

Advisory Committee Meeting for the Root River One Watershed, One Plan
October 18, 2021 @ 9:30am – 12:00pm
Fillmore County Office Building, Room 108, 902 Houston St. NW, Preston, MN
Notes

Attendees: Jacob Hernandez, USFWS; Adam Beilke, BWSR; Shaina Keseley, BWSR; Jeff Weiss, DNR; Jennifer Ronnenberg, MDH; Emily Zanon, MPCA; Adam King, Dodge SWCD; Dean Thomas, Fillmore SWCD; Eunice Biel, Fillmore SWCD; Laura Christensen, Fillmore SWCD; Nikki Wheeler, Fillmore SWCD; Jensen Bigelow, Mower SWCD; Justin Hanson, Mower SWCD; Caitlin Brady, Olmsted SWCD; Skip Langer, Olmsted SWCD; Dan Wermager, Root River SWCD; Wanda Anderson, Winona County SWCD; MN Beef; Donna Rassmussen, Friends of the Root River; Kevin Stark, St. Mary's University; David Ruff, The Nature Conservancy; Paul Krolak, Hiawatha Trout Unlimited; Jeff Hastings, Trout Unlimited

- 1.) Welcome & Introductions:
 - a. Meeting start at 09:37 a.m.

- 2.) Recap of the Root River One Watershed, One Plan Effort:
 - a. The What & The Why:
 - i. Slideshow by Laura Christensen, District Administrator, Fillmore SWCD
 - b. The Purpose of the Advisory Committee:
 - i. The Advisory Committee is made up of SWCD and WD staff, state agency staff, and other stakeholders.
 - ii. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to make recommendations to the Policy Committee, vetting ideas and providing feedback on the plan.

- 3.) Watershed Based Implementation Funding Update:
 - a. Discussion:
 - i. Potential capital improvement projects – Freeburg & roadways
 - b. Projects:
 - i. Crooked Creek Project update – Dan Wermager, Root River SWCD
 1. The structure is not meant to hold water year-round, only meant to manage water during large flooding events (slow the flow, not store consistently). The structure has an emergency spillway. Overall project cost was \$640,000, with RR 1W1P funds contributing \$380,000, and Crooked Creek Watershed District contributing \$260,000.
 - c. Outreach Efforts – Justin Hanson & Jensen Bigelow @ Mower SWCD:
 - i. Jensen has been working on learning the video editing software that Mower SWCD uses. She has also been working on the Root River Watershed Facebook page, and assisted Root River SWCD with their 6th grade conservation day. Email Jensen and CC Justin and Tim on anything that we need help with or would like promoted.
 - ii. Question to AC: Should we run sponsored Facebook promotional posts?
 1. AC gave go-ahead to trial sponsored Facebook posts.
 - d. GIS Update – Kevin Stark, St. Mary's University:
 - i. Hydroconditioning project is complete, the final product was delivered. Interactive online web map is available, in future could also be used with Avenza Maps.

4.) Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Update – Emily Zanon:

a. WRAPS:

- i. TMDLs were assessed and reassessed for WRAPS cycle 2, looking for LGU input on formatting and deliverables.
- ii. Scoping meeting: November 3rd to discuss what we as LGU want in the WRAPS update deliverables. Focus locations, scale, environmental justice, content, graphics, YouTube video, story map, etc.

5.) Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Update – Jeff Weiss:

a. Evaluation of Hydrologic Change:

- i. A minimum of 30 years of data are required to run the analysis, only site in the Root River that met that requirement was the outlet at Houston, MN. During analysis there was a ‘break point’ in the data in 1991, where it went from a continuous wet/dry cycle, to an increased LACK of dry conditions. The Annual Palmer Hydrologic Drought Index was used. Working on creating a poster and summary document to display the information to the public. Since 991, baseflow is up 73%, but runoff is only up by 35% - potentially related to the karst topography acting like a sponge? Average annual peak flows are up by 62%, but flooding has not increased, however there is a potential for data bias as the gauge is at Houston (thinking of scale, localized flooding, etc). Also since 1991, low flows occur 65% less often, the river tends to rise 40% faster on average, baseflow in August has more than doubled, and channel forming flows have slightly increased.

6.) Root River One Watershed, One Plan Advisory Committee Input:

a. Outreach Strategies:

- i. Facebook outreach ads
- ii. Conservation Planning (Dan Wermager)
- iii. Mower & Friends of the Root River work together on outreach, strategy, events, visibility.

b. Priorities & Priority Areas:

- i. More outreach in Crooked Creek watershed? – Dan will contact landowners in the fall, once crops are off.
- ii. Vulnerable waters in the watershed, Middle Branch, etc – bugs and fish are signaling vulnerability.

7.) Adjourn