

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project
Executive Council & Technical Team Meeting Minutes
May 8, 2019

Attendance: Clarence Badger, Cromwell; Joe Beaupre, Prairie Lake; Melanie Bomier, Carlton Co SWCD; Anna Bosch, MPCA; Jim Carlson, Big Sandy Lake; Barb Dahl, Carlton Co SWCD Supervisor; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; Dianne Knoblen, SWHIM; Lindsay Lally, Cromwell; Gary Peterson, Carlton County Commissioner; Bill Pratt, Aitkin County Commissioner; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Franklin Turnock, Aitkin County SWCD Supervisor; Sharon Zelazny, Island Lake Cromwell.

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:05 pm. Introductions were made. The agenda was approved as presented. M/S/C Carmen Rinta / Jim Carlson.

2. Guest Presentation – Chris Berg, Carlton Co. Zoning & Environmental Services Technician: Chris Berg joined the meeting and shared that he has worked with the Carlton County Zoning and Environmental Services Office for 2.5 years. He works with septic system and well water testing. This is his first year of also serving as the Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator. This program focuses on inspections, education, and early detection of AIS. The inspection season will start on Friday. One inspector will focus on Eagle, Island, Tamarack, and Cole Lakes. This inspector will partner with local law enforcement as needed. Examples of education materials were shared. Education is the largest goal of the program. Species of concern include eurasian water milfoil, zebra mussels, and spiny water flea. Inspectors will bring fresh water along to the landings, for use in replacing bait water. Tannin stained water appears to limit the growth of aquatic vegetation. Septic system upgrades seem to be improving water quality. Chris stressed again that education is the largest part of the AIS Prevention program in Carlton County. Chris was thanked for joining the meeting and sharing this information and handout materials.

3. The March meeting minutes were reviewed. Correction of several typos in item 6.2 were noted. The minutes were approved with the corrections. M/S/C Joe Beaupre / Ray Gurske.

4. A financial report for the months of March and April was shared. Expenses totaled \$ 4,533.02 and were for the spring newsletter and AIS themed coasters. The report was approved as presented. M/S/C Dianne Knoblen / Ray Gurske.

5. Old Business:

5.1. Spring Newsletter: Janet Smude shared copies of the spring newsletter. 4,456 copies were mailed to property owners in the watershed on April 18th. Dianne Knoblen commented on the regulatory feel of the information. A handful of positive phone calls were received from folks who received the newsletter. Thanks was given to the volunteers who helped with writing and reviewing of the newsletter.

5.2. 2019 Aitkin County AIS Grant Implementation: Work has begun on completing the work supported by this grant. Coasters: 5,000 coasters were ordered. Pat Rath has offered to distribute these to establishments around the watershed. Carmen Rinta offered to help if needed. Boat Plug Docks: These have also been ordered. 500 Docks will be distributed at boat landings and community events in the watershed. Cromwell 4th Grade AIS Event: This event was hosted on Monday May 6th. Twenty eight kids participated in activities related to watersheds and Aquatic Invasive Species. Sharon Zelazny, Barb Dahl, Melanie Bomier, and Janet Smude cooperated on the event. Students drew a design for a T-Shirt based on the activities. The committee reviewed the artwork and selected the winner.

5.3. Love Your Lake Event: This event was held last Saturday, May 4th. Guest speakers from the Minnesota Department of Health and University of Minnesota shared information on septic system and private well management. Approximately 100 people attended. The information was well received. It was a nice event.

5.4. Aitkin County Rivers & Lakes Fair: This event is scheduled for Saturday June 15th at Rippleside Elementary School in Aitkin. Ray Gurske will help with this event. Another person to assist with the booth would be great. We will share information on shoreland BMPs and give out AIS coasters, boat plug docks, and floating keychains. Please check your calendar.

5.5. Mississippi River – Grand Rapids Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) Project Updates: Anna Bosch shared that this process is nearing the end. The draft TMDL document, that details information on impaired waters, has been sent to the EPA for review. The WRAPS document, focusing on protection of high quality waters, is being edited right now. This will also be sent to the EPA. Public comments are being sought on these documents. Local input will help them to better reflect local priorities and objectives. A public meeting is being planned for June to gather final comments.

Anna also mentioned that a TMDL has begun for the mainstem of the Mississippi River, from northern Aitkin County to the Brainerd area. This stretch of the Mississippi has high levels of Total Suspended Solids. The Big Sandy Watershed is also included in this larger watershed.

6. New Business: There was no new business.

7. Working Session:

7.1. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

7.1.1. SWHIM: No report was shared.

7.1.2. Sandy Lake: Jim Carlson shared that the lake is 18" above normal. Many docks have not been put in yet. The USACOE dam cannot release any water now, as the Mississippi is also high.

7.1.3. Sandy River: No report was shared.

7.1.4. Tamarack River: It was noted that this group will meet again next month.

7.1.5. Prairie Lake / River: Joe Beaupre shared that beavers continue to be a problem. The Prairie Lake Improvement Assn. has taken 2 years off from trapping. Beavers created a dam at the lake outlet last fall. Higher water levels are creating more shoreline erosion. The Assn will be deciding on a course of action. A public meeting will be held on Thursday May 30th at 6 pm at the Fine Lakes Town Hall to discuss the Northern Slot Limit. Public input is desired as this regulation is updated.

8. Agenda Additions: Clarence Badger shared historical information with the group. He is a Cromwell resident whose family has been in the area since the 1800's. They homesteaded on the Tamarack River. He fished on the crystal clear water of Prairie Lake as a kid. After ditching of the area, the waters were not so clear anymore. Changes in the watershed over time have had a significant impact on the water quality. Clarence was thanked for sharing this information.

9. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 10th. This will be the BSALWMP Annual meeting. The meeting will be held at 2:00 pm at the Tamarack Sno-Flyers Clubhouse, if the meeting room is available. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 pm. M/S/ Lindsay Lally / Joe Beaupre.