Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (VRWPC) Meeting

September 13, 2017 - 3:30 p.m.
Dakota County Western Service Center, Room 334, Apple Valley, MN

WPC Members in Attendance
Tony Wotzka       Bruce Rydeen
Jim Guttmann      Carolyn Miller
Chuck Clanton     Ken Betzold
Josh Borton

Staff in Attendance
Mark Zabel, VRWJPO
Mark Ryan, VRWJPO
Jen Dullum, VRWJPO

Others in Attendance
Lindsey Albright, SWCD

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Chair Guttmann at 3:31 p.m., and opened with the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda
Motion by Commissioner Clanton, second by Commissioner Betzold, to approve the revised agenda. The agenda was unanimously approved.

3. Approval of minutes
Motion by Commissioner Miller, second by Commissioner Rydeen, to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2017 meeting as presented. The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Business Items
   a. Presentation on the Vermillion River Monitoring Network 2016 Report
Lindsey Albright from the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District gave a presentation of the 2016 Vermillion River Monitoring Network results. Conclusions consisted of: the dissolved oxygen standard being frequently violated; E. coli bacteria being high throughout all sites in the network and very high at the VR24 station (in Scott County); total phosphorous levels being low during base flow conditions, but with violations occurring during rainfall events; nitrate at site SB802 being elevated compared to other sites in the network; violations of total suspended solids occurring during runoff events; macroinvertebrate index of biological integrity scores being variable; temperature and habitat having room for improvement; and overall monitoring indicating that tributaries are important because they may be key sources of pollutants or stressors to the Vermillion River.
Recommendations include DNR fingerprinting bacterial source assessment monitoring for very high bacteria at the VR24 station, implementing projects to help address increasing nitrate in the South Branch subwatershed, strategically placing water storage and retention features, undertaking development projects to improve habitat throughout the watershed, and continuing to monitor to assess progress towards reaching water quality goals and further refine priority areas.

Commissioner Clanton wanted clarification that there was no redundancy or overlap in sampling equipment, data, and/or field work between agencies. Staff feels that over the years this has improved, and currently all interested agencies are sharing equipment and/or data and trying to coordinate field work. This includes good working relationships with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Metropolitan Council Environmental Services.

Commissioner Guttmann questioned the possibility of showing the direct effect our on the ground projects have on improving the health of the river. Can we show “before and after” results for projects on which we spend money? With remeander projects and the South Creek stream restoration and habitat improvement project, we hope to see and increase in intolerant species during our biomonitoring. In some cases the monitoring network may not capture project-level improvements because the stations are not immediately downstream of projects, and the VRWJPO is looking to do site-specific testing as a result. This coming year, we will be conducting “before and after” with the iron-enhanced sand filter project at Long Lake in Apple Valley and the nitrate treatment project near County Road 78. Pre and post-project improvements for the Rambling River Park Stream Restoration project could be looked at when another geomorphic assessment is completed. Staff will continue to monitor the overall big picture improvements of the watershed.

Commissioner Betzold was interested in fish monitoring and winter fish-kill. Monitoring is done one-time per year, typically in the fall, when the flow is conducive for this activity. The river systems do have young of the year and fish of varying ages, showing that fish do survive overwinter in deep pockets and areas of cover in the streams.

Commissioner Miller asked if there was an overriding program to put areas back into a “natural state”. The Vermillion River Watershed works to protect and restore surface water and groundwater quality. Dakota County’s land conservation program and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources work on the purchase and restoration of lands.

Commissioner Guttmann appreciates the monitoring and assessment for the overall health of the watershed. He commended the diligence shown and sees this as very valuable information. Change does not come instantly and spotting trends can be very useful.

5. Updates
   a. Chairman’s Report
   Commissioner Guttmann reminded everyone of the Watershed Tour coming up on Thursday, September 21. Please RSVP.

   Commissioner Guttmann also shared an article from the City of Lakeville weekly newsletter with a spotlight on the one year anniversary of the pollinator garden installed at Valley Lake Park.
b. Staff Updates
Mark Ryan gave an update on a potential plan for Long and Farquar Lakes in Apple Valley. Both Long and Farquar Lakes are on the impaired waters list and have been part of several projects in the past reducing pollutants by around 40%. This current plan calls for the draw-down of both lakes to kill curly leaf pond weed and rough fish, which disturb the natural ecosystem of the lakes. On a side note, the Johnny Cake Ridge Road improvements, which the VRWJPO is a grant partner on, calls for phosphorous reducing techniques for runoff before it would get to Long and Farquar Lakes.

Mark Zabel gave an update on the Vermillion River bacterial impairment. The focus area will be between Xerxes and station VR24. Xerxes does not show human DNA but E. coli is high. Upstream, there is human DNA detection. No bovine DNA was detected in these fingerprinting analyses. Scott County is taking this lead on this issue by reaching out to landowners with septic systems in the drainage area, working on nutrient management, and work plans for agricultural lands along the river.

Mark Zabel let the Commissioners know that the Dakota County Board certified the levy at their last meeting.

The VRWJPO along with Friends of the Mississippi River will be hosting H2O + Hops: The Health of the Vermillion for the public at Angry Inch Brewery in Lakeville on October 17, at 6:00 p.m. This event will highlight trends and emerging issues facing the nearby subwatershed, as well as potential solutions and actions you can take to make your home, lawn and community more water friendly.

Mark Zabel will be one of the presenters at the 25% by 2025 Listening Session in Burnsville on October 4, starting at 6:30 p.m.

6. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Betzold, second by Commissioner Borton, to adjourn the meeting at 4:46 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved.