



## Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

### MEMO

To: BCWMC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners  
From: Laura Jester, Administrator  
Date: January 22, 2024

#### **RE: Notes from January 18, 2024 Commission Plan Development Workshop**

Chair Cesnik provided an introduction to the workshop, noting the importance of commissioner involvement in the plan development process. She noted the work of the Plan Steering Committee over the last several months and noted that the draft goals are based on sound science – often by analysis of the Commission’s data. She indicated that commissioners should review and discuss the draft issue statements and goals and indicate where substantive changes are recommended. She noted this is not a brainstorming nor wordsmithing exercise and that goals should be “SMART” goals – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time based. She noted that Commission staff use the 10-year plan regularly – that it does not just sit on a shelf.

Commissioner Welch underscored that this is a Commission plan – the goals and content of which should be developed by the commissioners and alternates. He noted it’s appropriate to get technical input from TAC members but reiterated that it is a watershed plan, not a city plan.

Commissioners, alternates, TAC members, and Commission staff broke into four small groups to review and discuss issues and goals for about 45 minutes. The notes below reflect discussions in each small group.

**Comments with an “\*” and bold font indicate a proposed revision to the draft issue statements and goals or an item for inclusion in future plan drafts.**

#### **Group A:**

Chair Cesnik (CC)  
Commissioner Anderson (DA)  
Alternate Commissioner Johnston (DJ)  
Administrator Jester  
Commission Engineer Chandler  
Brian Vlach - Three Rivers Park District (BV)

DJ - Question about whether State water quality standards could change. Answer: yes, rarely.

**\*Plan could reference current, “or revised” state water quality standards.**

Discussion of importance of protecting waters with good water quality. Goals, as written, do address this. No change needed.

**\*Add goal (or add to an existing goal) related to addressing fish bioassessment impairments in lakes.**

(The 2024 draft impaired waters list includes a new impairment recommended for Medicine Lake for fish bioassessments. Need to determine which BCWMC lakes would possibly qualify for this impairment; may only be lakes of certain size.) BV noted that more frequent fish monitoring might be needed in the future through TRPD and/or BCWMC rather than relying only on DNR assessments.

**CC - \*Standardize language in goals re: “meets/exceeds/maintain/improve” relative to water quality standards**

Goal #1 (Medicine Lake delisting) = Group agreed this is a good goal and also presents an opportunity for outreach and education.

Goal #2 (Significant improvements in Northwood and Lost Lakes) = Group agreed this is a good goal.

**\*Revisit priority level of BCWMC lakes and how that relates to language in goals.** BV - As written, it’s unclear if “priority” in the goals means both priority 1 and priority 2 lakes equally.

Goal #3 (Protect lakes currently meeting standards) = Good goal (with above comment noted)

Goal #4 (Reduce bacteria sources) = Goal is appropriate. BV - Difficult to achieve and should be lower priority than addressing nutrient impairments.

Goal #5 (Improve/maintain water quality related to eutrophication in streams) = Goal is good. BV - Question on whether streams tributary to priority streams are also a priority. Discussed how projects that have a clear connection to improving water quality in priority streams would be a high priority similar to a project directly on the stream. (Sochacki Park project as example - ponds in the park are not priority waters but project directly impacts Bassett Creek.)

**\*Revisit CIP “gatekeeper criteria” as part of plan development.**

When asked what goals they were excited to implement:

- DA - Excited that new fiscal policy regarding use of investment income will help target implementation.
- BV - Excited to delist Medicine Lake.
- CC – Education and outreach activities are most exciting; provide the most opportunities.
- DJ - Education and outreach activities are also most exciting. Excited to help improve overall community sustainability practices.

**Group B:**

Commissioner Sicora (WS)  
Nick Macklem - New Hope TAC  
Jenna Wolf – Robbinsdale TAC (JW)  
Felicia Merkson – MPLS TAC  
Liz Stout – MPLS TAC (LS)  
Commission Engineer Johnson  
Commission Engineer Williams

Goal #5: (Improve/maintain water quality related to eutrophication in streams) - No concerns

Goal #6 (Maintain total phosphorus loading to the Mississippi River of 0.35 lb/acre/year or less as defined in the Lake Pepin TMDL)

WS - Cities would need to comply via MS4 permit. If Lake Pepin goal is assigned to cities, should that relationship be noted in the goal language? **\* It should be clarified somewhere – is there coordination needed between the cities and the WMC for MS4 reporting.** Is more explicit info needed from cities to meet their TMDL/MS4 requirements?

LS - “Maintain” implies we are meeting it, check on that with WOMP data. “Maintain” language is good; easier and cheaper to maintain than to improve.

Goal #7 (Maintain or improve macroinvertebrate indices of biological integrity (MIBI) in priority streams)

LS - Good to have the goal rooted in reality.

WS – Is there a regulatory driver? (SGW – no consequence to not meeting the State MIBI standard). Would be nice to reference the connected items. Issue statement is the driver. Should the regulatory driver be noted (more teeth)?

WS – Need to make sure we are maintaining a level of data necessary to assess progress and apply for grants.

LS – Speaks to the need to maintain the monitoring program and make sure it is adequately funded.

Goal #8 (Maintain or improve lake floristic quality indices (FQIs) and number of species towards achieving State standards for aquatic vegetation in Cavanaugh Pond, Crane Lake, Lost Lake, Medicine Lake, Northwood Lake, Parkers Lake, Sweeney Lake, Twin Lake, Westwood Lake, and Wirth Lake)

WS - Think about priority lakes versus non-priority lakes

LS – How is the decision making happening?

