

Second Generation Plan TAG Meeting Minutes

Bassett Creek Water Management Commission

May 21, 2001

A. Attendance: Ken Gothberg, Pat Wrase, Jeff Oliver, Ed Silberman, Fred Moore, Shane Missaghi, Don Maxwell, Terrie Christian, Connie Fortin, Jack Frost, Bob Mayeron, Vince Vander Top, Joel Settles, Lisa Goddard, Katie Heinz, Jason Westbrook, Len Kremer

B. Agenda

1. Review April 23rd Meeting Minutes
2. Q & A
3. Discuss groundwater goals, policies and issues
4. Discuss existing water quality goals, policies, and issues
5. Preview next meeting

C. Welcome and Introduction

Fred Moore started the meeting with a welcome statement and a review of the evening's agenda.

D. Review of March 26th Meeting Minutes

Minor corrections were mentioned before the meeting began.

E. Q&A

Ed Silberman asked if the creek crossing of Douglas Drive was passable by canoe. Len said it is large enough.

F. Groundwater Goals, Policies and Issues

Hennepin County has a groundwater management plan that has not been adopted. According to State of Minnesota Rules, because there is not an approved county groundwater plan, the BCWMC must decide their role in groundwater management and make policies accordingly.

Len Kremer started the discussion by giving the historical and geological facts of groundwater in the BCWMC. The county groundwater plan was written in the early 1990's and never was adopted by the county. A white paper reiterating the issues was released by the County in October 2000. One of the main issues is that there is not an agency to ensure that the water supply aquifer is not depleted.

Bassett Creek runs through an area with a shallow groundwater aquifer. In most of the watershed, groundwater discharges to the creek which accounts for the base flow. This is probably the result of the rolling topography in the watershed which creates depression areas to store and recharge the groundwater.

Len displayed a map of the Prairie Du Chein – Jordan aquifer and the surficial aquifer in Hennepin County. The map showed the sensitivity of certain areas the migration of pollutants into the aquifer. The surficial aquifer is vulnerable in a lot of areas throughout the watershed, especially south of Medicine Lake. However, all of the communities in the BCWMC that use groundwater get their water from the deeper Prairie Du Chein – Jordan aquifer. Most of the watershed is only slightly susceptible, meaning it takes centuries for surface water to travel into the aquifer. There are a few scattered spots that are moderately susceptible, meaning it takes months to years for surface water to reach the aquifer.

Terrie Christian asked what kind of contaminants the groundwater is susceptible to receiving. Any contaminant that can be carried in water such as nitrates or organics has the potential to pollute groundwater. Joel Settles said the most common source of groundwater pollution is transportation accidents where a spill gets into the surface water which then gets into the shallow groundwater.

Len anticipate the Department of Health advocating a policy requiring stormwater detention sites constructed in susceptible areas need to be lined to prevent leaching. Joel Settles said the Department of Health has a phasing list that requires the preparation of wellhead protection plans for areas which are highly susceptible. No BCWMC communities area very high on the list.

According to Fred, all of the stormwater ponds in Maple Grove are lined. The soils in the area are very sandy and it only takes weeks for surface water to get into the groundwater aquifer used by the city.

Terrie Christian is concerned that the chemicals we use on our lawns, roads and in our industries is having an affect on our health. Should the BCWMC have a policy restricting such chemical use? According to Len, the surficial groundwater in the watershed either flows to the Mississippi River or to an underground glacial valley. There are no groundwater receptor wells in the path of groundwater flow except for the General Mills wells.

Ken Gothberg asked if there are any known sources of groundwater pollution in the BCWMC. According to Len there are old gas stations, an old dump and an old oil refinery contributing to groundwater pollution.

The group then agreed on a policy against stormwater storage sites in sensitive areas. If a storage site is required then it must be properly engineered.

Fred Moore asked the group if the BCWMC should include a policy that encourages communities to complete a wellhead protection plan.

Joel Settles thinks this is a good idea. It would be good to identify all of the potential groundwater contamination sources in the communities. He does not think the BCWMC should require the communities to complete a wellhead protection plan. There are not any current problems with the drinking water according to the consumer confidence reports and we are therefore in a protect/preserve mode. Therefore there probably is not an urgent need for communities to spend money developing a wellhead protection program.

Connie Fortin asked if we can add to the number of contaminants we currently test for such as chlorides from road salts. According to Len and Joel, drinking water aquifers typically have an aquitard protecting the aquifer. There is a problem with chlorides in the surficial groundwater.

Another issue for the BCWMC to consider is that there is not an agency charged with the management of groundwater data. The DNR currently regulates groundwater appropriations. According to Fred, the BCWMC can have a policy to review groundwater appropriation permit applications.

