

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project
Executive Council & Technical Team Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2019

Attendance: Melanie Bomier, Carlton Co SWCD; J. John Cyrus, City of Tamarack; Barb Dahl, Carlton Co SWCD Supervisor; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; Ramona Hooper, McGregor Township; Dianne Knobon, SWHIM; Pat McGinn, Lake Minnewawa; Gary Peterson, Carlton County Commissioner; Bill Pratt, Aitkin County Commissioner; Pat Rath, Lake Minnewawa; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Franklin Turnock, Aitkin County SWCD Supervisor; Rod Walli, Cromwell Lakes; Bill Zelazny, Upper Island Lake; 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 Pat McGinn / Al Rinta.

2. Guest Presentation – Amanda Ingels, Kennecott Exploration Company: Amanda Ingels joined the meeting to share that Kennecott Exploration Company has entered into a 7 year agreement with Talon Metals. The staff in Tamarack will remain the same, however the focus is changing. They are entering a “study phase” that will begin with a Pre-Feasibility Study. This is estimated to take 3 years and will focus on what facilities might be needed and what type of mine would be feasible. A Feasibility Study will follow, and then the permitting process. Talon Metals is hoping that the summer program will help to further define the resources. Nickel and copper deposits are being investigated. The best grades of ore are about 1,000 feet below the surface.

Baseline monitoring of surface and groundwater quality has been completed for the first quarter of the year. Second Quarter monitoring will begin in May.

The company has an open door policy. Everyone is welcome to stop by the office in Tamarack to learn about the exploration work and ask questions.

Amanda was thanked for joining the meeting and sharing this information.

3. The January meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as presented. M/S/C Pat Rath / Ray Gurske.

4. A financial report for the months of January and February was shared. There were no expenses during this period. The report was approved as presented. M/S/C Pat McGinn / Pat Rath.

5. Old Business:

5.1. 2019 Aitkin County AIS Grant Application: Janet Smude shared that she has drafted an application to the Aitkin County AIS Prevention Program. The grant would fund a portion of the spring newsletter, 500 boat plug docks, 5,000 coasters, and the Cromwell 4th Grade AIS day. A total of \$ 6,300 will be requested. The application needs to be submitted by March 15th. A motion approving submittal of the grant application was made. M/S/C Frank Turnock / Pat Rath.

5.2. Spring Newsletter: Janet Smude reported that she has been drafting the spring newsletter. Funding will come from Lake Country Power (\$500), Aitkin County AIS Prevention Grant (\$1,500), and the Mississippi River Grand Rapids Unit WRAP (\$ 800). A four page newsletter is planned with the front and back focusing on AIS prevention and the inside focusing on strategies to improving water quality. Pat Rath, Carmen Rinta, and Dianne Knobon offered to assist with editing / proofing the draft newsletter.

5.3. Love Your Lake Event: Everyone is invited to attend this event on the morning of Saturday May 4th. Guest speakers from the Minnesota Department of Health and University of Minnesota will share information on septic system and private well management. The event will be held at Minnesota National Golf Course. Please RSVP by April 29th via email to BSLA@BigSandyLakeMN.org.

6. New Business:

6.1. Aitkin County Rivers & Lakes Fair: This event is scheduled for Saturday June 15th at Rippleside Elementary School in Aitkin. The group agreed to have an educational display again this year. Ray Gurske will help with this event. Another person to assist with the booth would be great. Please check your calendar.

6.2. Ditch Decommissioning as a Water Quality Restoration / Protection Strategy: Melanie Bomier shared that the Mississippi River Grand Rapids Unit WRAP has been discussing ditching in the watershed, and noting that several ditches may not be functioning as intended or benefitting anyone. These ditches have been shown to carry high levels of sediment and nutrients, and limit the ability of fish and other aquatic life to use the rivers. Carlton County and MPCA staff met recently to discuss options for select ditches in the Carlton County portion of the watershed. It was noted that restoration of these ditches may benefit logging access and have a benefit for downstream water quality. Many of the ditches discussed ended by being on state land. The next step will be to discuss this with the Minnesota DNR. Input from private landowners potentially affected by the ditches will also be sought. This may be a good strategy for improving water quality. It was noted that many ditches in the Aitkin County portion of the watershed are County / Judicial Ditched. These are managed a bit differently than the Carlton County ditches.

7. Working Session:

7.1. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

7.1.1. SWHIM: Pat Rath shared that the snow is deep on Lake Minnewawa

7.1.2. Sandy Lake: No report was shared.

7.1.3. Sandy River: No report was shared.

7.1.4. Tamarack River: Ray Gurske shared that there are few fish houses on Tamarack Lake. Most were removed before the deep snow came.

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

8. Agenda Additions: Bill Zelazny noted that zebra mussels have been found in Red Lake. Negative impacts to the water quality and fishery are expected.

9. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, May 8th. The meeting will be held from 2:00 pm at the Cromwell Park Pavilion, if a meeting room is available. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.
M/S/ Dianne Knoben / Pat McGinn.