**\* Identification of priority waterbodies becomes very significant – needs to be well documented in the plan and defensible.**

LS – Priority waterbodies have “more intrinsic value” beyond being just part of a system

WS – Sochacki Park is an example. Just because something is not a priority waterbody doesn’t mean we don’t have a reason to address it (example of ponds that provide excess nutrients).

### Chloride Goal Discussion:

WS – Suggestive element of “overuse” there is a legacy element and debate about how much is enough. It is a fact that it is in the system and used, needs to be acknowledged regardless of how much is excessive.

**\*Eliminate term “overuse” in the goal as you don’t lose the impact and reduces inflammatory language that could lead to finger pointing.**

LS – Targeted approach is appropriate for active management efforts/impairments. Broad approach (setting expectations is a watershed wide approach). City has had more luck with neighborhood residents approaching businesses directly.

JW – Robbinsdale has a code applicable to salting? Can fine business for “excessive hazardous materials”

WS – Cities and watershed need to have a policy and approach to manage reporting of oversalting (if pursued as a strategy).

### General notes:

Appreciate the conciseness of issue statement, no objection. Even without technical expertise, language references the applicable statutes.

Desired future condition is good. Delisting is embedded in DFC.

**\*LS – What about non-priority waterbodies? Plan should speak to what is being done for non-priority waterbodies. What services are being offered for those (what do they get out of this plan?)**

WS – The above is exemplified by Sochacki park – wetlands are not listed as priority waterbody.

WS – Are we going to prioritize work between different impaired waters?

What are you excited about?

What gives you pause?

LS – Gray area on interpretation/reporting/how cities and watersheds look at it? May still be worthwhile, but curious about interpretation.

WS – WMC may need to look at interpretation and reporting to see if our standards/processes are appropriate or need to be adjusted.

JW – First day on job got call from contractor; Lower Twin Lake (outside BCWMC) resident wanted to have treatment of curlyleaf pondweed. Education and outreach would be an important part of any lake vegetation goals. Folks want to get rid of native plants without knowing the harm in that action.

WS – Education and outreach is complicated and dynamic; getting measurable results from those efforts is hard. Is \$46K still appropriate for an E&O program? What is the best value for the watershed? Once programs/connections are started, you don’t want to drop that.

**Group C:**

Commissioner Welch  
Commissioner Polzin  
Alternate Commissioner Hauer  
Ben Scharenbroich – Plymouth TAC  
Erick Francis – St. Louis Park TAC

**Chloride:**

Questions on whether a 10% reduction is possible.  
Questions on why the 10% reduction goal is only for Bassett Creek.

**Streambank and Gully Erosion:**

Happy that this issue is coming forward.  
Should there be a goal within the goal? Consider a measurable goal of 80%.

**Lakeshore Erosion:**

Question on whether the Commission should do the assessment.

**Wetland Health and Restoration:**

Discussion about how the goal doesn't seem measurable. Others thought it was an appropriate goal.

**Impaired Waters:**

**\*Comment to organize the goals better within the issue so that like goals are grouped together.**

Goal #1: (Medicine Lake delisting) Wondered if this goal is too high. Discussion on potentially lowering the target.

Goal #2: (Significant improvements in Northwood and Lost Lakes) What does statistically significant mean? Should the goal be numeric?

Goal #3: (Protect lakes currently meeting standards) Good goal.

Goal #4: (Reduce bacteria sources) Need a better understanding of sources. May need more measurable goal.

Goal #5: (Improve/maintain water quality related to eutrophication in streams) Good goal. Question on current data.

Goal #6: (Maintain total phosphorus loading to the Mississippi River of 0.35 lb/acre/year or less as defined in the Lake Pepin TMDL) Good goal. Question on current data.

**Group D:**

Commissioner Carlson  
Commissioner Gwin-Lenth  
Alternate Commissioner Gould  
Eric Eckman – Golden Valley TAC

Streambank and Gully Erosion:

**Comment that this issue should be prioritized as “high” rather than medium priority.**

Question about how successful past restoration efforts have been. Is the disruption more harmful than the remedy?

Question about how to reduce erosion to streambanks in the first place. Education, prevention, mitigation

Question about what is considered “naturally stable” given climate impacts.

Agreed that goal is achievable.

Lakeshore Erosion:

**Comment that this issue should be prioritized as “high” rather than medium priority.**

Discussed possible no wake zones.

Agreed that this is a good goal.

Wetland Health and Restoration:

Comment that cities should prioritize this issue.

Question about who determines what a “priority wetland” is – DNR? BCWMC?

Discussed Golden Valley wetland regulations.

General Comment:

Education is needed across all goals.

Buffers are needed across all waterbodies.

**Whole Commission Report Out and Discussion**

Each small group reported the key parts of their discussions that are included with comments above.

There was some whole group discussion about the streambank and lakeshore erosion issues being categorized as “medium” rather than “high.” It was noted that these issues are directly intertwined with the water quality goals and the implementation plan should reflect that. It was also noted that it’s difficult to look out 10 years; the Commission should be responsive to issues as they arise as well.

There was a general consensus among commissioners (and articulated in all small groups) that education and outreach are critical activities across all issues. Alternate Commissioner Hauer advocated for raising the priority level of education issues from low and medium to high. Administrator Jester noted that while education is an important tool, it is difficult to directly measure its impact on water resources.

Chair Cesnik asked how commissioners would like to receive the PSC’s response to the workshop comments. Commissioners would like to review any changes as tracked – likely at the next Commission meeting. There was a comment that strategies/actions should be listed in order of priority.

Commissioners thanked the PSC members for their work and commented that overall the draft issue statements and goals are well written and appropriate – that only finetuning is needed at this point.