

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project  
Executive Council & Technical Team Meeting Minutes  
October 9, 2019

Attendance: Joe Beaupre, Prairie Lake Improvement Association; Rick Bruesewitz, DNR Fisheries; Jim Carlson, Big Sandy Lake; Barb Dahl, Carlton Co SWCD Supervisor; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; Ramona Hooper, McGregor Township; Dianne Knoblen, SWHIM; Bill Pratt, Aitkin County Commissioner; Tim Rinowski, Lake Minnewawa Association; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Sam Seybold, Aitkin County SWCD; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Franklin Turnock, Aitkin County SWCD Supervisor; Sharon Zelazny, Island Lake Cromwell.

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm. Introductions were made. The agenda was approved with the addition of an update from Rick Bruesewitz, DNR Fisheries. M/S/C Dianne Knoblen / Al Rinta.
2. The August meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as presented. M/S/C Carmen Rinta / Ray Gurske.
3. A financial report for the months of August & September was shared. \$ 500.25 was spent on AIS Tackle Boxes. The report was approved as presented. M/S/C Carmen Rinta / Ray Gurske.
4. Guest Presentations: Rick Bruesewitz, DNR Fisheries: Rick congratulated the group for their longevity and success in implementing water quality protection efforts. He updated the group on proposed modifications to the outlet dam on Lake Minnewawa. The new design includes a series of rock arch rapids that will allow for fish passage. Fish spawn below the dam, but can't get back to Lake Minnewawa. The new design will be helpful for all species – from minnows to big fish. It should also benefit the aquatic life in Minnewawa Creek. An application has been submitted to the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program. Construction this winter is hoped for. The Lake Minnewawa Association is partnering with the DNR on this effort.

The DNR is also working on a large scale geomorphological study of Big Sandy Lake through the USACOE. Fish movement will be studied. The walleye population in Big Sandy Lake has been stable in recent years. Studies have shown that fish in the Mississippi are larger / older than those in the lake. This may be due to movement out of the lake, and their inability to get back into the lake. An acoustical tagging study would track their movement.

Changes to lake water quality (mainly lower pH) are due to heavy rain events in recent years.

New fishing regulations on Lake Minnewawa are being proposed. There would be a 3 walleye limit, with no slot limit. If approved, this would go into effect next spring.

If more information is needed, or if there are questions please call Rick at (218) 429-3010.

Aitkin County Shoreland & Buffer Zone Ordinances, Sam Seybold, Aitkin County SWCD: Sam shared that he has been meeting with landowners in Aitkin County to answer questions regarding the Aitkin County Shoreland Management Ordinance. Private boat ramps are no longer allowed, unless there is no public access on the lake. A sandy area / beach area by the lake is allowed, if the patio limit is not exceeded. The main issue encountered on Big Sandy and Minnewawa Lakes is vegetation removal. Undeveloped lots commonly see this problem. Restoration is required. He is currently dealing with one excessive fill violation that poses an erosion threat to the lake.

The Aitkin County Buffer Zone Ordinance is also managed by Sam. He was pleased to share that Aitkin County is at a 100 % compliance rate with this ordinance. There are 18 other counties that also have 100 % compliance with this state law.

Members questioned other zoning issues including culverts / drainage on the east side of Lake Minnewawa and a failing septic system on a back lot of Lake Minnewawa. These questions will be shared with the appropriate staff in the Aitkin County Environmental Services Office.

#### 5. Old Business:

5.1. 2019 Aitkin County AIS Grant Implementation Wrap Up: Work has been completed on this grant. A copy of the final report was shared. The following products / activities were completed with the support of this grant: Spring Newsletter, Cromwell 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Education Event, Boat Plug Docks, AIS Information Coasters, and AIS Themed Tackle Boxes. \$ 6,299.78 was spent on these activities. Everyone was thanked for contributing to the successful completion of this grant.

