

To: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

Re: Teacher Focus Group

From: Education and Public Education Outreach Committee

Date: October 5, 2009

Background Information:

BCWMC's Education & Public Outreach Committee anticipates significant benefit in sponsoring a teacher focus group in order to better comprehend the needs of teachers who are interested in providing watershed education for their students. We understand that teachers have huge demands on what they are required to teach and that the requirements on them and their classroom time can and do change. We are convinced that many aspects of watershed education should fit well into science and social studies classes as well as other areas of study. We envision beneficial results in holding a focus group meeting of up to ten teachers to collect their ideas on how to direct our efforts to obtain improved outcomes. We want to invite science and social studies teachers representing multiple grade levels to take part in the focus group. We propose compensating the teachers in the focus group with \$100 stipends for sharing their expertise with each other and us.

The focus group would be structured to learn from the teachers:

- 1) Their watershed education resource needs
- 2) Their awareness and reactions to watershed education resources that are currently available (those previously developed)
- 3) What water education resources they would actually use
- 4) What barriers they encounter to using available water education resources
- 5) What barriers they see in how our BCWMC grants are structured
- 6) How can we better direct our BCWMC grant funds

The BCWMC Education and Public Outreach Committee members include former teachers in the Wayzata and Robbinsdale school districts and the coordinator of Hennepin County's River Watch program. Liz Thornton taught science in Wayzata and during that time she was president of the Minnesota Science Teachers' Association and chaired some of their state conventions. Stu Stockhauss was a social studies teacher as well as the social studies coordinator for the Robbinsdale schools. For the past few years Mary Karius has lead Hennepin County Environmental Services' River Watch Program, a program utilizing teachers and students to monitor local streams. These committee members will design and moderate this teacher focus group. With years of working with and coordinating teachers in our local districts we are fortunate that these committee members will volunteer their time and expertise for this project. Other members of the Education/Outreach committee will volunteer their time to assist Liz, Stu and Mary.

We propose to fund this project through \$1,000 from the Education/Public Outreach budget.

Recommendation:

Approval of \$1,000 for the BCWMC Education/Public Outreach Committee (BCWMC EPOC) of the BCWMC to design and conduct a focus group of science and social studies teachers from multiple grade levels and that this \$1,000 be used for up to ten \$100 stipends for the participating teachers with BCWMC EPOC members volunteering their time. The focus group will be lead by BCWMC EPOC members and will be designed to learn: 1) how we can assist teachers in accessing materials that fit into their standards; 2) explore their ideas for use of this funding source; 3) what are their watershed education resource needs; 4) what is their reaction to watershed resource education materials that are currently available; 5) what barriers they encounter to using watershed education resources; 6) ways to optimize our grant program.