

Meeting Notes

Indian Island Potluck

June 4th, 2013

Recommendation #1

More stormwater management and more in-ditch storage

- Reduce peak flows to reduce erosivity of the river
 - Cities: as development occurs
 - Farms: tiling helps – but farmers must look at downstream impacts of this.
- Funds are available to try innovative things like in-ditch storage, but costs of projects must come down to be feasible on a larger scale
 - Results of innovation must be measure
 - Identify areas of early, middle, and late thaw
 - Focus on draining off the areas of early thaw
 - Landowners make decisions and County Commissioners are the bank/caretakers
- Rate reductions in place – they work
 - Clean water
 - If dirty, don't threaten with fines; try to help me clean it/solution to the problem(s)
 - Slew filters the water and we need them
- Precipitation – stream, high waters are damaging (no finger pointing!)
- Rain barrels are a feel good thing; rain gardens are preferred
- Implementation – farm program pays to plant corn; need incentives that help pay for conservation (redirect Farm Bill)
- In ditch doesn't take stuff out of production, but ditches cannot hold everything
 - Everything is very tiles
 - Storage ditch (already completed) seems to be flowing normally
 - Basin needs maintenance
 - Farmers want to optimize money; not enough incentive
 - Ditches need to cleaned out every 10 years or even more often
- Many farmers view water as a liability; landowners feel there is risk involved with holding water
 - Financial incentives are a possible way to get at storing water

Recommendation # 2

More experimentation and demonstration with temporary water storage

- Trying new with resources we already have
- Maybe we could use wildlife areas to store extra water in the spring?
 - Flood a field in the Spring, then drain the water and crops
 - Experiments need to be tested to see if we are actually doing some good, and to determine fine-tuning of the design
 - Discovery Farms program is a good way to get... <writing ends here>
- When placing a road over a wetland, they need to install double the wetland that was used

- Curious about what the two-stage ditches are and the long term feasibility
- Not going to be paid on corn base any more (to avoid market manipulation) - \$8/bushel
 - Need lower grain price
- Have to be able to see that new methods work – how does it handle/react
 - Some people will not change no matter what
- Some people are making enough money they want to do conservation
- Poor people cannot afford to care about the environment
- Influential farmers trying stuff can help
- Pat did something because that the only way the D.S. people would go for it
- Landowners around Lake Elysian are installing (or have installed) rain gardens, shoreline projects to help slow down flows

Recommendation #3

More strategically placed buffers and more terraces and grass waterways

- More specific design would be more efficient use of land and money
- Pay farmers for nutrient removal as opposed to paying by the buffer acre – results oriented
- Buffers work, but an inlet...is that going to get buffered? What are the possible solutions?
- Buffers low hanging fruit but a lot of resistance – zoning, etc. required
- GBERBA adds 50% on top
- 80% economics/20% social
- Guys want till installers to drain their wetlands
- Grassed waterways can still fit with equipment
 - Schottler said some will come off by tilling rest of watershed
 - Grassed waterways only work when maintained
 - Disagreements about sullies and tiling
- Significant erosion this Spring – not enough crop residue
 - New machinery getting rid of all residue
 - Residue minimized weeds but for plants
- Government needs to pay more for conservation
 - Farm bill money needs to be re-directed
 - Government programs not known for efficiency
 - Some people take advantage of government programs, but they also keep some people in line (WACA..?)
- Need to hear success stories – risk of failure
- Conservation effort growing (e.g. garbage out window in early 20th century)
- Much discussion about “strategic buffers”
- Examples about ravines, open intakes, and ditch projects that are probiems – but hard to work together and with government to make everyone happy

