



Memorandum

To: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission
From: Technical Advisory Committee
Subject: June 5, 2014 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Date: June 10, 2014

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on June 5, 2014. The following TAC members, city representatives, BCWMC commissioners, and BCWMC staff attended the meeting:

City	TAC Members/Alternates	Other City Representatives
Crystal	Tom Mathisen	
Golden Valley	Jeff Oliver, Joe Fox	
Medicine Lake	Absent	
Minneapolis	Lois Eberhart	
Minnetonka	Liz Stout	
New Hope	Bob Paschke	
Plymouth	Derek Asche	
Robbinsdale	Richard McCoy	
St. Louis Park	Erick Francis	
BCWMC Staff & Others	Karen Chandler (Barr Engineering), Laura Jester (Administrator), Rachael Crabb (Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB))	

Fox opened the meeting at 1:32 p.m. There were no communications by members to report.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) forwards the following recommendations and information to the Commission for its consideration. This memorandum presents the TAC's recommendations and information relating to 1) proposed buffer standards for inclusion in the Next Generation Watershed Management Plan; 2) CIP process improvements; and 3) use of Channel Maintenance Funds by city of Golden Valley.

1. Discussion of Proposed Buffer Standards for Inclusion in the Next Generation Watershed Management Plan

Engineer Chandler provided an overview of the issue and reviewed previous discussions on the topic by the Plan Steering Committee. She reviewed a table showing current buffer standards in the BCWMC cities and adjacent organizations. Ms. Eberhart noted that buffers do not address runoff that is piped directly into the wetland, lake or stream through a storm sewer system, only overland surface flow to waterbodies. She also noted most of the land in the BCWMC in Minneapolis is on Minneapolis Park and Rec Board (MPRB) property, and MPRB does a good job of maintaining buffers wherever possible. Engineer Chandler noted the buffer requirements would only apply during development and significant redevelopment. There was discussion about the need for some exemptions to buffer requirements including recreational trails and other features. There was also discussion about the width of buffers needed to actually improve water quality and the other benefits of buffers including habitat and bank stabilization.

The group generally agreed that buffers on wetlands could be valuable but that buffers along creeks may be more challenging due to small lot sizes and buffers taking up too much of the lot, especially in residential areas. This could restrict the use of private land. Mr. Oliver noted that Golden Valley works to get at least 10-ft buffers on lakes and streams and that although the individual water quality benefit isn't high, every little bit helps.

Additional comments on buffers included the fact that Plymouth has a buffer policy for wetlands but it doesn't apply to lakes or streams. Mr. Asche indicated he supports the idea of stream buffers and reported that Plymouth homeowners completed 36 shoreline restorations through a previous grant program. Ms. Stout reported that Minnetonka attempted to require buffers on lakes but due to public outcry decided not to move forward with the requirements. TAC members indicated overall support for buffers if some flexibility was incorporated. TAC members noted buffer maintenance may be an issue for individual homeowners.

There was discussion about using buffers as a water quality treatment option in the MIDS process and about using the same triggers as in MIDS for buffer requirements. There was also discussion about the DNR's draft buffer rule in cities and how buffers are difficult to enforce. The group also considered an idea to simply encourage buffers and perhaps provide technical and financial assistance to homeowners or developers who install them. [Mr. Mathisen and Mr. Paschke depart the meeting.]

Ultimately, the group agreed to 1) recommend the wetland buffers proposed in the Commission Engineer's February 4, 2014 memo; 2) recommend a 10-foot minimum buffer on streams, along with a certain limit similar to the Minnehaha Creek WD language on buffer limitations for a certain percentage of distance between structures and the creek; and 3) recommend encouraging (rather than enforcing) lake buffers at this time. The group also agreed the Commission should include exemptions for public recreational uses and should include a policy requiring cities to adopt DNR shoreland rules when they are finalized. The group discussed but did not develop a recommendation for the definition of a wetland buffer – i.e., what types of vegetation would be required or allowed in the buffer. The group did not discuss what type of activities would be allowed in a buffer area.

