



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

MEMO

To: BCWMC Plan Steering Committee
From: Laura Jester, Administrator
Date: August 26, 2024

RE: Notes from August 15, 2024 Commission Plan Development Workshop

Plan Steering Committee Chair Kennedy provided an introduction to the workshop, noting the importance of commissioner involvement in the plan development process. He reviewed the plan development process and reminded commissioners about the issues and goals reviewed at the January workshop. He noted that education is a tool that can be used to help reach nearly every goal, and that goals for the Education and Outreach issue category will be discussed at a future workshop. He also noted that some of the goals to be discussed at this workshop may seem ambitious for the BCWMC with its current funding and staffing capacity. He noted that a future workshop will review goals in the Organizational Effectiveness category which will include a comprehensive evaluation of options for organizational structures and funding mechanisms. He then reviewed the questions to be considered in small groups.

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.

Highlighted comments indicate a proposed revision to the draft issue statement, goal, or implementation activity.

Group A:

Commissioner Hauer (JH), facilitator
Administrator Jester (LJ), recorder
Brian Vlach - Three Rivers Park District (BV)
Commissioner Sicora (WS)
Alternate Commissioner Vadali (MK)

Aquatic Invasive Species

BV – Desired future condition is likely not realistic

Groundwater-Surface Water Interactions

Issue statement: Suggestion to change “uncertainty” to “complexity”.

Goal 1:

WS wondered if we could identify interactions during subwatershed analyses (added as potential implementation activity).

MK/BV – Suggested changing “understand” to “identify areas” of groundwater-surface water interactions.

Degradation of Riparian Areas

Discussion that issue statement, as written, seems to point to streambank and gully erosion rather than degraded vegetation and habitat – consider rewording.

BV – Wondered if the protection of culturally significant areas would be included anywhere in goals.

Groundwater Quality

WS – Indicted the goals are broad and wondered about Commission’s authority.

Impact of climate change on hydrology...

WS – Stressed the importance of modeling and projecting future conditions. Suggested flagging areas of higher risk where additional flood storage is needed (added to implementation activities).

Goals 5 and 6:

These are very broad statements. WS asked what targeted functions are being sought.

Group B:

Alternate Commissioner Polzin (JP), facilitator

Commission Engineer Johnson (SJ), recorder

Commissioner Gwin-Lenth (JGL)

Alternate Commissioner Johnston (DJ)

Plymouth TAC Ben Scharenbroich (BS)

Robbinsdale TAC Jenna Wolf (JW)

Degradation of Riparian Area

JGL: Noted that buffers are important part but difficult issue because we can’t go onto private property and require activities. Would advocate that buffers should be a higher priority than “low priority”.

DJ: Seems like goals would be difficult to measure. Do we know where we are now? Would be difficult to measure progress.

Importance of education and helping people to understand what’s “good” and what’s “desirable”. Lots of people might look at a scrubby / reed canary grass area and think that it looks “good” because it’s “natural.” Those with more knowledge of native plants might desire different types of plants or know what’s better / healthier.

JW: Yes, or someone might want something more aesthetically pleasing such as wildflowers.

DJ: Important that we set a standard for Commission projects; set a quantitative measure.

Degradation of Upland Areas

JW: This is even more difficult to measure.

BS: Commission's role is to focus and support other agencies in this work.

Agree with low priority rating. See this as an 'opportunistic' one. Support others as opportunities become available. Parks Departments, etc.

BS: This is a 'support' goal, not a 'do' goal.

Groundwater Quality

JGL: Groundwater quality doesn't seem like this has historically been a big focus area of the Commission. Commission's focus on been more on surface water and water quality.

Groundwater quality is being largely protected already by others and by work that the cities are doing (restricting infiltration in DWSAs, etc.).

JW: Some cities noting that they're already seeing impacts of chlorides on their drinking water. Pulling drinking water from shallow aquifers. Do we need to think about this?

BS: Most of the cities in Bassett that don't get their drinking water from the Mississippi River (through MPLS) are pulling from deeper aquifers, not the shallow aquifers.

DJ: Sees as a super high priority, in general. But thinks that it's a lower priority for the Commission because of what others are already doing.

JP/SJ: Acknowledge inter-relationship of this goal with the chloride topic / goals. This issue statement is more about the intentional infiltration of stormwater and protecting groundwater sources. Concern brought up here is about chloride as a pollutant. **Look at chloride goal and ensure that we're not missing something.**

Flooding and Climate Resiliency

Issue #1, Goal #3: **Could we shift the language to note "at least 3" instead of "3".**

BS: Three might be a stretch, easy projects have been done.

DJ: Be sure that we're also counting projects that are not primarily focused on flood risk reduction, but have flood reduction benefit.

Bassett Creek Valley

JW: is 8-acres realistic? Can we really do this?

Group felt that it was 'reasonable' based on the info that's been created thus far.

Groundwater Quantity

BS: Lots of benefits here from a water conservation standpoint. Cities that don't get their water from Mpls are already doing this work. Been working on Goal #3 through city work since 2013. This is important and a great thing for the Commission to be supporting. JW agrees.

Any other thoughts on these issue statements / goals, in general? Anything that we didn't discuss?

JGL: There is a lot of content presented in the issue statements and goals. Good, important, aspirational stuff. Need to also be careful, though. Are we being too ambitious?

JP: That will be a focus area for next workshop / discussion.

