PROJECT TEAM MEETING MINUTES
July 8, 2003

1. **ATTENDANCE:** Daniel Wilkens – Sand Hill River Watershed Administrator, April Swenby – Sand Hill River Watershed Administrative Assistant, Roger Hanson – Sand Hill River Watershed Board Chairman, Jim Larson – Houston Engineering, Gary Huberty – DNR Fisheries, Randy Huelskamp – NRCS, Jody Horntvedt – Project Team Facilitator, Mike Vavricka – MPCA, Dan Grunhovd – landowner, Brian Dwight – BWSR, and Tom Raster – Corp of Engineers, Les Peterson - US Fish and Wildlife Service, Terry Wolfe – DNR, Luther Aadlund – DNR, and Bob Merritt – DNR Waters.

2. **AGENDA REVIEW:** No new items were added to the agenda. Wilkens gave a review of the minutes. The June 10, 2003 meeting minutes were approved.

3. **FISH PASSAGE:** Luther Aadlund reported to the Project Team that the DNR has reserved $200,000 for the Sand Hill River fish passage project. This money is reserved for the district until June 30, 2005. Aadlund explained to the group that this money could be used for the 25% cost sharing in conjunction with the 1135 project funding through the Corp. The group asked Aadlund if the money could be used for fixing the Texas Crossing and/or the triple box culvert at the West Mill site as these may not qualify under the Section 1135 funding. Aadlund said the money could be used as needed, but the watershed would then need to find funding for the 25% cost sharing . Tom Raster explained to Aadlund that fixing these two crossings is crucial to the success of the fish passage and to maximize the Habitat units from the 1135 projects to show that the project is cost effective. Aadlund said that the DNR would provide a write-up about species that would benefit from the project.

   Horntvedt asked Raster if there are ways to possibly speed up funding from the Corp. Raster said it would be best to wait until the Preliminary Restoration Plan is completed, which could take a couple months. He thought that by November he could give the Project Team an answer regarding the crossings and if the DNR is to fix them on their own or in conjunction with the corps funding.

   At the previous meeting, the project team asked Roger Hanson to give a brief history report on the Texas Crossing. Hanson distributed the following report:

   > "When the Corps Project of the Sandhill Ditch was completed, a bridge was constructed in 1956 on the township lines between Reis and Scandia. During the spring of 1971 the ice chunks were large enough to take the bridge out. The bridge was rebuilt that same year. Again in 1980 the spring melt ice took the bridge out The townships met with Houston Engineering and learned about the idea of a Texas Crossing. The cost of a bridge or Texas Crossing was about the same and the township chose the latter as the ice wouldn't wreck it."

   Wilkens and Raster reported on their discussions with Don Buckhout (DNR) regarding whether the 1135 project would be subject to a mandatory State Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). Buckhout's answer was "Yes," if the rock fill will cover an area exceeding 1 acre.

4. **BRADLEY LAKE:** Bob Merrit read DNR regulations regarding issuing permits for lake level changes. Wilkens stated that easements are needed from all landowners

surrounding the lake. He stated that an individuals that own ¾ of the lake are not interested in raising the level. The Project Team decided to put the project on hold until given the current land ownership. Huelskamp asked if there were other land holdings upstream of Union Lake. The Project Team will think about that question and if other areas are found to hold back water they will be looked at.

5. **UNION LAKE DETENTION**: The Project Team has asked the district and the SWCD meet to determine alternatives to fix and fund the project. Currently, it is still unknown who the landowner is. Huelskamp described the NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wetlands Reserve Programs as possible options.

6. **SECTION 17 OF SLETTEN**: Jim Larsen brought forth quad maps for the Project Team's review. He also distributed soil-type and land use maps. Wilkens showed the aerial photo that were once previously reviewed. Larsen estimated that a retention area in the downstream-most portion of the watershed could store 434 acre-feet of floodwater at a flood pool elevation of 1230 feet, equivalent to about 2 inches of runoff. The group hypothesized that the USFWS Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) and other wetlands in the upstream portions of this watershed probably meant that a 2-inch runoff event was equivalent to a precipitation event substantially larger than would be the case in a watershed with less natural storage.

   Horndvedt created the following table reviewing the projects objectives, goals and strategies:

NAME OF PROJECT: Section 17 (Sletten)

PROJECT OBJECTIVE: Slow down water from entering the Sand Hill River

GOALS:
1. Flood storage
2. Enhance/Restore wetland basin
3. Develop sub-watershed plan for land use

STRATEGIES FOR CONSIDERATION:
1. upstream land treatment
2. control structure on lower end

To be Completed:	Start:	Finish:	Person(s) Responsible:
Delineate a drainage area (quad map) to identify pool area, land use, etc.		Report back July 8, 2003 DONE!	Houston engineering
General assessment of the area, discussion with landowners, etc. and present report to PT	August 2003	September 2003	SHRWD (Dan and Gordon Sonstelie), USFWS (Larry Hanson, Detroit Lakes Office), SWCD (Gary Lee), NRCS (Randy Huelskamp)

7. **AREA NE OF RINDAHL:** Larsen brought forth soil types and land use maps. He estimated that a retention area in the southwest (downstream-most) corner of the watershed could store 629 acre-feet of floodwater at a flood pool elevation of 1190 feet using a 15-foot-high dam, equivalent to about 1.16

inches of runoff. The primary objective of this project would be to (a) control runoff reaching the Sand Hill River and (b) solve township road washouts.