5.2 Mississippi River – Grand Rapids TMDL and WRAPS Project Updates: Janet Smude shared that the TMDL and WRAPS Reports for this project have been completed. The documents can be accessed at [www.pca.state.mn.us/water/watersheds/mississippi-river-grand-rapids.com](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/watersheds/mississippi-river-grand-rapids.com). One final wrap up meeting of the Ambassador group is proposed. An additional stormwater management meeting may also be held. The group was thanked for their input in this process.

5.3. MPCA / EPA Section 319 Small Watersheds Focus Program: An application for this grant program was submitted by the Aitkin County SWCD on behalf of the Big Sandy Watershed. We were notified in early September that the BSALWMP was selected for this round of the program. This will work to restore water quality in this watershed by focusing funding and staff time to addresses issues over a 10 year period. The first step will be to develop a nine-element 319 Focus Grant Workplan in cooperation with the MPCA. Work on this will likely begin in early 2020.

5.4. Potential Clean Water Fund Grant Application, Cromwell Stormwater Runoff Mgt Projects: An application for this grant program was submitted in September by Melanie Bomier. The application addresses drainage problems at the Cromwell Park. The city has been working with the DNR on other grant opportunities, but stormwater management is not their focus. The city went ahead and had a preliminary design and cost estimate completed that will address stormwater at the park. Melanie Bomier used this as a base for the CWF grant application. The plan includes rain gardens and a swale to collect water and carry it away from the building. The grant could also include funding for a few other rain garden/shoreland stabilization projects. The Cromwell project could be a showcase / demonstration project with high educational value. The application was supported by local BWSR staff, however competition for the funds is stiff. Funding will be awarded by early January.

#### 6. New Business:

6.1. Looking Ahead to 2020: It was noted that the BSALWMP has no active grants right now. The application for Aitkin County AIS Prevention grant should be available in early 2020. We will watch for other opportunities to support goals of the group.

6.2. Spring 2020 Newsletter: The group discussed a spring newsletter. This was felt to be a good outreach tool. Lake Country Power was noted as a potential source of funding, as was the Aitkin County AIS Grant. Focusing on vegetation removal and the importance of vegetation on shorelines was suggested. In addition, the time that boats and docks need to be out of the water before being moved to another waterbody was noted as important. Janet Smude will work on this.

7. Working Session:

7.1. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

7.1.1. SWHIM: It was noted that the lakes are high.

7.1.2. Sandy Lake: Jim Carlson shared that Big Sandy Lake is also high. Buoys and docks are being removed. The Army Corp is updating the wastewater treatment plant for the campground and office. Large holding tanks will be used to manage wastewater.

7.1.3. Sandy River: Ramona Hooper reported that the Sandy River is very high. Beaver have been removed, but keep returning.

7.1.4. Tamarack River: Docks are being removed here as well. The Tamarack River is also very high.

7.1.5. Prairie Lake / River: All buoys have been removed for the winter. The water is clearer than many can recall. The Northern Pike regulations are changing. There will be more opportunities to keep northernns. Changes will be in effect for the next fishing season.

8. Agenda Additions: Frank Turnock suggested we invite a speaker from the Minnewawa LID to our next meeting. It would be interesting to learn if the LID is accomplishing what they anticipated and if it is successful. Jim Carlson knows someone involved with the LID and will see if they can come next time.

Ramona Hooper questioned a mailing she received from the MPCA. The letter talked of changes to rules being made without a public hearing. Others in the group had no additional information.

Carmen Rinta shared that Amanda Ingels from Kennecott Exploration is leaving her position as Communication Coordinator and transferring to Salt Lake City. They will be interviewing for new staff soon. Water testing will be conducted at the end of the month. People are welcome to join the sampling crew if they would like.

9. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 8th. The meeting will be held at 2:00 pm at the Cromwell Park Pavilion, if it is available. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm. M/S/ Jim Carlson / Dianne Knoblen.