Group C:

Golden Valley TAC Eric Eckman (EE), facilitator
Commission Engineer Williams (GW), recorder
Commission Chair Cesnik (CC)
Mike Sorensen (MS) Minneapolis Parks and Rec Board
New Hope TAC Nick Macklem (NM)

Flooding/Climate

MS likes the inclusion of ecology in the issue statement (allows BCWMC to respond to those problems);
likes that the desired future condition references both built and natural environments

Issue 1, Goal 1:

CC liked the inclusion of “populations” as a nod to equity considerations

Issue 1, Goal 2:

CC wondered if it is appropriate to say “reduce flood risk” in the face of climate change impacts; can it be achieved? CC asked if city plans contain similar language/goals. EE noted that city plans do include similar language/goals

MS liked that the goal did not address “all structures.”

Issue 1, Goal 3:

CC wondered if 3 CIP projects was a reasonable goal (the group generally thought the goal value was reasonable). CC wondered if it should read “at least 3” or “3 or more” projects.

MS asked if all BCWMC projects reduce flood risk. EE noted that many do, but some of strictly water quality focused. GW noted that some projects may have a net-positive impact on flood risk but do not explicitly quantify the benefit.

The group liked that the measurable aspect included projects versus a number of structures; the BCWMC has more control over the number of projects

Issue 1, Goal 4:

CC asked if the goal should be more concrete, such as “Do a study...” EE noted that a study is included in the strategies

Bassett Creek Valley

CC noted that the **issue statement should define the BCV area or reference a map.** MS noted that he did not know exact extent of the BCV. GW noted that the issue will have a narrative summary that can include a map.

MS noted that if BCV work results in land being turned over to MPRB (especially frequently flooded land) maintenance needs/plan will need to be well-defined. EE noted that ownership, easement, maintenance, etc. details would need to be ironed out as part of any project.

Consensus that 8 acres of floodplain removal seems like a reasonable goal

Groundwater Quantity

CC noted that the BCWMC doesn't really manage groundwater issues. EE noted that the BCWMC's secondary role is reflected in the "low priority" of the issue

CC wondered if coordination with other entities should be noted in the issue statement or goals. EE noted that coordination is noted within the strategies

CC suggested that the BCWMC attorney review the goals to confirm the BCWMC's role is appropriate (related to authorities/jurisdiction)

Issue 3, Goal 2:

EE noted that adding the number of projects was at BWSR's recommendation. CC noted that the number of projects seems reasonable

Aquatic Invasive Species

Goal 1:

MS asked if the goal should be expanded to cover AIS "in the watershed" versus just in lakes and creeks? (e.g., what about AIS in a ditch leading into a lake?). GW noted that the goal to prevent infestation of creeks and lakes wouldn't necessarily prohibit the BCWMC from taking action in other areas (e.g., a ditch) to prevent such contamination.

CC/MS both like that the goal does not refer to eradication of AIS

Groundwater-Surface Water Interaction

Goal 1:

MS asked if goal should be expanded to areas outside of priority waterbodies (Sochacki Park was identified as an example)? CC concurred and wondered how far upstream or downstream of priority waterbodies GW/SW interactions occur and should be considered (e.g., Sochacki Park is upstream of the creek, which is a priority waterbody). MS noted that the "how far" question is difficult because ultimately everything is tributary to the creek

Goal 2:

MS noted it is unclear if 75% of the projects in the goal is referencing ANY amount of restoration in 75% of capital projects, or 75% of available opportunities (e.g., shoreline length) on stream-focused projects. Overall, there is confusion regarding the interpretation of 75%.

EE noted that the 75% goal seems, if related to # of projects, seems feasible based on the recent breakdown of capital projects, but wondered if it would be overly prescriptive on the type of projects BCWMC could pursue (e.g., if BCWMC pursues multiple non-stream projects, would BCWMC then *have to* pursue a restoration project?)

MS wondered about projects that have no relevance to riparian areas.

Upland Areas

Goal 1:

MS noted that the reference to “greenway corridors” may be confusing for some readers, since “The Greenway” is commonly thought of as a trail in Minneapolis

Groundwater Quality

CC: Do we need to add a goal to “better understand contamination of GW resources (e.g., chloride in GW)?

Group D:

Commissioner Pentel (PP), facilitator
Commission Engineer Chandler (KC), recorder
Commissioner Welch (MW)
Minneapolis TAC Liz Stout (LS)
St. Louis Park TAC Erick Francis (RF)
Jen Dullum (JD), BWSR

Bassett Creek Valley

EF – Don’t know where, exactly, the Bassett Creek Valley is located. Consider adding a map.

LS – Bassett Creek Valley improvements is a priority for Minneapolis. Consider adding a measurable goal to increase access to the creek for the community. JD agreed that would be a good addition.

Groundwater Quantity

Goal 1:

LS – Issue seems to be low groundwater levels.

MW – Watershed organizations do have authority to regulate groundwater.

Goal 2:

Suggestion to clarify the goal to refer to stormwater reuse (rather than grey water reuse).

LS – Suggestion for new goal to encourage infiltration in recharge areas.

Aquatic Invasive Species

PP – Asked about measurability. KC pointed out measurability in implementation activities and noted the Commission’s APM/AIS policies and the AIS rapid response plan.

Groundwater-Surface Water Interactions

Goal 1:

PP – “Understanding is a stretch goal and may be very difficult along the whole creek.” MW agreed and noted that the sophistication of the goals and intended activities will take a lot of work to implement.

Degradation of Riparian Areas

Goal 1:

Suggestion to change to “require the establishment and maintenance of native vegetation” because the Commission won’t necessarily be the entity doing this activity.

Groundwater Quality

MW noted the Department of Health’s role in this issue.

Impact of climate change on hydrology...

Goals 5 and 6: MW noted there seems to be overlap and these goals could be combined.