

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT One Watershed, One Plan Joint Advisory Committee/Planning Team Meeting April 24, 2019

A One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) Joint Advisory Committee/Planning Team Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 24, 2019, at 9:00 AM in the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville, MN.

Advisory Committee members present were Jill Wilkey, River Keepers; Anthony Nelson, Pheasants Forever (PF)/Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Lynn Foss, Clay SWCD; Nicholas Brown, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Erik Jones, BRRWD Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI); Mike Sharp, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA); and Scott Schroeder, MPCA.

Planning Team members present were Brett Arne, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); Don Bajumpaa, District Manager, Wilkin SWCD (via conference phone); Peter Mead, District Manager, Becker SWCD; Aaron Larson, West Otter Tail (WOT) SWCD; Kathy Fenger, BRRWD Assistant Administrator, Matt Jacobson, Water Planner/Scientist, and Rachel Olm, Scientist, HEI (via conference phone).

Policy Committee members present were Lyle Hovland, Wilkin County Commissioner; Jay A. Leitch, BRRWD President; Rick Drevlow, Supervisor, WOT SWCD; and Ross Aigner, Supervisor, Wilkin SWCD.

Others attending included Gerald L. Van Amburg, BRRWD Manager; and Moriya Rufer, Scientist/Water Planner, HEI.

Policy Committee Chair Lyle Hovland called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and asked the group to introduce themselves.

Matt Jacobson, Plan Writer and Facilitator, HEI, reviewed the meeting agenda items:

- Recap on Progress & Direction
- Dr. Jay Leitch, BRRWD President-*Efficiency* Presentation
- Measurable Goals Revision Discussion
- Measurable Goals & Targeted Implementation Prioritization
- Plan Section 4: Targeted Implementation
- Action Items and Next Meeting

The group reviewed the status of the 1W1P components:

- Completed:
 - Land and Water Resources Inventory
 - Section 1: Plan Introduction
 - Section 2: Identification and Prioritization of Resources and Issues
 - Incorporate comments/issues wording changes, and forward to Policy Committee for approval at their May meeting

- Under Development:
 - Plan Section 3: Establish Measurable Goals
 - Each Plan Section 2 Priority Level A & B Issue will have a Measurable Goal
- Up Next
 - Section 4: Targeted Implementation Plan
 - Actions to make progress towards the Measurable Goals will be developed
 - Section 5: Implementation Programs
 - Plan funding
 - Implementation responsibilities

Jacobson explained to the group that the main goal is to come to a consensus about the Measurable Goals so we can recommend Section 3 for approval by the Policy Committee. He noted that we are about one month behind schedule, but since we are already on an accelerated timeline, our status is still in good shape.

BRRWD President Jay Leitch gave a 30-minute presentation regarding "Efficiency". He prefaced his remarks by explaining that he and Chuck Fritz, Executive Director, International Water Institute (IWI), are developing a series of eight short training sessions primarily targeted for Watershed Managers, based on a multidisciplinary approach to watershed management. Their efforts are coordinated with the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) and the North Dakota Water Education Foundation.

The next topic for the group was a discussion about their work on Measurable Goals, which they've addressed at their last few meetings. Jacobson noted that there were two main comments received from the Committee, which he incorporated into the draft Section 3 by adding an explanation of the origin of the goals, definitions of the terms Priority Issue, Measurable Goal, Short and Long-Term Goals, and Metric. He also included a narrative about the background on how the goals were developed. The Committee is currently working with a list of 13 measurable goals, relating to the priority issues. Jacobson noted that in Plan Section 4: Targeted Implementation, other local watershed districts are developing an estimate of their available baseline annual funding and staff resources to work on the Plan Goals. He thought that as a result of this process, some of the short-term goals could be revised.

Copies of the draft Goals were distributed for review and discussion. The group also viewed a map showing the BRRWD's nine Planning Regions, which encompasses two major watersheds (Buffalo River and the Red River) and a portion of a third (Otter Tail River). Jacobson explained that the 1W1P goal setting and action identification will be based relative to the Planning Regions where applicable. Each Measurable Goal lists the Primary and Secondary Priority A and B Issues that will be addressed in a watershed-wide and planning region application, demonstrating the concept of multiple benefits. The group discussed the format Jacobson used to present the goals. Leitch suggested that there should be another metric (measurement in units) to compare the costs of our efforts to reach a particular goal and if the benefit was worth the resources expended to reach that goal. Jones and Mead both suggested that it might be easier to compare potential benefits once we've identified the actions phase of the Plan.

Leitch also suggested that some of the proposed goals were crafted to align with State objectives in order to qualify for State funding. He thought we should develop goals to solve problems in our own area, not problems that politicians have identified and want to fund. If we want to maximize social welfare, we don't want to waste resources. Jacobson agreed with Leitch's concept, and he noted that there could be opportunities where state and local goals coincide to maximize social welfare and leverage state funding. There was a brief discussion about state driven issues/goals and state funding.

