



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

Meeting Notes of the
Watershed Plan Steering Committee
May 24, 2023 @ 11:00 a.m.

Wirth Lake Room, Brookview Golden Valley

Meeting Attendees:

Commissioners Cesnik and Welch; Alternate Commissioners Polzin and Kennedy; TAC Member Ray; Administrator Jester, Commission Engineers Chandler and Williams

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Because some members had not met Engineer Williams, introductions were made around the table.

2. APPOINT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Alternate Commissioner Kennedy was appointed as committee chair person. There was a suggestion that the chair position could rotate to different members.

3. OVERVIEW OF PLAN DOCUMENT, PLANNING PROCESS, AND COMMITTEE ROLE

Committee Role and Ground Rules

Administrator Jester gave an overview of the committee's role – serving in an advisory capacity to the Commission; developing recommendations on issues, goals, policies, and implementation programs for the Commission's consideration. She noted that over the next 18 months this committee would be doing the heavy lifting, reviewing many details, and discussing significant policy issues.

Administrator Jester reviewed expectations of staff during the process including:

- Prepare meeting agendas, materials, and notes (materials to be posted online about one week in advance and no paper copies mailed)
- Provide the data and information to help committee make informed decisions
- Start and end meeting on time
- Bring snacks and drinks
- Respect all input and be open minded

The committee agreed to meeting ground rules including:

- Come prepared; review materials before meeting
- Respect all input and be open minded; realize not all voices are represented
- Step up/step back; make sure you're heard and make space for others to be heard
- Commit to active participation
- Route communications through Administrator
- Work with a spirit of brainstorming; keeping everything on table at beginning of process

The committee agreed that the group would strive for decisions by consensus and that if votes were needed a decision would be based on a simple majority of all members present at the meeting.

Administrator Jester reviewed the plan schedule with a basic graphic.

Plan Requirements and Structure

Engineer Chandler reviewed the basic contents required in the plan and noted that MN Rule 8410 was updated in

2015, the same year that BCWMC's last plan was adopted. She noted that BCWMC's 2015 Plan was written with an attempt to meet the spirit of the new 8410 Rules but not all aspects of the new rules were incorporated into that plan.

TAC Member Ray asked if the Land and Water Resources Inventory (a significant section in the watershed plan) could be streamlined as the same content is required in local plans. It was noted that local plans can reference watershed plans.

Engineer Chandler indicated that as goals and policies are being considered, staff plans to bring potential implementation (projects and programs) ideas that could be considered along with the goals and policies. She noted that during development of the 2015 plan, the implementation section seemed to be rushed because it was drafted at the end of the process. She hoped to avoid that scenario this time. She noted the plan's development should be an iterative process. She noted an internal review of the entire document would be expected during the last quarter of 2024. Committee Chair Kennedy suggested that internal reviews of the different plan sections be completed as they are developed, rather than reviewing the entire document at the end of the process.

It was noted that the structure of the plan should be developed soon. Administrator Jester asked committee members to review plans from different watersheds to see if there is a structure they like. It was noted that a draft table of contents should be reviewed at the next meeting. Alternate Commissioner Polzin asked that the plan be structured so that it's easier for cities to determine their responsibilities.

It was noted that very few printed copies of the final plan would be available and that most people would read an electronic version of the plan. There was consensus that the plan should have a landscape orientation most likely with two columns of text that can more easily include graphics and photos. It was noted that draft versions of the plan should include the version date in the header and "draft" as a watermark.

4. REVIEW INPUT RECEIVED

Administrator Jester reviewed input received from review agencies, member cities, the public open house, and the online survey. She noted much of the information was presented at the July 2022 Commission Workshop.

General input from member cities:

- BCWMC should continue core programs such as water monitoring, modeling, Flood Control Project inspections, and CIP program
- BCWMC could expand education programming including outreach to diverse communities
- BCWMC should consider starting a cost share or grant program for installation of best management practices by residents, businesses, and cities
- Provide assistance with routine maintenance of Flood Control Project
- Provide more focus on floodplain management
- Consider refining implementation of Capital Improvement Program (too time consuming and expensive)

Public online survey:

- 165 Respondents
- 80% say natural resources (lakes, streams, wetlands) are very important to their quality of life
- Biggest concerns
 - Pollutants entering waterbodies
 - Health of aquatic habitats; abundance & diversity of wildlife
 - Aquatic invasive species (AIS)
 - Impacts of climate change

