

**SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA WATER RESOURCES BOARD
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 9, 2008
SUMMARY**

In attendance

Dodge County:	Dean Schrandt	Wabasha County:	Byron Evers
Fillmore County:	Donna Rasmussen	Winona County:	Pat Bailey
Goodhue County:	Beau Kennedy	BWSR:	Mary Kells
Houston County:			Dave Peterson
Mower County:	Bill Buckley	MPCA:	Norman Senjem
Olmsted County:	Terry Lee, John Harford		Tim Thurnblad
Rice County:	Jennifer Mocol-Johnson	MDA:	Bruce Montgomery
Steele County:	Scott Golberg	SEMWRB:	Bea Hoffman

The final 2008 approved workplan included an item suggested by Commissioners Bryant and Thompson to provide education about water quantity issues in SE MN.

The January 14 JPB meeting will include a presentation by Jeff Green, DNR, discussing water usage, water level monitoring (Ob Well Network), and ethanol plant permitting. His talk will begin with Aquifers 101 as a review for all. Two resolutions will be introduced to the Board: one to support the funding of statewide high resolution digital elevation coverage and one to encourage the state to assess trout streams for nitrates. Commissioner Ohly will introduce the nitrate resolution.

Regional Clean Water Legacy Act – an award was received for maintaining the services of 2 wastewater facilitators to work with small communities with inadequate sewage treatment throughout the Basin. Award is in the amount of \$272,000.

Safe Streams Initiative – Sheila Craig and Dave Legvold (CRWP) and Doug Malchow (U of M Extension) met with Rep. Jean Poppe to discuss stable funding for the wastewater facilitator positions and for feedlot engineering services. They argued that these projects have yielded good results and it is inefficient to provide these services through short-term grant funding.

Suggest programs for MN Waters Conference – the following programs were suggested:

- Weaver Bottoms drawdown – Pool 5 of the Mississippi river (one hour's drive from Rochester)
- Cave tours
- Boat excursion on Lake Pepin – in connection with the Lake Pepin TMDL
- Visit a clam farm (DNR) to see restoration of native clam species
- Visit a livestock operation using rotational grazing
- Aftermath of the August flooding
- Cascade Lake flood retention project (this might be good as it is in the Rochester area)
- Spring Valley till plain – Mystery Cave
- Beaver restoration site (Terry Lee is the contact)

Hazard Mitigation Planning and Updates – Pat Bailey explained that Winona County hired a consultant to do their plan with all cities in the county participating. Pat stressed that it is important to gather input so that there is ownership by those who need to implement the plan such as emergency management and the cities. The plan addresses all possible hazards. The plan also addresses improvements to flood warning systems, retrofitting of structures in the floodplain and elevation of

structures. Once the plan is in place, if there is a presidential declaration of disaster, you can submit projects to the federal government. FEMA will then pay 75% of the eligible costs and the state or county matches that amount. The top mitigation item is acquisition of structures out of the 100 year floodplain.

County Assistance for City of Rushford Unsealed Wells – Donna Rasmussen reported that when Rushford did their Wellhead Protection plan, they identified 40 unsealed sandpoint wells but found over 300 after the flood. Some properties had 5 or 6 unsealed wells. At the time of the flood, Rushford city ordinance still allowed residents to install their own well. Some residents cross-connected their sandpoint wells to the city system. After the flood, the city had high bacteria and was unable to use their municipal wells. Cross contamination with shallow aquifers was suspected. Sandpoint wells also allow contaminants to be drawn down into the aquifer.

Federal flood recovery funds would not cover sealing the wells but Fillmore had some BWSR flood relief funds that could be used for well sealing (they will offer 50% up to \$800 for flood victims). The city wanted the county to say that the sealing funds would be tied to not drilling another well. Since many still want to keep their wells, the cost-share contract was amended to say the city has to inspect properties to see that the well has stayed sealed. On Dec, 27, Fillmore SWCD met with the city of Rushford to ask them to change their ordinance to ban sandpoint wells. In the process of looking for old wells, officials found an old 580' deep unsealed well under the bank boardroom that could be a major source of contamination. They also found an old unsealed railroad well that was 14 feet in diameter.

A discussion about sandpoint wells followed. Many floodplain towns have this problem. Olmsted County does not allow any sandpoint wells but they are a delegated county and so have more control in this matter. Is more public education or more regulation needed around this topic? It was decided to invite someone from the MDH to come to our next staff meeting to address the many questions that were raised about sandpoint wells and the health risks they pose.

MDA Proposal to Incorporate Pesticide Testing into the Volunteer Network – Bruce Montgomery stated the MDA wants to find out what is being consumed in terms of pesticides and would like to piggy-back pesticide testing onto the region's volunteer nitrate monitoring network. MDA would test for atrazine and its break-down products using an immunoassay test kit. MDA is currently working with a lab at the University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point to test the method. This method would be very expensive for homeowners to do on their own. Bruce also mentioned that:

- the lab will provide the bottles, mailers, directions, and well owner consent form
- the samples must be shipped in batches (they need 20-25 samples plus about 5 splits)
- MDA will pay for the analysis for all network wells in up to 3 counties to start and would eventually get to all interested counties
- They would like to test 100-150 wells in each go-around
- They will test 1x/county but the MDH will resample if a certain % of hits is reached
- There is a 14-day holding period for atrazine
- The time the samples are taken is not critical
- 2-3 counties would need to volunteer right away but eventually they will all be included, if interested

Staff response was very positive. All counties except Dodge were interested in participating. Goodhue and expressed interest in being a lead-off county and Mower may also be interested. Several county staff said that volunteers have often expressed interest in having a pesticide test done as well as nitrates. It was also suggested that adding pesticide testing would help to keep volunteers interested. The MDH will be asked if they are interested in piggy-backing with arsenic testing.