Ross Aigner, Wilkin SWCD Supervisor, commented that the last two goals related to promoting public outdoor facility access and increasing public awareness and engagement aren't within the scope of the 1W1P Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). He suggested that either we need to revise the MOA or drop the last two goals from our list. He thought that the DNR, Pheasants Forever, and Ducks Unlimited, through the

State's Game and Fish regulations and programs, addressed those goals. Nick Brown, DNR, and Leitch agreed with Aigner. Jacobson noted that at the last Policy Committee meeting, Jerry Flottesch made the case that since we're using some Clean Water Legacy (CWL) funds for the 1W1P, we should include goals in line with the Legacy Act language. Leitch pointed out that this illustrates his point that we are including issues/goals in our Plan to maximize funding from the State. Mead noted that the Planning Team also had a problem with the referenced Issues. He pointed out that there is already more than adequate access to outdoor resources within the BRRWD. Don Bajumpaa, Wilkin SWCD, agreed with Aigner, stating that the items could remain on the Issues list, but we don't need to develop measurable goals to address them. The group consensus was to remove the increased public access and awareness issues from the Priority Issues/Measurable Goals Priority lists and demote them to the Level C Issues list. Jacobson will add this proposed change to the next Policy Committee meeting agenda for discussion/approval. He noted that to retain the Priority B Issue of protection of surface and groundwater drinking that was addressed in Public Awareness and Engagement Goal, we could add it to other Priority Issues/Measurable Goals related to water quality.

Rick Drevlow, WOT SWCD, questioned the source of the abandoned wells data. Jacobson said the data came from the County Well Index, which is the most accurate public information available. He explained that the short-term goal under the groundwater quality Issue would be to verify the status/location of potentially abandoned or unsealed wells in each county. The long-term goals would be to seal them. Leitch questioned the efficacy of sealing abandoned wells to address the goal of reducing nitrogen delivery and loading to protect surface and ground water quality. He asked if there was an established link between water seepage into unsealed wells and nitrogen delivery. Aaron Larson, WOT SWCD, explained that this item would be more for groundwater protection in general and not specifically nitrogen delivery. Lynn Foss, Clay SWCD, noted that the County, in conjunction with the State Department of Health, just completed a second round of well sampling. In certain areas/soil types, they are finding there is a potential nitrate issue in groundwater associated with wells, but overall nitrate infiltration is very low in our area. Van Amburg noted that there has been County well sealing programs since the first Water Plans were developed. Jacobson suggested that we could split off the groundwater quality goal from the nitrate reduction goal. The group had an extended discussion regarding these issues/goals. Jacobson noted that the Minnesota Department of Health (MDA) is already working on a groundwater restoration and protection strategy for the Buffalo River watershed. Brett Arne, BWSR, explained that the Level A and B Issues will be the focus of the BRRWD's State 1W1P funding resources, but the Level C and D issues are still addressed in the Plan, and we can still apply for funding for those lower level issues.

Leitch commented that the long-term goals should be evaluated based on return vs. expenditures. He thought the 100% completion goal wasn't realistic. Jacobson explained the long-term goals can be reevaluated after the short-term goals are achieved. Leitch noted that the Plan should be a living, evolving document that can change according to conditions. Jacobson agreed, commenting that the Plan could be considered a guide to assist local staff prepare their annual workplan and a public communication tool.

Nick Brown, DNR, commented on the "Restore and Protect Wetlands and Upland Areas" goal, where it notes that some grassland and wetland Planning Regions goals have already been met. He pointed out that while there appears to be a sufficient quantity of wetland acreage in some regions, we are still lacking quality wetlands. Jacobson suggested that the narrative for this goal could include a priority to increase the Level 1 and 2 wetlands. Brown also commented on the Phosphorus Delivery and Load Goal. He thought an opportunity is being lost to manage the phosphorus once it's in the water. Jacobson thought the verbiage could be added to the goal, and when implementation actions are developed, this idea could be addressed. He suggested that since it was not realistic to expect to make progress on all the lakes on the Lake Basins list, we should focus on achieving the short-term goal for a limited number of the listed lakes (approximately 7), keeping the full list in the Plan, for reference in future Plan updates. The group briefly discussed the term "impaired" to describe water quality conditions in lakes, rivers, and streams.

Jacobson noted that Peter Mead, Becker SWCD, revised the list of potential shoreland stabilization sites down to only three lakes that we could target to assist landowners with shoreline restoration, keeping the rest of the sites on the list to be addressed in future Plan updates. The goal does include the installation of the required grass bufferstrip. Mead suggested that the goal narrative should include a citation of the Buffer Law. The group discussed DNR programs that could possibly be used to assess goal progress.

Jacobson summarized the group discussion. The Advisory Committee agreed to move the public awareness, outdoor recreation, nitrogen delivery, and groundwater/surface water supply protection issues to Level C and to eliminate the goals for those issues, but include notations in Plan Section 5, citing local/state agency programs that are in place to address these issues. These changes will be recommended to the Policy Committee for approval at their 5/29/19 meeting. Jacobson didn't expect that there would be a final draft of Plans Section 3 ready for approval at the 5/29/19 Policy Committee meeting. He suggested that he could send a final draft to the Advisory Committee via email for comment prior to the next Advisory Committee.

The group moved on to Prioritization strategies/concepts:

- Prioritize Measurable Goals
 - Develop Targeted Implementation Schedule based on Measurable Goals by HUC12 and/or Planning Regions/Watershed
- Prioritize Implementation – Use Prioritized Measurable Goals to:
 - Determine where to work first
 - Allocate implementation funding based on priority planning regions (Dependent on AIG Implementation Scenario)

Jacobson used the example of the prioritization of the measurable goals for unstable ditch segments and outlets. The group agreed to take some more time to consider the goal implementation and if those efforts should be ranked according to the planning regions/watersheds or other methods.

The next Advisory Committee will be scheduled on June 19, 2019, at 1:00 – 3:00 PM in the BRRWD office. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.