Suggestions from public:

- Less trash in lakes and along streams
- Lower chloride levels (less salt!)
- More logs for turtles
- Less streambank and shoreline erosion
- More education of residents & new homeowners
- Better access to the creek for paddlers and enjoying nature
- Incentives for native plantings and other best practices

5. 5-Minute Break

6. REVIEW CURRENT CONDITIONS

- A. Conditions of water resources
- B. Progress on 2015 Plan (review 2021 performance assessment report)
- C. Capital Projects Completed
- D. Gaps Analysis (review gaps analysis)

Conditions of Water Resources

Engineer Williams reviewed the geospatial information that is used to determine watershed conditions and which is typically included in the Plan's Land and Water Resources Inventory. He noted that once the Commission identifies the priority issue, it should determine where the issue is a priority. He noted that priority locations or priority resources should be identified in the Plan.

Engineer Williams showed maps with the following information:

Land Use	Impaired Waters and Impervious Land Use
Topography	Water Quality Modeling Results
Hydrologic Soil Groups	Potential Pollutant Sources
Wellhead Protection Areas	Hydrologic/Hydraulic Modeling
Major Subwatersheds	Floodplain (100-year)
Priority Waterbodies (streams to be added to map)	Trunk System and Flood Control Project
Wetlands and Biological Survey	Parks, Recreation, and Public Access
Monitoring Locations	

Commissioner Welch noted that one emerging issue is the conflict between State agencies on how to handle stormwater infiltration in relation to groundwater concerns. He noted that infiltration is prohibited in some cases. He noted that the Commission should determine if MDH's requirements reflect sound science.

There was some discussion about the need to confirm the Commission's current list of priority waterbodies. The group was reminded about the detailed process that was used during the 2105 Plan to analyze and assign priority levels to waterbodies across the watershed. Commissioner Cesnik wondered why French Regional Park wasn't included on the MN Biological Survey map. Commissioner Welch noted that the Commission should understand and map flood prone areas in order to help build climate resiliency.

It was noted that maps should include the source and date of the data and that aquatic invasive species should be added to the maps. Other comments/ideas for maps included presenting data from the P8 model and including a standalone list of Flood Control Project features.

Progress on 2015 Plan (review 2021 performance assessment report)

Administrator Jester presented the high level results of the performance assessment by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in 2021 which looked at progress on implementation of the BCWMC 2015 Watershed Plan. She noted three important recommendations from BWSR:

Recommendation 1 –Prioritize developing an education and outreach strategy for BCWMC constituents
Survey respondents that indicated there were potential roadblocks to implementing education and outreach activities –specifically staff capacity and funding.

Recommendation 2 –Conduct a review of the CIP
Review the CIP program to identify specific barriers limiting implementation of some large projects, and develop a strategy for addressing those issues

Recommendation 3 –Develop clear, measurable goals and actions for future plan implementation
Highly recommended that the next watershed plan define a strategy to identify the top resource priorities, identify clear measurable goals and actions, and develop metrics to measure progress

Commissioner Welch noted that the 2021 Performance Assessment should guide development of the plan, specifically with regard to focusing BCMWC's efforts on critical resource-improvement and flood-risk-mitigation priorities. He suggested that the committee may wish to have Minnehaha Creek Watershed District staff again present MCWD's structure for focusing and being responsive to emerging needs and opportunities. He indicated that the Commission should have a robust and meaningful assessment of water resources issues such as pollutant loading and flooding and determine the best ways to address those issues. He said the 2025 watershed plan should be “a plan rather than a list of ideas.”

Alternate Commissioner Polzin noted that the plan should be built on good data with a description of the higher-level decision-making process and details on identified issues. It was also noted that removing unimpactful activities would also be helpful to focus Commission work to priority issues and areas.

Next Steps/Meetings:

Administrator Jester asked committee members to review plans from other watersheds for good/effective plan formats. There was consensus that the next committee meeting would focus on identifying and defining watershed issues. It was noted that a presentation from MCWD could follow at the subsequent meeting. (The committee should first identify the issues before determining the best mechanism to solve them.)

The next meeting would be scheduled for July (through a scheduling poll) since Committee Chair Kennedy is gone during the month of June.

7. ADJOURN – The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:15