

Sand Hill River Watershed District
10 – Year Comprehensive Plan Update
Public Input Meeting Regions 1 & 2
June 20, 2007
Beltrami United Methodist Church

ATTENDANCE: Brian Dwight – BWSR, Mark Aanenson - Houston Engineering, Wayne Goeken – RRWMB Water Quality, Terry Wolfe – MN DNR, Randy Huelskamp – NRCS, Doug Thomas – BWSR, Ben Larson– SWCD Board member, Gene Billing – landowner, Myrdell Skalet – landowner, Daniel Wilkens – Sand Hill River Watershed District Administrator, and April Swenby - Sand Hill River Watershed District Administrative Assistant.

WELCOME: Sand Hill River Watershed District Administrator Daniel Wilkens welcomed the group.

AGENDA ITEM ONE:

General Description of Planning Regions 1 & 2

Aanenson explained that this meeting is for regions mostly west of Highway 32 (with a few exceptions). The new overall plan will be based on planning regions instead of categories such as flood control, and water quality. This overall plan will incorporate the interests of other entities. Different areas within the district will have different resources and needs. Houston Engineering has used a watershed-based approach to define the four planning regions that were developed using the sub watershed boundaries. The project team was utilized to develop these four regions.

Aanenson displayed and explained land use maps, pre settlement vegetation, general soils, and wetland maps for both regions 1 and 2.

Water quality Issues

Aanenson displayed maps showing impaired waters from 2006. Impaired waters are identified and listed by receiving a call for data, analyzing the data by professional judgment teams. Information meetings are held and a public notice is given. The EPA approves the classification of impaired waters.

A list of Sand Hill River Impaired Waters for 2006 was distributed to the group. The list recognized the affected use and the pollutant or stressor. In addition to the 2006 list, a 2008 preliminary list was displayed, also including the affected use and the pollutant or stressor. Goeken explained his thoughts regarding the low oxygen levels near Rindal, but did not think that the low oxygen levels extended to Kittleson Creek, which disagrees with the proposed 2008 list.

Wilkens and Thomas discussed the purpose of the list from PCA and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of being listed as impaired waters. The group suggested speaking with PCA to discuss the areas listed as impaired and what their criteria is when

listing impaired waters. The PCA plans on having a new impaired waters list by April of 2008.

Natural Resource Enhancement Opportunities

In Region 1, the NRE proposes to improve existing hydrologic conditions in the watercourses, re-establish the habitat corridor along the Sand Hill and Red Rivers, and reduce erosion and resulting sedimentation in watercourses.

In Region 2, the NRE proposes to enhance and protect tracts of grasslands east of highway 9, maintain and increase CRP contracts, and protect high quality natural resource feature (beach ridge areas, wetland complexes, native prairie tracts, natural watercourses and corridors.

AGENDA ITEM TWO:

Soils and Soil Erosion in Regions 1 & 2 – Randy Huelskamp

Huelskamp explained land use in the watershed and farm use in the area. He displayed photos showing examples of problems in the region: i.e.: streams without buffers and topsoil in the ditches. He provided solutions to some of the various erosion issues: CRP, CREP II, WRP, EQIP, and WHIP. Other solutions are quick growing cover crops in early spring and field wind breaks along with good field cover at all times.

Huelskamp stated that in the future, if areas are seeking priority, EQIP is locally driven and can be given additional points.

AGENDA ITEM THREE:

District Project in Regions 1 & 2 – Daniel Wilkens

Wilkens gave an overview of Project # 12, Project # 17, Fish Passage (currently awaiting continued funding), and the current project – Project # 20.

AGENDA ITEM FOUR:

Identification of FDR & NRE Issues – Small Group

Problem Areas - Region 1

- Water quality of streams is poor (Sand Hill River has Low Oxygen in reaches , Turbidity problems in other areas)
- Wind erosion is causing water quality and ditch maintenance problems due to a loss of windbreaks
- Surface water recreational opportunities are lacking
- Control structures prevent the movement of fish upstream (Sand Hill River East of Beltrami)
- Urban areas need protection from large flood events, (Beltrami – addressed with diversion and Reis-Scandia ditch) primarily along the Red River
- Bank erosion threatens loss of farmland and causes water quality problems
- Areas of continuous wildlife habitat along streams and rivers are being reduced (Red River and Sand Hill River)
- Stream channels lack habitat for fish and other aquatic life
- Over bank flows resulting from smaller rainfall events causes damage to agricultural crops – (Projects 17 and 20)

- The number of acres of wildlife habitat is insufficient

Problem Areas – Region 2

- Water quality of streams is poor (low oxygen - Sand Hill River) Note: Goeken strongly disagrees with this statement.
- Erosive soils and slopes causing sheet and rill erosion
- Control structures prevent the movement of fish upstream (Culverts by the Mill Dam have been redone and Texas crossing redesigned)
- Loss of CRP has the potential to cause water quality and wildlife impacts
- Channel erosion and down cutting of the streams are a problem (Sand Hill River)
- Areas of continuous wildlife habitat along streams and rivers are being reduced
- High water table causing residential drainage problems
- Additional drainage is needed for agricultural lands (primarily along Maple Creek)

Additional comments by the group were made:

- Nielsville and Climax had requested a city ring dike a few years back.
- Buffer strips would benefit water quality if they were applied to all county ditches.
- More recreational accesses to the Red River
- Bridges
- The Sand Hill ditch can use bank erosion solutions

ACTION PLAN: Houston Engineering will gather the information from tonight. They will coordinate meetings for the other planning regions.

ADJOURN: The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The next meeting will be announced after Houston Engineering gathers additional information.