

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA WATER RESOURCES BOARD
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
September 3, 2008

SUMMARY

In attendance

Dodge County:	Dean Schrandt	Wabasha County:	
Fillmore County:	Donna Rasmussen	Winona County:	Pat Bailey
Goodhue County:	Beau Kennedy	SEMWRB:	Bea Hoffmann
Houston County:	Rocky Danielson	MPCA:	Justin Watkins
Mower County:	Bill Buckley	MDA:	John Hines
Olmsted County:	Sheila Harmes		Dave Tollefson
	Terry Lee		Kevin Kuehner
Rice County:	Jennifer M-Johnson	MDH:	Jim Lundy
Steele County:			

August 25 JPB Budget meeting report - the Board passed the 2009 budget with dues staying the same as the 2008 rate (\$4000) and with the Executive Director's hours cut from .6 FTE to .5 FTE. The Board also shortened the meeting time a half hour from 9 – 11:30 to allow attendees time to get to afternoon meetings.

Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Grant Extension - the Board approved for signature the amendment to our contract which extends the grant period from 6/30/09 to 9/30/09.

Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Budget balance – after all expenses were projected to grant end, approximately \$27,000 will remain. All counties responded that they can utilize an additional \$2000/county for the grant extension period. As there is no Project Manager staff time remaining in the budget for 2009, the Board approved using the remainder for Project Manager salary and benefits. It was suggested that if there is additional funding remaining that we might purchase a Hach analyzer for the region. It was mentioned that the MDA machine in Rochester and others owned by MDA will continue to be available for county use.

November 10 Joint Powers Board Meeting program – as per the 2008 workplan, organize a program on “Tools for Successful Compliance”. Dean Schrandt will contact their compliance officer to speak specifically on their Dodge County buffer compliance initiative. It was also suggested to contact Brian Green, MPCA, to discuss how counties can use the new “straight pipe rule” to achieve compliance and check to see if Goodhue County has any experience using their ticketing authority. Mower County can also discuss their 2 straight pipe cases.

Recommend to Board a Strategy for Letter to NRCS/FSA re: CRP land coming out and 50' buffer requirement - at the July 14 Board meeting Commissioner Bakke suggested a letter be sent from the Board to the NRCS informing them about the 50' buffer requirements and encouraging them to inform landowners about the requirement when their CRP lands are coming out. The staff suggested the following as part of the strategy:

- Offer a fact sheet of all setback requirements
- Bring FSA/NRCS staff into the DNR shoreland rule revision process (regional meetings)
- Contact Jon Nicolson to seek NRCS cooperation
- Meet with the FSA/NRCS as a group: Sept. 17 is the employee's meeting; Oct. 17 is the Area 7 meeting
- Ask NRCS staff to inform landowners when they come in for a 1026 form
- Send an approved letter from the Board to the NRCS that requests that they inform landowners about the state/county buffer requirements
- Include the Board's resolution on buffers (resolution 2006-4) with the letter

Straight Pipe Inventory Grant Update – a project on Lake Zumbro has taken shape with Wabasha and Olmsted Counties participating. A meeting to hammer out the workplan will take place September 4. Mower will soon begin the records search for their Cedar River inventory. The Roberd's Lake project is underway with on-site inspections. A meeting among all the SE counties conducting inventories will be planned to share strategies and experiences.

Selection of 3 counties for survey and focus groups (Whitewater Watershed Project subcontract) – Mower (ditch country), Winona (river county in Whitewater) and Goodhue (have been pro-active in encouraging buffer compliance) were recommended as the 3 counties for the survey and focus groups.

Understanding your Water Quality Data Workshop – suggested by Bev Nordby, Mower SWCD and Katherine Logan, MPCA, the staff felt that such a workshop would be valuable as a refresher. Other suggestions: include discussion of non-degradation in light of how to look at water quality data. Look at the new water quality data from our nitrate monitoring network. Include training and preparation for TMDL work. MN Waters conducted a similar workshop a couple of years ago - see their program.

Midwest Value-Added Agriculture Conference Bio-fuels impacts on water track – the Board passed a motion to change the 2008 workplan to drop the planning of a seminar on water quality/quantity impacts of ethanol production to planning for a 1-hour track at the Value-added conference looking at water quality/quantity impacts of all bio-fuels. Suggestions for speakers: John Wells, EQB, and Mark Lindquist, MN DNR. It was suggested that the 2009 workplan might instead have a seminar on sustainable water management (aquifer management, water availability, decisions as to water use). See the Roman Kanivitzski (U of M) report on water sustainability .

Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network

Record keeping strategies - Jenny Mocol Johnson explained her system of scanning all paper documents into an electronic folder for each well-owner.

Potential Nitrate Contaminant Survey: missing nitrogen fertilizer choice – most used “land application” check off. If assumed nitrogen fertilizer, make a written note.

Pesticide Sampling - John Hines, Kevin Kuehner, and David Tollefson said that MDA management is still considering whether to fund a pesticide study that would be piggy-backed

on to our volunteer network. MDA is now sampling 12 springs 4x/year in the southeast and plans to add 15 drinking water wells to analyze for a full analytical suite to assess the impacts on shallow aquifers due to routine application of pesticides/BMP. Because that sample would be very small, they are interested in augmenting it with drinking water sampling from our volunteer network. An immuno-assay screening for atrazine, which MDA recommends, would be \$30-\$40/sample with a total cost of about \$20,000. This will disclose detection and a rough idea of the concentration but won't tell exactly which atrazine compound is detected. Well selection will be determined by the question they want answered. Sample condition is not critical so the mail-in process would work with a second sample bottle sent out to volunteers. MDA would need to make sense of the data once the sampling is done so the sample has to be linked back to the geology (aquifer) and pesticide application sources, which is often difficult to do in karst.

Recommend Strategy for Reporting Nitrate Data and Survey Results – Jim Lundy reported that almost all the county well data has been sent in to MDH. 65% of the node data has been received and eventually 73% of the nodes are expected to be filled. Jim showed maps that illustrate the kind of information he can generate from the well information that the Well Network Coordinators have sent him. Terry Lee said that it would be important to look at the data on a regional basis, for instance, to look at the Prairie du Chien data over the whole region, and to look at results in the protected vs. unprotected aquifers. This could be done for each aquifer. Since Olmsted County and other counties plan to be in the study for the long term, it will be important to use graphics that can show the value of the project to the public and to elected officials.

Dean Schrandt mentioned that our information will be targeted to different audiences at different times. Pat Bailey mentioned the value of integrating the new nitrate data with pre-existing (historical) data whenever possible and that one important piece of information we have gained and can act on is the number of people using older wells.

The final report will need to discuss the successes and failures of the process – for instance that hundreds of people were willing to participate as volunteers. This was not previously known.