on page 6 of the Joint Powers Agreement, a copy of which was provided. A more comprehensive list of the roles of all the committees was also handed out.
4. Discussion and review of the Draft Annual Work Plan (from the Planning Work Group): The annual work plan is divided into activities for Jan. 1 to June 30 and July 1 to Dec. 31; however, those dates are not hard and fast.
 - a. Jeff Weiss volunteered to help develop a 1-2 page summary of the plan for the public along with members of the Planning Work Group (Tim Ruzek, Shaina Keseley, Sheila Harnes, Donna Rasmussen).
 - David Schmidt suggested a “meatier” version of 6-10 pages that includes maps, technical information and priorities for use by others who may want more information, including members of the Advisory Committee.
 - John Beckwith said he can provide some examples from other projects.
 - b. PTMApp training is being planned by BWSR for use of the web-based version. State agency staff and NGO staff are also interested in the training. The web version training will likely be one day. Training for the desktop version will be longer and more intense. BWSR will take requests for the desktop training.
 - c. PTMA pp validation testing is planned for the MDA Field to Stream Partnership watersheds since three of the counties have all or portions of the study watersheds. The data used by HEI for calibrating PTMApp should be reviewed to be sure that the same data is not used for validation. Validating what PTMApp is telling us will involve identifying if there are practices already in place where PTMApp identified the needs.
 - The Advisory Committee can provide input regarding other areas to run PTMApp, e.g. DNR fish monitoring stations.
 - d. There was lengthy discussion about the complexities of tracking BMP implementation among the various partners without too much duplication of effort. Reporting is tied to funding, and diversity of funding is good but complicates reporting. Funding the plan will require some of that but doesn't necessarily get at outside funding. One idea is to have a GoogleDocs spreadsheet that partners can access and enter information. Another is to have a person to whom reports can be sent who can then compile the information. Federal practices pose a special problem due to privacy of data when mapping information. Clean Water Accountability reports for tracking Clean Water Fund accomplishments are one means of documenting some work. It is real work to do this so an investment of funds is needed. BWSR has not yet developed guidelines for a “State of the Watershed” report.

- A subcommittee to develop a methodology for documenting partner activities will consist of Adam Beilke, David Schmidt, and Caleb Fischer.
 - We should begin documenting projects and practices as of Jan. 1, 2017.
- e. The Planning Work Group will work on developing budget scenarios that include funding levels needed to accomplish certain work items to begin once we know what funding sources are available. The legislature is considering \$11 million for BWSR in FY18-FY19 for implementation of 1W1P approved plans. The first year allocation of \$3 million is for the first five pilot projects and seven WMOs in the metro area. The second year allocation will add the next set of 1W1P projects. These are funds formerly allocated for the Targeted Watershed category. BWSR has no specifics yet other than looking at the block grant concept with an anticipated start date of Jan. 1, 2018.
 - f. The Advisory Committee meeting bullet will be moved to the first part of the year since it is happening now.
 - A second meeting will be added in the second half of the year once funding information is known.
 - g. Education templates for use by all the partners will be based on Tim Ruzek's ideas. The civic engagement activity is different from education. Beginning the social capacity activities generated lots of discussion. Concerns included how to track landowner interactions so there aren't overlaps between programs causing landowner fatigue and the need to take the time to build good landowner relationships.
 - The consensus was to first develop an outline for a civic engagement plan. Use efforts such as the MDA/MDH focus on the Utica drinking water supply management area and the ideas generated during today's mapping exercise to help develop the plan. If we start with a project plan, then we can look for funding to implement it.
5. Break (10:40-11:00)
 6. Advisory Committee priority projects and mapping exercise: Four small groups each marked upcoming projects on maps of the watershed. Then each group reported back to the larger group.
 - The projects were also recorded in a spreadsheet that will be posted on the Fillmore SWCD website along with a compilation of the maps.
 - This information will be used to help us prepare for future funding and for reporting of activities occurring in the watershed.
 7. Break for lunch
 8. MPCA presentation of 2018 Root River Monitoring: Justin Watkins from MPCA is the acting project manager for the Root River. He reported that the second round of Intensive Watershed Monitoring will be done in the Root River watershed in 2018, one of the first in the state to be doing this. 2018 won't be the same as the first time. Certain base locations will remain the same but some funding will be reserved in order to choose other locations to focus on with more decisions made locally regarding those focus areas. Joining Justin were April Andrews, biologist from the St. Paul office working on the biologic assessments, Isaac Martins from the Lakes and Streams Unit working on the chemistry assessments, and Joel Chirhart, (by phone) biologist from St. Paul working on the macroinvertebrate assessments. The first monitoring cycle was set up to be unbiased across all watersheds, so all were treated the same by using uniform process and parameters. The Root had 15 chemistry sites and 180 biologic sites. The purpose of cycle 2 is to re-evaluate the condition of the watershed, track change and effectiveness, and allow customization. The base sites for the second cycle include 57 bio anchor sites and 13 chemistry anchor sites. In addition to the chem sites, chemistry data is also being collected at six MPCA Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring Network sites. In the fall of 2016 the anchor site locations were finalized. Now input is being sought from local staff for tailoring the rest of the monitoring.
 - a. A proposal should be submitted to Justin by April 15th ranking the additional sites. Maps and shapefiles of the anchor sites will be provided by MPCA. The proposal should consider sites with multiple objectives, timing that aligns with the IWM schedule, feasibility with the MPCA

