

South Branch Root River Watershed Project
May 8, 2008 Meeting Notes

In attendance: Shaina Keseley (MPCA), Adam Birr (MDA), Bill Sweetser (Bennington Twp Supervisor), Jerry Tesmer (U of M Extension-Fillmore/Houston), Chuck Amunrud (Fillmore County Commissioner), Stafford Hanson (Fillmore County Commissioner), Mark White (Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park), Matt Drewitz (BWSR), Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD)

Brainstorming scenarios for the SWAT watershed model: The model is calibrated and ready to run scenarios based on what we expect or would like to see on the landscape. Three categories have been set up: current trends; innovative change that accelerates progress; and paradigm change that results in exponential change. The original was prepared for the MN River. The list was reviewed and modified by the Local Water Management Committee. Adam commented that SWAT has not been used extensively in Minnesota. The South Branch has been divided into 20 subwatersheds based on topography, land use, and soils. These are called hydrologic response units and form the building blocks for the model. Information from the FANMAP interviews can be utilized to customize the subwatersheds to some extent, but not to the detailed level of individual fields. The model works best with tillage and nutrient management timing and rates, but it is not so good with structures. Buffer and filter strip information works ok in the model. Adam cautioned not to get too caught up in how to implement the scenarios but to run the model first to see the reductions, which will be broad estimates. The list of scenarios that had been developed and modified was reviewed by the group. The changes that were proposed will be made and submitted to MDA by the end of the month so the modelers can begin running them in the model. It was suggested that promotion of the implementation practices should include an artist's rendition of what the practice looks like on the landscape to help people visualize how the landscape would change, e.g. a 180' buffer with pheasants.

Discuss wrap up of project: With the extension of the grant period, we could wrap up the project with a special open house or other event sometime in August or September. Due to the limited time, this discussion will be postponed until July. Any ideas should be directed to Donna.

Updates:

319 Grant extension request: The request was approved by MPCA and paperwork was approved by the County Board on Tuesday to extend the grant period for three months to September 30, 2008. This gives us three full field seasons for the project (2006, 2007, and 2008) following approval of the original contract on August 23, 2005.

Spring newsletter: This issue is being prepared for mailing the end of the month to avoid sending it during the peak of field work. It will include: Heusinkveld Farms named Conservationist of the Year for Fillmore County by the Fillmore SWCD, information about the Root River Turbidity TMDL, monitoring at Forestville and JD#1 by the MDA. Other topics suggested include the low-interest loans and low-income grants for septic system upgrades.

Grazing Field Day: A field day is planned for June 10th at 6:30 p.m. at the Lynn & LaVonne Mensink farm to show his management system. Harry Root will speak about use of the ethanol syrup by-product with corn stalks for a forage supplement. Loren Mathison will demonstrate wrapping high moisture hay. Two more pasture walks are planned: July 23 at Wold Sundown Valley Farm between Mabel and Spring Grove and in September at the Vance and Bonnie Haugen near Prosper.

FANMAP follow-up: The FANMAP on-farm interviews were completed by April 1st. There were 60 participants. The summary report will be available this fall. Some preliminary results will be ready by late June.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.