LE SUEUR RIVER WATERSHED NETWORK

Citizen Advisory Committee – Meeting Notes
April 9, 2013 Meeting Notes

Main Street Plaza, Pemberton

Present
Ozzie Arndt, Mark Bosacker, Paul Davis, Pat Duncanson, Leo Getsfried, Larry Gunderson, Carl Guse, Brooke Hacker, Mark Krosch, Harold Loeffler, Brian Loeffler, Scott Lynch, Allan Lynch, Greg Mikkelson, Patrick Moore, Rick Moore, Kim Musser, Kevin Sargent, Eugene Scheffert, Randy Schindle, Leon Schoenrock, Earl Ziegler

Agenda

7:00 Introductions & Waseca County Farmers Forum Debrief

7:15 Beaver Creek film & Discussion of other case studies

7:30 Future Efforts

7:50 Break

8:00 Recommendations Discussion

8:50 Next Meeting Discussion

Waseca County Farmers Forum Debrief

As part of the introductions, we went around the circle of those present and asked those who attending the Waseca County Farmers Forum to share their observations.

Articles from Waseca County News
http://www.southernminn.com/waseca_county_news/features/article_212698e3-11c8-527e-8a9e-60b52feb3b7b.html

http://www.southernminn.com/waseca_county_news/news/article_d03a01e3-62a2-550b-9efd-bd3bafaf85f7.html

Beaver Creek Water Quality Success Story

A video case study in the Hawk Creek Watershed was shown. Beaver Creek has see significant water quality improvements over the past ten years. Reduction in sediment and phosphorus was gained by enrolling approximately 6.1 percent of the watershed in grass practices in perpetual easement programs in key areas: directly adjacent to streams, in the floodplain, and other critical locations.

http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/case-studies

- Patrick M added that the way this program was "sold" to landowners was buffers will help with habitat and hunting. Renville Co SWCD and Hawk Creek staff went farm to farm and built personal relationships.
- Leo G (MN DNR) added that he remembered this watershed in the 1970s and 80s and that it was intensely drained. Tom Kalahar (Renville Co SWCD) was a huge factor in the success of this project because he has built a rapport with landowners over the years. There are many exceptional public servants in Renville County.
- Mark B added that he was one of the paddlers cited in the video that noticed a distinctive change in Beaver Creek over the past ten years. After a rainstorm, the water used to be gross. He could see subjectively that the water looked much better and this was later supported by scientific data.
- He also added that while paddling the Cobb River over the years that he has seen water quality improving there as well. He has noticed more wetlands, changes in manure application. He has noticed more improvements in the Cobb than the Maple River.
- Rick M (MSU WRC) talked about a project that is beginning in the Le Sueur: Targeted Conservation Practices. The goal of this project is to identify areas in the landscape that would be best for BMPs using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and stakeholder involvement. He is hoping this group can continue as a part of this project. There is funding for additional meetings. He underscored that the project needs local expertise to flush out and identify the best locations and most acceptable BMPS.
- Paul D added that the MPCA is working on a similar project (referred to as Priority Management Zones or PMZ's) that is focusing on a farm scale to use GIS computer modeling to identify areas and then talk to landowners about how that meshes with what is happening on the ground.

A question was raised: *Does it work, as a landowner, to have agency staff come to your door to talk about potential practices on your property?*

- CAC members said that it depends on past experience with the agency and staff. Earl talked about a bad experience with overbuilt/over engineered terrace.
- Greg M added frustration about blanket rules like a 50-foot buffer that didn't really address problem spots.

Patrick M shared examples from groups working in different parts of the state at a "sub-sub watershed" level. They are looking at the science and trying to determine what makes sense at a local level. With this kind of model, the farmers are given the scientific information that has been gathered in the watershed and the farmers are the messengers to their neighbors. After talking about it with each other, the farmers then go back to the SWCD's, DNR, MPCA etc after determining what BMPs to install where, how to spend cost share money etc.

Future Efforts – Clicker Survey

Kim passed out a map of watershed organizations in the Minnesota River Basin and explained that many parts of the Basin have watershed groups currently structured to help with water

quality improvements like Hawk Creek watershed Project. There are a variety of ways these groups are organized with varying authorities: watershed projects, watershed districts, watershed management organizations.

The following is results from an anonymous clicker survey used to better understand what the group is thinking about the group as we move forward. Please see attached handout (thanks to Brooke and Jon!)
Here are some highlights:

2.) Rank what you believe are the 3 most important water pollution issues in the Le Sueur watershed (Priority ranking).

Sediment	41.67%
Phosphorus	20.37%
Nitrogen	14.81%

3.) Rank what you believe are the 3 largest contributors to water quality impairments in the Le Sueur watershed?