resources and staffing, complying with MPCA's site selection guidance, accessibility and safety of the sites, and how to fill data gaps.

Suggested focus areas:

- South Fork needs more sites overall due to the many changes from source to mouth from warm water to cold water to warm water. Cycle one data raised lots of questions so add sites on the major tributaries where past data shows a need.
- Watson Creek has several impairments including elevated nitrate, so consider more longitudinal nitrate monitoring.
- WPLMN sites and streams with drinking water as a designated use will continue to be monitored for nitrate. It was suggested that more nitrate monitoring is needed watershed-side.
- Look at the effect of closing down the Lewiston wastewater ponds by placing a site above the confluence with Pine Creek.
- Do more monitoring upstream of Mystery Cave before the South Branch goes underground.
- The Field to Stream Partnership watersheds are already planned for more monitoring.
- Align sites with DNR Fisheries habitat projects.
- Look for sites near recent culvert, bridge or dam work and consider waiting to do chemistry.
- Consider adding bio sites that were deferred in cycle 1 (listed in Monitoring and Assessment Report), e.g. South Branch headwaters.
- Joel added that Bee Creek is a candidate for exceptional use designation. Once designated as exceptional use, it will stay that way. Other designations are general and modified. A ditch is not automatically designated as modified use. The biological data must also match.

Surface Water Assessment Grants (SWAG) are available to local partners that want to be involved in the monitoring activities. Each county could apply on its own, or it could be a group effort with one fiscal agent, which is encouraged. Those grant applications are due in the fall with monitoring to begin in spring 2018. Chemistry and bacteria testing would be done May through September, three times per month in the first year and two times per month in the second year for a total of five samples/month over the two year monitoring period.

9. Next meetings:

- a. To be determined for the Advisory Committee after more information is known about funding. If block grants are not allocated to the 1W1P pilots, we will meet in June to discuss possible competitive grant applications. We can meet later sometime between July and September if block grants are approved.
- b. The Policy Committee will meet March 20th. Information from this meeting will be provided to them: the list and map of projects. These will also be posted on the Fillmore SWCD website.

Justin added that MPCA has a contract to rerun HSPF modeling with water quality data extended into 2015, including the Upper Iowa, with plans to better simulate karst. The desktop version of PTMApp will be updated so it can be redone for the Root.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:45 pm.