

South Branch Root River Watershed Project
Meeting Notes for July 13, 2005

In attendance: Bob & Eloda Wood, Mark White (Forestville/Mystery Cave SP), Bev Nordby (Mower SWCD), Norma Merkel (Bloomfield Twp Clerk), Lee Ganske (MPCA), Bill Sweetser (Bennington Twp), Keith Voorhees (Clayton Twp), Denton Bruening (MDA), Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD)

Introductions

Overview of DNR “Healthy Rivers” Water Course: This is an interactive course that runs on your computer’s Internet browser. It contains information about the biological, chemical, and physical characteristics of rivers and about the significance and value that rivers have for society. It is set up like a book with chapters and subheadings and contains audio (music and interviews), video, charts, pictures, and website links for more information. It’s available for \$19.95 through the DNR and Minnesota’s Bookstore. It can be used in a variety of settings for schools, community groups and policy makers.

There were several suggestions about ways to use the CD as an educational tool for the watershed project. Teachers should be contacted in the three school districts within the watershed project area: LeRoy-Ostrander, Kingsland, and Grand Meadow. The project could provide the CD or it could be signed out from the Mystery Cave Visitor Center or from the Fillmore SWCD. Parts of the CD with information especially pertinent to the Upper Iowa and Root rivers should be highlighted for the teachers.

Review and compare two years of crop residue transect survey results: Starting last year, 97 sites were surveyed plus 35 sites on the countywide route. The fields surveyed total 15,444 acres, which is 20% of the project area or 26% of the cropland.

- Conventional tillage (<15% residue) increased slightly,
- reduced tillage (15-30% residue) increased slightly,
- mulch till (>30% residue) decreased by 8%,
- no till increased by 4%,
- other (pasture, hay, CRP, oats) and ridge till remained the same.

A table showing the percentage of land in each subwatershed in each type of tillage practice in 2004 was reviewed. The subwatershed with the highest percentage of no till is the S. Branch East (28%). All but two subwatersheds (Canfield and Forestville) had at least 20% of the land surveyed in no till. The highest percentage of conventional tillage was found in S. Branch West from Etna Creek to the County line. Since Mower County fields tend to be larger, the statistics are weighted towards the practices there when comparing acres. A new practice called rolling is becoming more common. It involves use of a large roller that pushes down field rocks so planting is easier. Although it leaves the residue intact, it breaks down the soil structure making it more erosive.

Begin discussing timing and topics for next newsletter: The spring newsletter was mailed May 13th. The consensus was to aim for a November mailing. Ideas for articles include: 1) Feature about a livestock producer (MN River did a booklet—find out how that was used.) 2) Transect

survey data summary (compare to countywide data), 3) Atrazine setback requirements, 4) CSP acceptance, 5) Hay set-aside enrollee interview (Dave Mensink? Highlight springshed boundary?), 6) Controlled drainage project. CREP can be mentioned, but a separate CREP mailing will be done countywide in both counties.

Discuss future meeting schedule: Some people have asked if the number of meetings could be reduced, especially with the other meetings being held for New Look at Livestock, field days, etc. It was the consensus of the group to meet every other month alternating the second Wednesday and Thursday and keeping the time at 6:30 p.m. to encourage landowner attendance. There will be no watershed meeting in August, but there is a manure application field day on August 23rd that everyone is encouraged to attend. It was suggested to meet with Friends of Forestville and the Whitewater River Watershed Project to share ideas about the projects.

Updates: Revisions were made to the program guidelines. Also note that CWP loan terms and limits are being changed in Mower County: 10 year terms to coincide with Ag BMP Loans and caps are being raised to \$7500 for trench systems and to \$10,500 for mound systems. Fillmore County will be considering these changes.

There were 19 people who attended all or part of the June 9th Township Officers' tour, including the presenters. Four of the six townships in the watershed were represented plus one state representative attended.

New Look at Livestock Initiative met June 30th at Dan Miller's farm. Discussion continued about producing a video for non-ag audiences about the benefits of livestock. It was decided to make posters for the livestock barn at the county fair based on some of the slides from the storyboard for the video. MDA is printing those. These may be used at other county fairs also. Information about the Initiative will be presented at Dan Miller's grazing field day on Thursday.

Information about the August 23rd Manure Application Field Day at Larry Mathison's was distributed. Denton Bruening will be part of the program talking about the results from the FANMAP interviews. Posters can be displayed at area businesses.

On July 26th, citizen stream monitoring volunteers are invited to an event at Whitewater State Park that will feature Cal Fremling, author and scientist who has studied the Mississippi River and written about the river.

Donna distributed information about how to submit comments on the 2007 Farm Bill via the USDA website at www.usda.gov.

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.