



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting

October 22, 2020, 1 p.m.

teleconference using Zoom and in person at conference room 1 & 2, Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, MN

Board Members in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik, Chair
Dakota County Commissioner Mary Liz Holberg, Vice Chair
Dakota County Commissioner Tom Wolf, Secretary/Treasurer

Others in Attendance

Mark Zabel, Watershed Administrator
Melissa Bokman Ermer, Watershed Co-administrator
Travis Thiel, Dakota County, Senior Watershed Specialist
Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Water Resources Outreach and Communications
Mark Ryan, VRWJPO Watershed Engineer
Jen Dullum, Dakota County, Public Outreach and Communication
Helen Brosnahan, Dakota County, Assistant County Attorney
Brian Watson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Commissioner Slavik at 12:59 p.m.

2. Roll Call

All Board members were in attendance.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

There were no comments from the audience.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Minutes from the August 27, 2020, meeting
- c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report
- d. Approval of Expenses
- e. Authorization to Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County for the Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP)

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

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- f. Authorization to Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Lakeville for the Jaguar Avenue Stormwater Basin Enhancement Project

Res. No. VRW 20-16: Motion by Commissioner Holberg, Second by Commissioner Wolf, and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the consent agenda.

5. Business Items

5a. Report on Measurable Outcomes as identified in the 2016-2025 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan

Mark Zabel introduced this item. A series of outcome measurements is used to track the impact of the implementation of the Vermillion River Watershed Plan. Jen Dullum coordinates compiling data and reporting. Jen noted these measures will be tracked and reported annually. She highlighted one to two outcomes for each Watershed goal.

Goal A: Protect or restore water quality in lakes, streams, and wetlands

Since 2016, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) projects have stopped over 2,000 tons of suspended solids and 795 pounds of total phosphorous from entering water resources.

Goal B: Protect and restore groundwater quality

Since 2018, over 435 acres have been enrolled into the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) cover crop program, which is supported, in-part, with VRWJPO funds.

Goal C: Maintain a sustainable water supply

The VRWJPO completed six irrigation efficiency audits in 2018 and 2019, combined. This has led three townhome associations to apply and receive cost share funds for retrofit projects.

Goal D: Address more intense fluctuations (up and down) in river flow rate and volume

Since 2016, eight stormwater retrofits projects have been completed to address river rate and volume.

Goal E: Improve public awareness and stewardship of water resources

Since 2016, the VRWJPO website has seen an increase of 5,358 users. In 2019, over 2,000 people participated in events, programs, and training.

GOAL F: Improve watershed resilience to changing precipitation and temperature patterns

Since 2016, 35 VRWJPO Standards compliance evaluations have been completed with local municipalities. The Landscaping for Clean Water program, which is in-part funded through the VRWJPO, has installed 56 rain gardens, 30 native gardens, and 2 shoreline plantings in the Watershed since 2016.

GOAL G: Protect or restore sensitive biological resources, such as plants, fish, insects, and wildlife

Nine of 18 biological monitoring sites are showing positive trend for macroinvertebrate health.

Commissioner Slavik thanked staff for the update. Commissioner Holberg appreciated the report readability, which she feels is appropriate for public consumption.

6. Staff Reports

Jen Dullum informed the Commissioners the VRWJPO is currently promoting the Minnesota Water Stewards (MWS) program for the 2021 program year. This past week, our 2020 stewards graduated

after completing several months of course work and a capstone project. Mark Zabel asked the Commissioners for direction on accepting a 2021 steward candidate that does not live in the Watershed or Dakota County because VRWJPO funds are used to support the MWS program. Commissioner Holberg questioned if the VRWJPO has ever had more applicants than available spots. Mark Zabel responded that has never happened. Commissioner Holberg stated if the VRWJPO has space for this steward candidate, and if they do volunteer work in the Vermillion River Watershed, accepting them into the program is acceptable to her. Mark Zabel noted the fee per steward is \$1,500. Commissioner Wolf agreed with Commissioner Holberg's position. Commissioner Slavik stated that volunteer work completed within the Watershed should factor more heavily into eligibility than where a candidate lives.

Travis Thiel noted that the Records Trail project has been completed. The bulk of the 78-10 denitrification project has been constructed, but is still waiting to have some minor grading, seeding, and stabilization done, but the snow has slowed things down. The Hastings 21st Street project, which consists of three separate projects, is progressing. For the three parts: stabilization of the ravine basin is complete; the filtration basin at 21st Street and a Cemstone business property driveways is partially complete; and the hydrodynamic separator location is currently being excavated. This project will hopefully be complete in next couple weeks pending resolution of utility conflicts.

Mark Ryan stated that the 78-06 woodchip wetland had a new outlet added in October and the project will be closed out pending seeding. Travis Thiel and Mark Ryan presented this week at the Minnesota Water Resources Conference on the South Branch subwatershed's increasing nitrate trend and the two projects installed to address the nitrate issue in this subwatershed.

Mark Zabel showed the Commissioners water quality nitrate monitoring information from the South Branch station. Mark presented charts of data from 2005-2017 showing nitrate loading in the South Branch. One graph showed annual open water season load trend, and the other graph depicts when nitrate peaks (at snow melt, after planting, mid-summer, late summer, and late winter). Mark believes the peaks occur from shallow return flow and surface runoff coming into the river.

Mark Zabel received a letter of interest for internal grant program from the Water Resources Center at the University of Minnesota (U of M). The grant program has project priorities for studying agricultural inputs to groundwater and surface water. The VRWJPO and Dakota County have been interested in determining the effectiveness of nitrate reduction projects on the water quality in the drinking water wells in Hastings and in the South Branch of the Vermillion River. If the grant is successful, the U of M would conduct work within Dakota County and the VRWJPO researching nitrate in surface and ground water. The grant could provide research support equivalent to up to \$210,000 in funding. This is a grant program internal to the U of M that directs research and graduate student work through the UM Water Resources Center. No cash contribution is required from the VRWJPO and local partners, but there may be some collaborative roles including water sample collection, for example.

Mark Zabel noted that the Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) work group will meet next week to discuss the proposed projects for potential funding. The group will discuss scoring and ranking for the proposed projects and possibly select the projects that will be recommended for grant funding.

Mark Zabel, Mark Ryan and Melissa Bokman Ermer met at the Bemis Wetland with Troy Kuphal of the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District to discuss repair or reconstruction of a berm that controls the current wetland outlet, for potential WBIF funding and discussed other possible funding alternatives.

7. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Holberg, Second by Commissioner Wolf, and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 1:33 p.m.

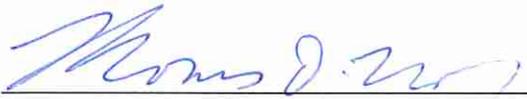
Next Meeting Date: December 3, 2020 at 1 p.m. Location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted:

Jen Dullum
Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Mark Zabel
Administrator for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest



Commissioner Tom Wolf Secretary/ Treasurer

12-15-20
Date