

South Branch Root River Watershed Project
Meeting Notes March 9, 2005

In attendance: Jaime Schaunaman (NRCS), Kurt Vorhees (Clayton Twp. Supervisor), Bill Sweetser (Bennington Twp. Supervisor), Jerrold Tesmer (Extension), Carol Kohn (landowner, stream monitor), Vaughn Snook (MN DNR Fisheries-Lanesboro), Chuck Amunrud (Commissioner-Fillmore County), Stafford Hansen (Commissioner-Fillmore County), Bob and Eloda Wood (stream monitors), Jeff Green (DNR Waters Rochester), Diane Hafner (landowner), Warren Freeman (landowner), Garry Termaat (landowner), Fred Beier (homeowner), Denton Bruening (MDA), Mary Kells (BWSR), Norman Senjem and Lee Ganske (MPCA), Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD)

A more in-depth review of the Citizen Stream Monitoring data: Lee Ganske prepared a summary of the data from the last several years. The CSMP data is the longest span of data that we have for the South Branch and is the most likely to continue beyond the scope of the project. Lee handed out a California research article about use of the transparency tube. This is one of the tools that can be used to measure how we are doing with conservation and a way to get that tool into the hands of the people living on the land. He showed a table comparing average and minimum transparencies for several sites in the watershed. An article that appeared in the CSMP newsletter showed how transparency relates to user perceptions of recreational suitability. Differences in perception were seen between regions. In general, transparencies of about 35 cm marked the transition from fair to poor recreational suitability. A graph of turbidity vs. transparency shows a violation of the water quality standard of 25 NTUs at transparencies at or below 20 cm. This data has prompted an important change in the use of CSMP data, which will become part of the water quality assessment that is included in the report to Congress every two years. In order for CSMP data to be used for declaring a stream impaired, 10% of the observations must be equal or below 20 cm, and there must be a minimum number of observations made over the two year period.

In addition to CSMP, biological monitoring is going on at four sites by SWCD and Park staff. These data have not been analyzed by WSU yet, but should be by the end of the summer. The Winona State University Water Resource Center has hired a coordinator who will be working directly with counties and volunteers to expand the CSMP and utilize the data.

Warren Freeman talked about a problem with increased runoff from the BP Amoco Terminal near Spring Valley, which is located on the watershed boundary. The company has proposed to route rainwater and snowmelt from the containment structures around the tanks into a waterway on his land to the north. Water disappears underground at the end of the waterway and is presumed to go to Spring Valley Creek to the north. However, dye tracing may show a different pathway for the ground water. Other dye tracing in the area has shown that water draining to sinkholes to the east of the terminal flows underground to Moth and Grabau Springs. The SWCD has a plan for handling the water on-site at the terminal, but there has been no response to the plan from the company or the MPCA.

Preliminary itinerary for June Township Officers' tour: Suggestions were to start in the early evening early enough in the month so it's before the crops canopy and to have set times for each stop. Our regular June meeting is June 9th scheduled to begin at 6:30. We could move to an earlier time and begin and end in the park. Transportation in 2-3 county vans can be provided, but the rest may have to caravan. Some suggestions so far include a feedlot fix, a septic system installation (O'Connell Construction is willing to cooperate on a demonstration of an installation), Other suggestions include the cave, BP Amoco, JD #1 wetland restoration, wetland complex in the Forestville Creek headwaters, Fairview Blind Valley, bad riparian management, mound system, Cherry Grove junkhole sink, CRP buffers around a sinkhole and riparian (Hafners), strip till, forestry-DNR, Heusinkveld monitoring site for MDA grazing study, rotational grazing (Austin, Mensink).

Updates:

Local presentations about the project have been given for the following groups: Ostrander Lions on 2/17, Ostrander City Council on 3/1, Spring Valley Kiwanis today, Mower Township meeting on 3/17, Trinity Lutheran Church in Ostrander on 5/1. It was suggested to also go to the schools, especially Kingsland.

Watershed newsletter: still waiting for printing information from SV Tribune

Grant and loan agreements: Loan agreements have been signed by both county boards and now being executed by MPCA. General obligation notes are needed for each county after agreements are executed. Those take about two weeks. The grant agreement is expected in about two weeks.

New Look at Livestock Initiative is making progress on the video. The group refined the key points to include in the video and will be trying to get some footage this spring before the snow is gone.

Nitrate clinics are scheduled for the end of the month in Wykoff (March 29, 1-4 p.m.), Spring Valley (March 29, 5-8 p.m.), and Ostrander (March 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.).

Norman reported that the EPA watershed initiative submitted but not funded last year for the Root River is being revised and resubmitted by the Hiawatha Valley RC&D.

Those in attendance were invited to take a short tour of the Mystery Cave Visitor Center following the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.