

## August 25, 2014 – St Olaf Lake Park Meeting Notes

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### Agenda

5:30-6:15 PM	Potluck at shelter with canoe rides
6:15-6:30	Welcome, Overview of Agenda, History of the group
6:30-8	Nature Tour & Presentation Stations
8-8:30	Group discussion & Action Agenda

### Desired Meeting Outcomes

- Learn about high water quality lake, and stormwater projects, fisheries and shoreland protection
- Build the Network - Reach out to New Richland region
- Highlight emerging projects that group may support

### “The Ask” to the group

- Come learn and talk about this emerging watershed group
- Brainstorm about future projects or demonstration sites
- How does this group support projects within the watershed?

About 45 people attended the August 25, 2014 Le Sueur River Watershed Network meeting at St Olaf Lake Park in New Richland, MN. The meeting kicked off with a potluck. Hot dogs from local Morgan's Meat Market and cookies from Nancy Jane's Bakery were provided and participants brought a dish to share. Following the potluck there were introductions to the Le Sueur River Watershed Network where Leon Schoenrock, a steering committee member, gave a brief history of the group. Al Batt told the meeting participants his stories of growing up in the watershed and why conservation is so important for a healthy watershed. Throughout the park there were presentations from Hugh Valiant – Conservation Landscapes, Paul Davis – MPCA, and Bruce Pittman - MDNR on the type of work done at St Olaf Lake Park to preserve the high water quality there. Following the nature walk were presentations on emerging projects in the watershed including a local landowners, Carl Guse, and the Bull Run Creek Project. The group agreed these were the types of projects we want to support, and the Le Sueur River Watershed Network signed a letter of support to include with the Bull Run grant application to BWSR.

### Welcome & Announcements

- Meeting organizers welcomed attendees to St Olaf Lake Park, thanked everyone for coming, and highlighted the steering committee's role in planning the meeting
- Paul Thompson gave a brief presentation about his ancestor's history in the watershed and description of what life was like growing up in the watershed. He painted a picture of the 1930s and 1940s where the Le Sueur was a clean stream surrounded by pastures and dairy farms. He noted that he has seen dramatic changes since WWII.

## Nature Tour

- Al Batt shared some of his stories about the Le Sueur River watershed and what life was like growing up. He emphasized the importance of conservation and finding ways to protect wildlife
  - Al pointed out the special kinds of birds, bugs, and plants that were encountered during the nature walk, and some of their history
- Hugh Valiant illustrated the raingardens, basin swales, and berms that were constructed adjacent to the lake at St Olaf Lake Park
  - Toured participants to numerous stormwater features adjacent to the lake. He showed the group a linear rain garden feature designed to improve infiltration and filter out excess sediment and nutrients. The rain gardens include native plantings and a weed mat for low maintenance.
  - He also described a basin north of the boat launch designed to hold high flows and cut surface runoff. It captures tile and other surface runoff. It is constructed with a berm and permeable fill.
  - There is also a large native plant shoreland restoration planting that was installed about 10 years ago by the DNR.
  - Many of these structures were installed by local groups. GBERBA provided an 8,000 grant and many others donated time and equipment to make them happen. The local Sportsmen Club was particularly helpful.
  - St Olaf Lake is known for its high water quality and drains a small watershed
- Paul Davis from MPCA presented on the history of efforts to improve water quality and current methods of monitoring
  - He described how we use real world data to tell a story about a river or lake. MPCA has professional monitors and also needs citizen stream and lake monitors
  - Told the history of the Clean Water Act and how that is driving his monitoring efforts
  - He had a table of equipment, diagrams and data analysis results describing water quality monitoring for the Le Sueur River watershed
  - Explained the type of tests and data he collects for his job, which includes tests for lakes and streams turbidity, flow, chlorophyll, total phosphorus and nitrogen, etc.
  - Explained a hydrograph that compares when peak rain events are and the water table levels. There is a concern that we are getting more and higher peak flows, but because of the land use, the water is being absorbed too quickly by vegetation and not infiltrating
- Bruce Pittman from the MDNR provided an overview of the Northern Pike Rearing Pond
  - He described how we have altered this watershed tremendously and that there used to be many spawning areas with seasonally flooded wetlands. The pike can travel 14 miles to spawn. They need shallow areas with productive zooplankton away from predators. They need vegetation and water in the wetlands for up to 30 days. He described their life cycle where the eggs need vegetation and live 7-14 days before they hatch. They need additional 5-12 days under water after they hatch. Many of the seasonally flooded areas not only have water in them for 10-12 days and the fry would dry out and die.
  - The rearing pond also serves as a good sink for sediment and nutrients.
  - Historically stocking has been a challenge. The control structures were re-established in the past few years. The Waterville hatchery grows the fish and stocks the pond. It is a relatively small population (~500-800)
  - The rearing pond has been effective for the last 20 years and there has been noticeable changes to the fish population diversity.
  - He noted that the rearing pond is good for fish and water quality

- After the stations the nature walk continued to the pier at the St Olaf Lake Park where Al told more stories about the area and what kind of wildlife you can find along the shoreline

### **Large Group Discussions**

- Carl Guse , farmer in Waseca County, and Mark Dittrich, MDA, gave the meeting participants an explanation of Guse’s property and objectives for the upcoming year
  - Carl is waiting to hear back from local staff in Waseca County for an OK to clean-out his sediment basin
  - Thinking about adding some other features on his property in the next year
  - Invited the Le Sueur River Watershed Network Steering Committee out to Guse’s property and discuss potential projects that could be initiated and align with the network’s 7 Recommendations
- Leon Schoenrock, farmer in Waseca County and a steering committee member, gave the Le Sueur River Watershed Network updates on the Bull Run Creek Project
  - There are a few interested citizens that have been talking with Mark Leiferman, Waseca County Planning & Zoning Administrator and grant writer along with GBERBA
  - According to David Bucklin, Waseca County/GBERBA is applying for \$1.5 million from BWSR Clean Water Funds to initiate conservation practices on landowner’s property in Bull Run Creek Watershed.
  - Meeting organizers asked the attendees if this is a future project they are willing to get behind there was group consensus on supporting the Bull Run Creek Project
  - A letter was drafted and signed by the steering committee, then sent to Mark L. to attach with the grant
- Group seemed excited for this type of action and people commented that they want to see more projects like this and are willing to back those projects if it means improving water quality and watershed health
- Gene Scheffert read through the mission statement and 7 recommendations and suggested that we keep meeting and talking and work to get things done in the watershed
- Following the signing, the meeting was closed out
  - Some of the meeting participants enjoyed a moonlight ride on the large war canoe that MPOC brought

### **Potential Next Meetings:**

**September** – Steering Committee invited out to Carl Guse’s property for a field visit to discuss potential projects and learn more Le Sueur River watershed landowner’s stories. Discuss the Network’s options to move forward and seek funding to sustain the group.