Recommendations

The TAC recommends to the Plan Steering Committee the following buffer policies for the Next Generation Watershed Management Plan

1. Buffer widths for wetlands:
 - o An average of 75 feet and minimum of 50 feet from the edge of wetlands classified as Preserve
 - o An average of 50 feet and minimum of 30 feet from the edge of wetlands classified as Manage 1
 - o An average of 25 feet and minimum of 15 feet from the edge of wetlands classified as Manage 2 or Manage 3
 - o An exemption for public recreational amenities such as access for a width of up to 20 feet, or trails
2. Buffer widths for streams/creeks:
 - o A minimum of 10 feet from the ordinary high water level of priority streams or 25% of the distance between the ordinary high water level and an existing structure (such as a residence), whichever is less.
 - o An exemption for public recreational amenities, such as access to a waterbody (width of up to 20 feet), or trails.
3. Buffers for priority lakes:
 - o The BCWMC will encourage the use of buffers and may develop a grants program to further promote their installation.
4. Cities within the BCWMC shall adopt State buffer and/or shoreland management requirements for public waters in incorporated areas if and when they are finalized.

5. Buffer requirements would be triggered by the same thresholds as the MIDS water quality standards for new and redevelopment.

2. CIP Process Improvement – Reporting Progress and Outcomes to the Commission

Administrator Jester noted several areas where she believed the CIP process should be improved in order to provide more opportunities for Commission involvement in choosing potential CIP projects and tracking the progress of the CIP projects. Her list included: 1) asking Commissioners for assistance with identifying potential CIP projects needed in their cities and throughout the watershed; 2) requesting that Commissioners attend public meetings or open houses on CIP projects in their cities to hear citizen concerns directly; 3) encouraging Commissioners to visit CIP sites in their cities before, during and after project implementation; 4) providing monthly updates on all ongoing CIP projects in the Administrator's Report; 5) updating CIP webpages online with latest developments; 6) having city staff provide brief updates on projects during construction; and 7) having city staff provide a brief written report with photos, successes, lessons learned, etc. after project completion. She noted that additional improvements had been made to the CIP process last year and earlier this year to provide for 1) the Commission Engineer to review and comment on CIP project feasibility studies; and 2) Commission Engineer involvement during the design phase including discussions with city consultants.

The group discussed the fact that additional Commission involvement in CIP projects means less funding is available for actual project construction. The group agreed that lengthy reporting requirements would be onerous on already-busy city staff. Administrator Jester noted that most of the tasks listed above were for her and Commissioners to perform. The group agreed it would be too costly for the Commission Engineer to provide a final report on CIP projects as they would have to be involved with construction oversight and would have to review as-built records and perform in-field inspections, etc. The group agreed it would be more appropriate for city staff or their consultants to provide reports to the Commission at key points in the CIP process, during construction (and/or reimbursement requests), and upon projection completion.

Recommendations

- The TAC recommends to the Commission that city staff and/or their consultants provide periodic updates to the Commission at key points in CIP project implementation, such as construction start dates, construction progress, etc., including when reimbursements from the Commission are requested.
- The TAC recommends to the Commission that city staff and/or their consultants provide a brief written final report after CIP project completion that includes project description and benefits, project successes, total costs (including in-direct costs), photos, dates of milestones, and lessons learned.

3. Request from Golden Valley for Use of Channel Maintenance Funds

Mr. Fox distributed photos of and described a private residence in Golden Valley with severely eroding streambanks on the Main Stem of Bassett Creek (outside the areas of the current or past restoration projects). He noted a next-door neighbor with similar conditions. The City of Golden Valley is requesting the use of the Commission's Channel Maintenance Funds to help fund stabilization projects in these areas. Engineer Chandler noted that certain cities have access to Channel Maintenance Funds for these types of projects and that Golden Valley's current allocation of those funds is approximately \$130,000.

Recommendations

- The TAC recommends to the Commission that Golden Valley move forward with stabilization projects in these areas with the use of up to \$90,000 of BCWMC Channel Maintenance Funds.

The TAC meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Future TAC Meeting agenda items:

1. Developing guidelines for annualized costs per pound pollutant removal for future CIP projects
2. Stream identification signs at road crossings
3. Blue Star Award for cities
4. Look into implementing “phosphorus-budgeting” in the watershed – allow “x” pounds of TP/acre.
5. Discuss issues/topics arising from Next Generation Plan process.