

**SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA WATER RESOURCES BOARD  
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
July 2, 2008**

**SUMMARY**

**In attendance**

Dodge County:	Dean Schrandt	Wabasha County:	Troy Dankemeyer
Fillmore County:	Donna Rasmussen	Winona County:	Pat Bailey
Goodhue County:	Beau Kennedy	SEMWRB:	Bea Hoffmann
Houston County:		MPCA:	Norman Senjem
Mower County:	Bill Buckley	Cannon River WP:	Ross Hoffmann
	Justin Hanson		
Olmsted County:	Sheila Harmes		
Rice County:	Jennifer Mocol-Johnson		
Steele County:			

**July 14 Board meeting** – as per the 2008 workplan, a program on riparian buffers is planned. Ross Hoffmann, Shoreland Educator, Cannon River Watershed Partnership, will speak on the importance of agricultural buffers, and the program will include presentations by MDA staff on pesticide application and by MPCA staff on manure application setbacks from streams.

**Straight Pipe Inventory Grant Update** – after expressing initial interest, Goodhue County decided not to go forward with a straight pipe inventory in their highly concentrated shoreland areas; the MPCA will give us a little more time to find an interested county in our region, but if no county expresses interest, the \$74,000 grant will be forfeited to a county in the northern part of the state; Wabasha County, Olmsted, and Houston Counties will be contacted to assess interest. The regional planning and zoning organization may be of assistance.

**Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network**

**Pesticide testing** – the MPCA can find about \$20,000 in funding for us to piggyback an immunoassay screening test for atrazine onto the volunteer nitrate monitoring network, however, we may be required to use a lab with an EPA-certified Quality Assurance Project Plan. The MDA was unable to find such a lab and had to return their pesticide testing grant to the EPA. The MPCA staff are investigating this further for us.

**Recommend strategy for network sustainability** – the staff decided that a newsletter be sent to all network volunteers after the second 2008 sampling as a way to maintain interest in the project and to thank volunteers for their participation. The newsletter will be written by Bea Hoffmann and will include the following topics:

- Health impacts of high nitrates
- QA/QC protocol
- How nitrogen moves through the environment
- How different aquifers behave differently in terms of contaminant transport (consult Jim Lundy)
- Refer to additional information on the website

**Quality Assurance/Quality Control** – our MPCA Project Manager, Tim Thurnblad, asked that we address a number of QA/QC concerns:

### Issue #1

**Bottle integrity** – Hoffmann is running a test, freezing and thawing 2 bottles 40 times – one bottle standing up in the freezer and one bottle laying down, to see how long the bottle seams can stand up to this treatment.

### Issue #2

**5% split samples** – emphasized importance of taking a sample at the same time the homeowner takes their sample, keeping them on ice, then getting them to the Olmsted lab within 48 hours

### Issue #3

**Sample travel time from homeowner freezer to county freezer - does the sample stay at 4 degrees C or below during this interim?** Mark Zabel conducted an experiment where he set out at room temperature a frozen water sample in its Styrofoam box and cardboard sleeve. The sample stayed below 4 degrees C for 19 hours. Our February sample period showed that in many cases it took longer than 19 hours from time of mailing until receipt and refreezing in county offices. In many cases there was no postmark to help determine travel time. Some samples arrived at room temperature. The importance of using the log-in form when samples arrive was stressed.

Staff decision as to how to handle samples with no known travel time, with travel time beyond 19 hours, or samples that arrive at room temperature:

- Ask homeowners to write the mailing date on the box. Provide a space on the label for this.
- Amend homeowner directions to ask homeowners to put the sample in the mailbox in the morning
- As far as liability, the current caveat on the results reporting form sent to well owners covers this problem. Some counties may choose to send an additional letter explaining that the sample was not received in optimum condition and what this may mean for their results.
- Because there are so many samples that fall into this category (and many more will fall into this category during the August sampling), rather than throw out those results and ask volunteers to resample, those results will be flagged in the database.
- The project final report needs to discuss the trade-offs between accuracy and practicality in this project and that there will always be many variables that cannot be controlled when using a volunteer mailing method.

Dean Schrandt reported that he gets as much as 20% variability from one Hach machine to the next. He considers this the biggest problem for accurate results. It is recommended that the same machine be used all the time.

**Ag Shoreland in SE MN and Whitewater LCCMR Shoreland Mapping Project** – Ross Hoffmann stated that his position is to provide education and assistance to the counties in the Basin to increase awareness and compliance with the county shoreland rules. He reported that DNR shoreland rules refer

only to Public Waters. Shoreland is 300' either side of a stream or 1000' from a lake. The law states that you can farm in shoreland but not in the shore impact zone. The shore impact zone is 50' in which there should be no row-cropping and should instead be covered with perennial vegetation. Repeated studies have shown an 87% reduction in sediment transport to the stream with a 50' buffer. Drainage ditches are required to have 16 ½ feet of perennial vegetation from the bank edge. Some counties have increased this requirement.

Ross Hoffmann also stated that Whitewater Watershed Project, through an LCCMR grant, will subcontract with the Cannon River Watershed Partnership to create land cover maps of shoreland for all 10 counties in the SE MN Water Resources Board. The project will begin in August and will help to target problem areas. Ross will need counties to provide air photos and parcel data.

There was much staff discussion about the difficulty of obtaining compliance with county shoreland ordinances. Staff said both the carrot (incentive payments) and the stick (county enforcement) and not enough. There needs to be a value placed on the soil loss as well as the crop loss. Include the value of hay as an offset. Some ask why government should make incentive payments so someone can obey the law. The counties need financial backup for enforcement. We should emphasize how during flood events, buffers can protect the stream banks and the fields. Engage the P&Z staff more in the discussion.

**Whitewater Watershed Project Landowner Survey & Focus Groups** – the Whitewater Watershed Project, through the same LCCMR grant, will subcontract with the SE MN Water Resources Board to conduct a landowner survey and landowner focus groups to identify barriers and opportunities for shoreland buffers.

**Wellhead Protection (WHP) Workshop** - Mark Wettlaufer, Source Water Protection Specialist, MN Rural Water Association, was unable to attend the meeting but asked for comments on the draft agenda. Staff comments were:

- 1) keep an MDH hydrogeologist in the first slot - an MDH person would be best to talk about geology in relation to well construction. It would also be valuable to have Jeff Green, ground water specialist for the DNR, bring another perspective (Jeff has done a lot of dye tracing in the region and is also knowledgeable about water appropriation issues)
- 2) bring in Pete Bolton, City of St. Peter water and wastewater superintendant, to talk about his experiences with real issues in the recharge zone
- 3) try Heintz Center as a venue