Recommendation #4

More communication and education among watershed residents

- Raise awareness of what role you are or can play – if aren't part of the solution, you're

part of the problem

- Rain barrels, native shoreland plantings, educate, not point fingers, in order to get things done, share resources – both techniques and funding sources
- Write your congress person about projects/funding
- Encourage press to cover positive projects
- Lura Lake – flat/windblown 2000+ acres
 - 6 miles = rip rap landscape (1100 – 700 (~40 miles) is most in last 5 miles)
- Freeborn Lake – rough carp – no vegetation – soft sediment
- Pickeral Lake – fish kill (shell rock)
- Cattails – not pretty? Do they want to see nothing but have dirty water?
- What percentage of land in the LSW is rented ground (half or more)?
 - Widows are huge owners of land
- Control drainage take out in Spring(when rain)/Fall not enough rain
 - Effective in Chisago, but not here?
- What are other farmers/landowners doing?
- How is controlled drainage holding?
- What is required? How do we get the ball rolling?
- Education is most effective – high school, post high school in curriculum at schools; recognition programs
- Show how everything is inter-related (Gulf) – drains to river, do not dump!
- Can't recognize for trivial stuff but people need to be recognized
- Recognize lawns for eco-friendly – lawn of the week
- River friendly practices recognition – counties, SWCDs, citizen groups, Le Sueur group
- Outdoor news, local papers, Maple River messenger, get things advertised/out there, rewards, (e.g. Mapleton bucks for most friendly lawn)
- Matter of education bad, you should have some brains to begin with
- Communication successes
- Accountable in education
- Have someone from media at meeting to say we are talking – trying
- Education
- Stormwater ponds – people do not understand why they are there; what is their value?
- Profit = driver
- More education
- Indian Lake – recharge, ponds, restoration; Seven Mile Creek looks promising
- Field trips for younger generation
- Financial incentives

Recommendation #5

Less red tape

- Sometimes agency programs have requirements that tie people's hands
- Better funding of agencies so they can have adequate staff to administer programs
 - One size doesn't fit all
 - If more staff, could be more tailored to each site/project

- Write to congress people to push for more funding
- Is this necessary?
- Use common sense
- Accountable to tax payer
- Need to be secure at job to get beyond red tape
- Someone to write grant and help with planning
- Bottom Line = Pay up

Recommendation #6

More river channel maintenance of major snags

- No agency has the responsibility for maintaining river channels, so it generally is whoever the snag is causing a problem for that ends up taking it out
- DNR trails and waterways unit tends to do this after
- Uplands didn't originally have trees; trees cause channel migration; woody debris is "ponderosa box"
- Erosion vs. wildlife
- Pulling out snags = more downstream water; Water is relative to where you are

Recommendation #7

More streambank and ravine stabilization

- Streambanks are eroding badly
- Toe wood is cheaper than rip rap armoring – can get LCCMR grant to do this kind of project
 - Ravine stabilization is a good bang for your buck
- Experienced J-hooks; better to address issues not symptoms; rivers will always be variable
- Streambank is a lot of money
- Lows of bluffs – prioritize
- Remember running cars off the bluff to see if they would make it to the river
- 80% sediment is bank source
- Will not eliminate tile – need economic solutions

Additional Comments

- How do we find value for keeping water on the landscape?
- Lake – more water storage capacity – bank water to meter in the summer so stream don't go dry
- Duck vs. Kids – I like ducks, but I like kids better
- Tax tradeoffs?
- SWCDs get folks coming in – gully hillside
- Landowner initiative typically they have a problem good soil leaving
- Absentee landowners – pressure money, needs to use every crop; share cropper like to see farmed correctly
- Mixed bag – how interested landowners are in maintaining land
- No blanket answers, but SWCDs have new techniques to identify potential problems (e.g. LiDAR)

- Ravine control have interest because of cropland loss; huge benefits to land owner
- Constructed wetlands – good at low flows, may not be effective in high flows
- Smart ditch – 8 foot sections; good for from field to ditch without erosion; avoids ditch bank sediment
 - Harold Leottler – residue caught sediment in field
 - No till
 - Strip till
 - Example site on Burt Burns property; 1965 was poor farm
 - Concrete culvert put in 1965 at base of ravine
- Teach k-12 about algae blooms
 - Problem identification
 - Water quality sampling
 - K-8 focus before HS closes minds and kids find niche
 - Social media
 - Reddit – young computer, male (unregulated social media)
 - Tumblr
 - Facebook – losing currency – too many ads
 - Read wired magazine to get hip (lol)
 - Twitter
 - Blogs
 - Instagram
 - Radio – MPR, Maverick, BBC
 - Posters/graphics around campus

