

Root River Watershed Citizen Conversations

Context Mapping Activity: Themes from the Analysis of Responses to 4 Questions

1. What do people know about water quality of the Root River watershed?

Chatfield March 25, 2013 32 attendees

- Changes
 - A. Over the years
 - B. Changes to be made for improvements
 - Flooding and erosion
 - Nitrates/ag Runoff
 - Aesthetics/beauty
 - Lack of knowledge about the watershed
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- Runoff issues: farms, roads, communities
 - General lack of awareness
 - People know what they've been told and what they can see
 - Beauty and concern for its future

Rushford April 4, 2013 25 attendees

- Don't know—ambivalent
 - Some crop rotation awareness
 - Ex. waterways, contour strips, buffers
 - More aware, concerned during “water event”, ex. flood, drought, spring thaw
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- People don't know enough info. to protect watershed
 - Silt/sediment a problem and getting worse
 - Limited understanding of how watershed works

Eagle Bluff, Lanesboro April 6, 2013 20 attendees

- Generally, people are aware of the tangibles; high water during floods, brown/cloudy water, gullies, etc.
- There is a huge disconnect between the actual water quality and the perceived water quality (trout fishing, canoeing, etc.)
- There is a “target” blame on agriculture.
- Overarching theme is that more education is needed.

Preston April 8, 2013 20 attendees

- Water quality improved due to water practices
- Rural and town problem not only agriculture
- Floods fast
- Monitoring of water quality is good

Spring Valley April 9, 2013 22 attendees

- They know that they need good grass coverage around sinkholes and along rivers to help maintain water quality.
- Lack of knowledge on water quality.
- Some people think that water quality is better.
- People are unsure of what harmful substances are in the rivers.

Houston April 20, 2013 24 attendees

- Many people don't know much, lack of information.
- Different people with different backgrounds have differing opinions about water quality.
- Water quality is important to many parts of the economy.
- All water users have a stake in water quality.

Grand Meadow May 8, 2013 5 attendees

- Don't care/don't know
- Trout quality
- Don't know what watershed we are

2. What actions are needed to improve water quality in the Root River watershed?

Chatfield

- Education
 - community interest and participation
 - forestry management
 - agricultural management
 - Runoff – farm, city, sewage, septic systems
 - Best practices – no till, terraces, green strips, water retention, septic system, cover crops, filter strips
 - Government programs
 - enforcement of laws
 - recreational usage
 - buffer strips
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- Implementation and education on manure management plans.
- Encourage and promote soil and water conservation programs and practices.
- Cooperation between rural and urban citizens to promote and improve the watershed.
- Develop and maintain natural filter systems and practices to minimize pollution getting into waterways in the first place.

Rushford

- Practices in farming and urban areas—use best practices such as manure management, grasslands, contour farming
- Education—Public awareness of watershed, quality, make info easier to find—what is actually in our water and how it affects downstream
- Incentives for controls and to improve water quality: wells, sewers, feedlots, crops, urban fertilizing and sewers and treatment plants
- Flood mitigation—buffer zones, trees, rip-rap, contour farming, winter cover crops, terracing

Eagle Bluff, Lanesboro

- Public education and information
- Ag practices—buffer strips, forage strips, no till, perennial cropping
- Monitoring current state; monitor inputs/prevent: limit erosion
- Accountability/incentives (economic)

Preston

- Better land management: diverse crops; contour strips; increase buffer strips; control storm sewer runoff
- Control pollution from herbicides, pesticides, manure
- Incentives tied to conservation
- Education (volunteers)
- Borrow from experience of Olmsted and Dodge counties

Spring Valley

- Manage municipal storm water runoff
- Need for responsible pesticide and nutrient management
- More buffer and filter strips
- More water retention including wetlands

Houston

- Best management practices: buffer strips, more livestock on managed grass, grassed waterways, more hay and perennials in addition to corn and beans, no till, retention ponds
- Education—of the public, farmers, all people who live in the watershed
- Enforcement of conservation agreements, regulations, etc.
- Cooperation among people: public/private and rural/urban

Grand Meadow

- Control runoff
- Buffer strips/cover crops
- Public education

3. What are the challenges preventing people from taking action to protect water quality?

Chatfield

- Financial considerations/including time – people can't afford to do what needs to be done
- Learning what we need to do – education—communication—publicity
- Understanding stewardship and lack of ownership

Rushford

- Finance—cost of BMP
- Finance—farm profits/row crops are more profitable
- Lack of knowledge—other management
- Apathy—some (not all) city dwellers just don't care

Eagle Bluff, Lanesboro

- Education – people are unaware of the problem or unaware of the solutions, or how to find solutions
- Economic
 - Incentives that encourage polluting
 - Expense of solutions
 - Expense of food
- Social
 - Cultural difficulties in changing practices (including laziness)
 - Difficult having discussions with neighbors
 - Urban vs. rural culture clash

Preston

- Costs to implement change/need for more \$ incentives
- Lack of knowledge/education
- Lack of regulation/enforcement. Whose writing the regulation—are they relevant?
- Lack of long-term visionary thinkers. Everyone seems to be looking at short-term, quickest profit approach.

Spring Valley

- Costs of implementation
- No knowledge/lack of info on helpful contacts

- Fear of changes
- Apathy

Houston

- Human nature—ignorance and apathy/not concerned/priority and time/polarization/short-term thinking/environment vs. industry polarization
- Cost and money to implement and enforcement
- Government—bureaucracy—lack of enforcement—politics—inability to break thru system—lack of info
- Community
 - Harassment
 - Ownership, leadership
 - Tradition, status quo, “That’s the way we’ve always done it.”
 - Lack of info

Grand Meadow

- Money—costs money to do conservation
- Awareness of programs is lacking—have to look for programs—takes effort
- Criticism for doing something different
- Lack of knowledge/education—disconnected from resource

4. What information would be helpful to motivate people to protect water quality?

Chatfield

- Education
 - Resources
 - Finances
 - Action
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- Education/research
- Accurate feedback/conservation practices
- Information on health effects/for generations now and in the future
- Financial assistance—loans/grants

Rushford

- Education on how poor water quality affects everyone
- Provide financial assistance to change practices to improve water quality
- Monitoring/studies--drinking water, ground water, and effects on humans—provide information about water quality kits
- Examples of Best Practices that improve water quality and use neighbor to neighbor communication

Eagle Bluff, Lanesboro

- Report pollution levels in real time in a way that identifies the source; “low-moderate-high” and daily water quality reports.
- Provide real life examples and first hand experiences of what works or doesn’t work to protect water.
- Future consequences of failing to protect clean water; including cost to individuals.
- Financial incentives to protect water and/or financial consequences of polluting.

Preston

- Education – best practices—chemical use town and country; start with school
- Information about costs (losses) due to decreased quality
- Data of water quality, nitrates, aquifer quantity and quality
- Info about economic incentives: utility savings

Spring Valley

- Knowledge—Education—Information
- Impacts of health issues if do nothing
- Public meetings, awareness groups, media, FaceBook
- Everybody be accountable and do their part
- Farmer led, volunteer programs, mentor groups

Houston

- Education
- Research and monitoring
- Easier access
- Who benefits
- What are the consequences of poor water quality
- Financial grants available
- Info about new technology
- Ethical component

Grand Meadow

- Money
 - How to get assistance
 - How to improve profits
 - Better incentives
- Education
 - what are the problems and what people can do individually to fix them
 - K-12 and public (e.g. Farm Bureau add watershed materials to the book bundles they provide for K-4 graders)
- Foster a stewardship ethic; relate water quality to quality of life