PROJECT TEAM MEETING MINUTES
January 10, 2007

1. **ATTENDANCE:** Maynard Pick – Congressional, Roger Hanson – SHRWD Chairman, Les Peterson – US Fish and Wildlife, Bryan Paradis – LID, Bill Baer – US Corp of Engineers, Brian Dwight – BWSR, Gary Huberty – DNR Fisheries, Harold Vig – Sand Hill River Watershed District Manager, Jenny Burrack – East Polk NRCS, Adam Woltjer – East Polk NRCS, Gary Lee – East Polk SWCD, Lawrence Woodbury – Houston Engineering, Mike Vavricka – MPCA, Wayne Goeken – RRWMB Riverwatch, Mark Aanenson, Houston Engineering, Mick Alm – Norman County Engineer, Paige Guetter – East Polk SWCD, April Swenby – SHRWD Administrative Assistant, and Daniel Wilkens – SHRWD Administrator.

2. **AGENDA REVIEW:** No new items were added to the agenda.

GARDEN SLOUGH: Baer reiterated that completing the points of concurrence is part of the permit process for the Corp. After a purpose and need is agreed upon, alternatives can be assessed. Baer concluded that the RRWMB should be included in defining the purpose and need. Houston Engineer has completed a preliminary purpose and need statement and will continue it's completion on the modeling. Woodbury will model and build a case not highlighting a particular project. The modeling will support the statement and the RRWMB will be included at that time, should it be deemed necessary.

FISH PASSAGE: Wilkens gave a status report on the West Mill Site and the Texas Crossing. The sites are nearly complete.

UNION LAKE EROSION CONTROL: WACA and Shoreline regulations have not voiced concerns. Landowner permission needs to be obtained before WACA is applied for. Brian Dwight did not anticipate any issues with the various organizations. Baer said this project requires a permit with the COE unless there is not a discharge of fill. He suggested completing a joint notification form and general permit form but did not anticipate problems. A general permit is not subject to public review. Dwight informed the project team that a joint notification form can be found on the BWSR website. Woodbury will complete the joint notification form.

Woltjer read a letter from Michelle Page - USDA Farm Service Agency which stated that some earthwork and structures could be incorporated into the practice, but the CP21 practice must serve its basic need as a filter strip – not a flood or water retention control structure (e.g., a dam) the County Committee will not approve a Conservation Plan for a CP21 practice that includes a structure intended to act as a dam or ponding area for the water. The East Polk NRCS Office will determine and document the environmental need for the structures on the CP21 practice.

If the project restrict cropping, the easement won't be allowed unless it is a RIM, FWS, or FLP easement as noted in 2-CRP.

Woltjer will revisit this issue with Page.

The group discussed the ownership of the project. Paradis would like to see the Watershed take responsibility for the project and Sand Hill River Watershed District Chairman Hanson would prefer the LID maintain responsibility for the project. This issue needs to be resolved so someone is in charge of the project and continues upkeep as needed down the road.

Overall Plan Update: Dwight distributed handouts for the NRE assessment (attached).

Aanenson updated the project team on the Overall Plan process, which is currently in Phase II. Wilkens and Aanenson will collaborate to form the TAC and CAC committees.

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be held March 13, 2007 at 10:30 AM at the Sand Hill River Watershed District office in Fertile, MN.

Minutes respectfully submitted:

April Swenby – Administrative Assistant

Overview

Sand Hill River Watershed District Natural Resource Assessment

(by Henry VanOffelen, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy 08/09/2006)

Purpose:

The purpose of the watershed based natural resource assessment is to identify areas where existing and restorable natural resource features can be conserved and enhanced. During the watershed planning process, the locations of these areas can help identify opportunities for combination flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement areas and may be used help avoid potential future conflicts between FDR and NRE projects.

This assessment will use information gathered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Sand Hill River Watershed District, Houston Engineering, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Counties, Ducks Unlimited, and others. Once compiled and analyzed this existing information will undergo a comprehensive review by local resource professionals to identifying specific areas in the Sand Hill River watershed district where active stewardship can conserve and enhance existing and restorable natural resources. Project teams, technical advisory, and citizen's committees can provide a final review of this information, prioritize different natural resource areas, and compare them with flood damage areas.

Work Products:

Existing Resources Analysis

- Large Habitat Blocks
- Quality Habitats
- Sensitive Species
- Waterfowl Concentration Areas
- Public and Conservation Lands
- Watercourse buffers

Restorable Resources Analysis

- Farmed and drained wetlands
- Partially Drained Wetlands
- Unstable waterways
- Water Quality Improvement Areas

Priority Natural Resource Area Analysis

- Conservation Opportunity Areas
- Watershed Management Initiatives
- Priority Grassland and Wetland Conservation Lands

Deliverables:

1. ArcView format project file on CD-ROM with GIS data layers and database files used in natural resource assessment.
2. Hard-copy maps of natural resource layers used in assessment on watershed base map.
3. Natural resource assessment report for the Sand Hill River Watershed District.

Timeline:

February – Develop Basic GIS maps for watershed district
Late February – Meet with NR professionals to review GIS products and prepare NR worksheets for each planning region
March – prepare draft NR assessment

NR Planning Worksheet
WD Subwatersheds

This worksheet will be used to help prompt discussion about natural resources in each subwatershed in the watershed district. Please review and complete the worksheet prior to the meeting. Complete the questions as best as possible and add more questions and issues if needed.

Subwatershed Name: _____

1) What important/significant natural resource features exist in this subwatershed? (list and describe wetland, upland, grassland, woodland, riverine, etc. habitats)

2) What factors limit the productivity and quality of these natural resource features? (e.g., lack of prescribed burning, needs to be larger, extended low flows, etc.)

3) What unique resource features are located in this subwatershed? (fens, trout streams)

4) Where are there opportunities to make larger blocks of habitat?

5) Where are there opportunities to connect existing quality habitats?

6) Where are there opportunities to rehabilitate streams and other waterways?

7) Where are the known areas in this subwatershed where wildlife concentrate (e.g. deer wintering, waterfowl/shorebird migration)

8) What areas in this subwatershed have notable wind and/or water erosion problems?

9) CRP and WRP may provide important NR features in this watershed. If so, where are the acres from the most recent sign-up concentrated? Where are the areas where large amounts of CRP may return to production in the next ten years?

10) List specific action items to create, rehabilitate, or generally improve the natural resources in this subwatershed.

11) Where are there project opportunities for flood damage reduction projects in this subwatershed?

12) Please list/provide references for the NR's in this subwatershed (cty water plans, WMA plans, etc.)