It is possible that large projects that need to dewater could have permanent draw down effects. – Joel Settles

The group agreed on a policy that the Commission should continue to review DNR appropriations permits.

Fred recommended including a policy that encourages communities to participate in the County well seal program. After Joel Settles provided information about the program, the group agreed that such a policy should be included.

G. Water Quality Goals, Policies and Issues

The first topic was the classification of water bodies – are they properly classified?

Len Kremer informed the group of the process that was undertaken to classify the water bodies. The Commission was formed in the 1960's as a flood control organization, but they also instituted a lake sampling program every three years and a stream sampling program every five years. In the late 1980's, the Commission applied for a EPA grant for Medicine Lake and the application was approved on the condition that the Commission adopt a watershed wide water quality policy. The Commission requested the grant because there was not time to adopt a watershed wide policy and then started on the development and adoption of a water quality management plan and policy.

Since the adoption of the water quality policy, hundreds of water quality best management practices have been constructed. Monitoring of the Creek shows that the water quality has not degraded and has even improved in certain reaches of the stream.

The water bodies were classified in the late 1980's as part of this plan. Public input and historic water quality data were used in the classification process. Since then, lake and watershed management plans have been developed for each of the water bodies. The plans identify improvements that need to be made in order for the water bodies to achieve or maintain their classifications.

Currently there is only one water body that is meeting its water quality goals – Twin Lake. Further, the lake management plans have identified eight water bodies (Westwood Lake, Turtle Lake, Lost Lake, Wirth Lake, Northwood Lake, North and South Rice Ponds, and Bassett Creek Park Pond) that have no feasible way to achieve their goals. This means that if all feasible BMPs that were identified were implemented, the goals still could not be met.

Maybe a good goal for Wirth Lake is to acquire land for BMPs if it becomes available (Connie Fortin).

I would hate to see any water body down graded (Lisa Goddard).

Will downgrading the classification of the water bodies open the doors for less restrictions and create worse water quality (Terrie Christian)?

Can we separate the classifications from the goals and required treatment levels (Shane Missaghi)?

Although a water body was identified as being capable of a certain use, that does not mean anyone is currently using it for that recreational purpose (Don Maxwell).

Water body classification is a very political. We should just make information available to the policy makers for them to decide (Jeff Oliver).

All water bodies have value and we need to identify the proper use (Joel Settles).

If we make all of the water bodies a Level I, what impact would that have on development (Connie Fortin)?

Maybe we should determine treatment levels for lakes on an individual basis (Fred Moore).

If we tried to classify every water body as a Level I, we would likely have problems with lawsuits (Ed Silberman).

Some watershed management entities have the same standard for all receiving water bodies (Lisa Goddard). But it is more common to classify (Len Kremer).

Since all water ends up in the main stem of Bassett Creek, why would we allow lesser quality water into one water body versus another? It seems to reason that cleaner water going in would equate to cleaner water coming out (Don Maxwell). The lakes themselves also remove pollutants before discharging into the creek (Len Kremer).

Let the developers pay the extra cost for increased treatment (Connie Fortin).

Why is Twin Lake the only water body currently meeting its goals (Connie Fortin)? Twin Lake has a small watershed with little impervious surface and is fed by groundwater (Len Kremer).

What treatment practices are available besides ponds (Connie Fortin)? Infiltration and chemical (alum) treatment (Len Kremer).

We should see the most recent water quality data available (Ken Gothberg).

We should always keep our options open as technology changes (Len Kremer).

We need to identify where the water bodies are on the response curve. Most response curves begin as a linear relationship and then flatten out. Depending where a water body currently exists, investing a large amount of money in treatment may equate to much cleaner water or no noticeable effect (Joel Settles).

Water clarity does not necessarily equate to cleaner water. At one point in history, Lake Polaski near Buffalo, MN was very clear, yet it had a much higher concentration of bacteria than nearby Buffalo Lake which was rather green (Ken Gothberg).

Barr will prepare a list of proposed implementation projects, the benefits they would provide and the associated cost for review by committee members.

We should set goals for the maximum attainable use for each of the water bodies (Joel Settles).

Land use is set by planning committees of the communities. The communities need to know that if they want a certain water quality, then they may have to control certain land uses (Fred Moore).

Is there any reason why we practically cannot set the highest goal for all water bodies (Connie Fortin)?

We need to consider the internal loading of water bodies (Shane Missaghi).

If our current plans are not meeting the goals set for the water bodies, then we are not doing enough (Joel Settles).

At this point Fred Moore concluded the discussion of water quality for the evening and set the agenda to continue the discussion at the June meeting.

H. June Meeting

The next meeting will be Monday, June 25. The agenda items will be water quality prioritization, project costs, and streams; wetlands goals, policies and issues; and public ditch issues.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.