

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project  
Executive Council & Technical Team Meeting Minutes  
November 8, 2017

Attendance: Jim Carlson, Big Sandy Lake Association; John Cyrus, City of Tamarack; Barb Dahl, Carlton Co SWCD Supervisor; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; John C. Hooper, McGregor Township; Ramona Hooper, McGregor Township; Dianne Knoblen, SWHIM; Patti McPhail, Island Lake Cromwell; Bill Pratt, Aitkin County Commissioner; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Shannon Westerlund, Aitkin County SWCD; Sharon Zelazny, Island Lake Cromwell.

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm. Introductions were made. The agenda was approved as presented M/S/C Al Rinta / Ray Gurske.

2. The October meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as presented. M/S/C Carmen Rinta / Bill Pratt.

3. A financial report for the month of October was shared. Expenses totaled \$ 1,721.13 from the EPA Section 319 Grant and \$ 208 from the Aitkin County AIS Grant. Expenses were related to cost share projects, water quality monitoring, staff services, and mileage for AIS material distribution. The report was approved as presented. M/S/C Ramona Hooper / Ray Gurske.

4. Special Presentation: The Buffer Law in Aitkin County, Shannon Westerlund Buffer Specialist: Shannon Westerlund introduced herself to the group. She is the new Buffer Specialist for Aitkin County, working out of the Aitkin County SWCD Office. The Buffer Law was signed into effect in 2015 by Governor Dayton. This law requires a 50' buffer of perennial vegetation on public waters, and a 16.5' buffer on public ditches. Aitkin County has adopted a Buffer Ordinance that outlines how this law will be enforced in Aitkin County. Shannon has been working to identify affected properties in Aitkin County and ensure their compliance with the law. Deadline extensions are possible if a landowner needs additional time to establish required buffers. In general, Aitkin County and all of NE Minnesota has a high compliance rate with this law. The State of Minnesota has been determined to be 94% compliant with the Buffer Law on public waters. Shannon was thanked for sharing this information with the group.

5. Old Business:

5.1. 2017 Aitkin County AIS Grant Final Report: Janet Smude shared that all funds from this grant have been expended. Work on this project has been completed for the season. A final grant report has been prepared, and was shared with the group. Thanks was expressed to everyone who helped with this effort.

5.2. Mississippi River – Grand Rapids WRAPS Ambassador Meeting: The next meeting of this group is scheduled for Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> in Grand Rapids. Everyone is welcome to attend. We will be discussing watershed restoration and protection plans for the watershed. Janet Smude or Anna Bosch, MPCA can be contacted for specific meeting information.

5.3. Draft Letter to Legislators: A draft letter to our state legislators, letting them know what our priorities are for water quality restoration and protection efforts in this watershed, was shared. It was suggested that this also be sent to federal legislators (Nolan, Franken & Klobuchar). The letter will be signed by Chairperson Barbara Dahl and Janet Smude. A map of the watershed will be included in the mailing. The draft letter was approved and will be sent out in the near future.

6. New Business:

6.1. 2017 Lake Water Quality Monitoring Summary: Seven lakes in the watershed were monitored last summer with the help of local volunteers. Monthly samples were taken for Total Phosphorus, Chlorophyll a, and Secchi Disk Transparency between June and September. Big Sandy, Eagle (Carlton Co.), Minnewawa, and Prairie Lakes were at the lower boundary of classic eutrophy. These lakes may exhibit decreased transparency, aquatic vegetation problems, and support only warm water fisheries. Blackface Lake was in the mesotrophic range. This is where we would expect lakes in this area of Minnesota to be. Thanks was expressed to the many volunteers who assisted with this monitoring.

7. Working Session:

7.1. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

7.1.1. SWHIM: No new information was shared.

7.1.2. Sandy Lake: Jim Carlson noted that Big Sandy Lake is not beginning to freeze yet. The lake level is dropping for the winter.

7.1.3. Sandy River: Beaver activity and windfalls are impacting water levels. Bank washouts are occurring. Funding for beaver trapping is limited.

7.1.4. Tamarack River: This group is taking a break for the winter will meet again in the spring.

7.1.5. Prairie Lake / River: No report was shared.

7.2. New Project Submissions: There were no new project submissions.

8. Agenda Additions: The group discussed a donation to the City of Cromwell for letting us use the Pavilion for the Fall Tour and Luncheon. A motion was made to donate \$ 50 to the City of Cromwell from the watershed tour budget M/S/C John Cyrus / Jim Carlson.

9. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 10th. The meeting will be held from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm at the Cromwell Park Pavilion, if a meeting room is available. The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm. M/S/ Carmen Rinta / John Cyrus.