The group proposed incorporating upper watershed treatments (e.g., wetland restoration) in a comprehensive plan. The upper watershed already has some Federal WPA and State Wildlife Management Area (WMA) lands. The Project Team asked that a subcommittee be formed with Wilkens, Wolfe, Lee, and Jenny McClung (NRCS). The subcommittee is asked to report back to the group by November.

8. **MAPLE CREEK DIVERSION (MELVIN SLOUGH):** As requested by the Project Team, Wilkens distributed a written history of Melvin Slough and is as follows:

> "The Maple Creek Diversion Project was looked at two different times by the district. The first time considerable engineering was done to see if water could be diverted south to Kittleson Creek, which would help the Maple Creek area considerably. This effort was done in the early 80's. The project would divert water on the East Side of the North-South Twp road southerly to Kittleson Creek where a dam was to be built on Kittleson Creek, which would then store the water from the diversion, and Kittleson Creek. It was estimated to hold around 1500 acre-feet of water. The project never materialized at that time because of the concern for the wetlands along the diversion.
>
> The second time the district looked at the project came at the request of Terry Wolfe, DNR Wildlife Manager, who was interested in obtaining more water into Melvin Lake. Water had been diverted away from the lake in the 40's for a gravel mining operation. Aerial pictures showed Melvin Lake becoming smaller over time. Wolfe asked the district to look into what could be done. The district did surveying and engineering and came to the conclusion that if more water were brought into Melvin Lake that it would need to have some storage so as to not exacerbate the flooding on Maple Creek. The project involved several control structures. One on Highway 102 and one along the township road south of Melvin Lake where water turns and goes west. A channel was also going to be dug into Melvin Lake to allow for drawdown in the fall for management purposes. At the conclusion of the study it was determined that storage was not feasible and the project was abandoned. The landscape has changed from the original study. The drainage area that comes into this area from the east has been reduced by ½ with changes in the drainage system. Water that originally came into this area flows southerly along PC # 44 to Kittleson Creek. The severe erosion problems in the area have been repaired and stabilized through efforts of the landowners, local SWCD, township, and watershed district. The need for a major holding area is no longer necessary. A much smaller project with natural resource enhancements may be feasible. With more knowledge, better communication and the project team process something may be found that is beneficial in this area."

Wilkens then reviewed possible alternatives with the primary benefit being NRE with some FDR benefits. This project would include replacing a permanent plug east of Melvin Slough and Maple Creek, which then goes to Kittleson Creek if the north-to-south diversion is improved. A control south (downstream from Melvin Slough) could store more water in Melvin Slough, which might further enhance its habitat value.

The group speculated whether diverting water to Kittleson Creek might have an adverse effect from the reduction of flows on Maple Creek downstream of the diversion ... in which case the measures to provide more water to Melvin Slough might offset the diversion and help both Maple and Kittleson Creeks.

The group decided to form another subcommittee which includes Penny Doty (West Polk SWCD), Terry Wolfe (MNDNR), an individual from USACE and Jon Schneider (Ducks Unlimited) to look at options and report at the PT's November meeting.

9. **GARDEN SLOUGH:** Larsen distributed maps previously requested by the project team. Wilkens displayed an aerial photo previously viewed at prior project team meetings. He estimated that a retention area in the northeast (downstream-most) corner of the watershed could store 3,600 acre-feet of floodwater at a flood pool elevation of 1180 feet using a 20-foot-high dam, equivalent to about 6 inches of runoff. DNR dam safety staffers have expressed concern with the high dam and possibility of sandy outwash foundation materials.

   Danny Grunhovd, local landowner discussed potential PCA issues because the proposed flood pool would virtually eliminate the requisite buffer distance from his farm's feedlot operation and, thus, negate a permit for expansion of his operation. It is undetermined whether occasional storage in a floodwater retention project is subject to the same shoreline regulations that apply to a regular lake. Jim Ziegler (PCA) will be contacted to discuss those issues.

   Dwight reported on efforts to look at the Wetland Conservation Act concerns about bounce and plant species diversity effects. They want to look at depth-duration-timing of the year relationships vis-à-vis species of interest. Merritt said that there are concerns that "putting that much water on wetlands causes real impacts" even if the floodwater is retained only 1 or 2 weeks. Wilkens commented that the FDR Work Group's TSAC's study of environmental effects from on-channel storage might change current thinking. He said that 10 or 20 feet of bounce in the spring when things are dormant has no adverse effects versus limits on summer bounce and duration.

   The following were added to the tables created by Jody Horntvedt at the previous Project Team Meeting: MPCA will determine the shoreline location by September 15 and BWSR/IWG will report on wetland bounce vs. mitigation by September 30.

10. **ADJOURN:** Meeting was adjourned at 2:15 PM**.** The next meeting will be September 9, 2003 at 10:30 am at the Sand Hill River Watershed District office in Fertile, MN.

Minutes respectfully submitted:

April Swenby, Administrative Assistant