Bank erosion	29.91%
Drainage (tile, ditching)	21.37%
Ravines	13.68%
Impervious pavements	12.82%

5.) Do you think a citizen group would be helpful in the Le Sueur River watershed?

Yes	75%
No	5%
Undecided	20%

6.) Do you think that we should form a more formal watershed partnership or citizen group in the Le Sueur watershed? (Multiple Choice)

Yes	63.16%
No	15.79%
Undecided	21.05%

7). Would you want to be involved? (Multiple Choice)

Yes	75%
No	0%
Undecided	25%

8.) What do you think should be the focus of this group?

Promote voluntary adoption of conservation practices	19.72%
Dig more into the science	15.49%
Communicate recommendations to others in the watershed	14.08%
Secure additional $$ to bring to the basin for water quality projects	14.08%

Communication Strategy

Patrick outlined some perspectives that might be integrated into a communication strategy moving forward. There are many things going on in the Le Sueur River watershed that puts us on the cutting edge.

Messages:
We want to work together, ***by choice*** to improve water quality for future generations.
We believe that farmers are good at figuring things out once they are given a challenge.
We are trying to figure this out!

Le Sueur River Watershed has:

- First and only 2 stage ditch in the State
- One of the first rate reduction weir systems
- Discovery Farm sites
- Many farms have been in the family for 100 years
- Home to the president of the statewide Farm Bureau
- Long time leaders of the Corn Growers
- Some of the best paddling in the Minnesota River Basin
- Still good fishing and great WMAs
- Trails
- It's a great place to raise a family

The idea going forward is that we lead with what is good, what is working and encourage more of it, based on recommendations from the citizens and landowners. We want the rest of the Minnesota River Basin and the people of Lake Pepin to know that we care and we are doing something about it. This is why this list of

recommendations is so important. In this communications strategy, we have to be willing to stand behind the recommendations to the public.

Draft Recommendations

More stormwater management and more in-ditch storage

- Pat D. clarified that with the term stormwater, the group means any water that originates after a precipitation event, water flowing from urban and agricultural lands.
- We've learned that there is sediment coming from streambanks and that high (peak) flows are causing the damage.
- We need to reduce peak flows and figure out how to store water on land and still farm. We won't farm without tiling. We need to figure out how to do it without spending too much money and in a way that protects water quality and wildlife.
- We need to slow the water down and to figure out a way to have less water flowing through the system.

More experimentation/demonstration with temporary water storage retention

- Demonstration projects have a lot of power to actually see with your own eyes how these BMPs work and learn from people who have experimented with them.
- Once you see how it is done, you realize it is not so bad.

More strategic buffers (where appropriate) and more terraces/grassways

- Buffers are "low hanging fruit" have proven to be effective in reducing pollution.

More communication/education

- Promote rewards for good that is already being done
- More public awareness/education about geology/hydrology of watershed;
- We have to communicate to people within the watershed and the public. This is a critical first step.

Less red tape

- Red tape frustrates landowners and agency/local staff alike. We should model different approaches on a subwatershed scale. Local people really know what works best.

More river channel maintenance of major snags (causing bank erosion or major obstructions)

- Some rivers are seeing trees plugging the entire waterway. Some are left from a tornado 15 years ago. This woody debris needs to be removed in some sections.
- Downed trees in the system are a symptom of a larger issue of an unstable river channel adjusting to increased flows.

More streambank stabilization and ravine stabilization

Draft Recommendations - Ranking

The table below is the result of the post-it process where the CAC ranked their top 5 strategies (ranked 1-5). Talleys indicate the total number and ranked importance.

ACTION	1	2	3	4	5	Total
More stormwater management	4			4	2	17
• More in-ditch storage		1		1	1	3
More experimentation/demonstration with temporary water storage retention	3	4	3	1	1	17
More communication/education	1	3	2	1		12
• Promote reward for good that is already being done	2		1			3
• More public awareness education about geology/hydrology of the watershed						
More strategic buffers where appropriate		1	4	1	1	11
• More terraces/grass waterways				1	1	5
Less red tape	1	2	1		3	10
More upstream/downstream ditch level meetings with engineers/ SWCDs/ landowners	1				2	6
More river channel maintenance of major snags causing bank erosion or major obstructions	1					4
More ravine stabilization						2
More streambank stabilization				1		2
More closed intakes (where appropriate)		1				2
More partnerships						0
More river access for recreation/education						0

Some recommendations were combined from the initial list. The following were taken off the initial list:

- Partnerships – should be a byproduct, not a goal
- More closed intakes – the group felt that it would probably happen naturally over time
- More upstream/downstream ditch level meetings with engineers/ SWCDs/ landowners
- More river access for recreation/education

Next Meeting

Potential meeting sites include: Indian Island Winery, McGowan Farm, Pemberton Main Street Plaza. We will be in touch with a doodle poll about the last week of May to early June to set up the next meeting.