May need to be added:

- Change the Farm Bill – need more conservation practices; need to be sure farm programs are not benefitting poor stewards
- Connection between surface water and groundwater to prevent excessive drawdown of the aquifers (like in Nebraska)
- Dredge drainage ditch, and have to remove the dirt and can't place back on fields
- Need more organization
- Funding sources?
- Engineering assistance – show how it will help
- Soil health
- Biggest Key Education
- How things have changed. Explain.
- Precipitation events

May need to be removed:

- We need more science to make sure we have correctly identified problems and solutions
- Rain barrels – pointless (Leon)

Large Group Discussion

- Rec's illustrate groups growth and progress
- Economics – Key driver
 - Obstacle and reason why current state
 - Driving what does and does not happen
 - Farm Bill (if changed still similar landscape; like ethanol)
 - If recognize economic benefit of water storage on landscape
 - Meter out high flow
 - Recognize value of stored water
 - Farm Bill Complex – 80% goes to food/nutrition not farmer; crop insurance subsidized by Farm Program; many people benefit
 - Income
 - Ethanol lowering fuel costs
- Need areas to store water
- Land prices rising, more challenging to get set aside storage
- Does crop insurance increase cropping? Can get money back from bank <debate>
 - Partially true
 - Lot of farmers farm for insurance program; contributes to current big size farmers
 - Crop never make it, still get paid for it
- What can we do to make a difference?
 - Recognition programs outstanding practices (urban and rural) through the SWCDs and County Boards
 - May not be motivator
 - Needs press it deserves but media focuses on negative
 - Needs full page ad, get word out; keep the ball moving
 - Good low or no cost; something better than nothing
 - Focus on practice and not person
 - Good practices should be publicized
 - Education by communication – can talk to neighbors but need the press
- Education about what's improving, what's working, I can do it too
- Lift up new ideas
- Need repetition
- Show not tell
- Look to Iowa for example
 - Native flowers in ditches for pollinators and other wildlife habitat
 - Ditches in a natural state wildlife, great habitat
 - MN a striking contrast less habitat
- Beaver are best natural dam builder; take photos; don't trap; holds back water
- Maple River flows unnaturally today
 - Bounce
 - Beaver dams can help hydrology
 - Great educational opportunity

- Pheasants, “crop” tourists; tourism draw; economic change with natural improvements
- Other economic possibilities for the future
- Additional Ideas:
 - Organization at watershed scale technical capacity and planning
 - Need some joint power or district to manage on a watershed scale
 - Many other major watershed’s in MRB have organized watershed groups (GBERBA: BE, LS, WW; BNC; WQ Board)
- What would it take to create watershed project?
 - Vision
 - Getting together and working on it
 - One watershed, one plan gives permission to watershed entity to collaborate and produce one plan
 - Saves money, requires less technical expertise, need to share effort
 - This is the first effort in LS to involve landowners, citizens in effort
 - Concern agency that this effort won’t fly; challenge to prove otherwise
 - Citizens led effort in other parts of MRB
 - Working together to gain funds
 - Grass root level and “trickle up”
 - People come to consensus, what can we do?
- Interested in being a part of this?
 - More formal watershed entity; can be in many different forms
 - Help build roadmap
 - Focus efforts, raise funds
 - Education outreach
 - Raise awareness and see what comes
 - Think like a watershed; resources come; change what happens; comes from within us
- Jack McGowan’s Farm
 - Celebrate at confluence
 - LS dug blue clay 1683
 - 10,000 kids a summer
 - Park, cabin, catapult, blazing house
 - 10 ft. burning glass
 - History fest, 2nd week October (historyfest.com)
 - 60 learning stations
 - 200 reinactors
 - Teaching opportunities
 - Before harvest; during the week; big party; launch plan; talk about recommendations
 - Farmers in area about offense, not defense
 - Downstream folks concerned about Lake Pepin filling in
 - Message