

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project
Annual Meeting & Executive Council Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2021

Attendance: Lynn Anderson, Tamarack; Joe Beaupre, Prairie Lake; Melanie Bomier, Carlton SWCD; Jeff Budnick, City of McGregor; Barb Dahl, Carlton Co SWCD Supervisor; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; Jack Hooper, McGregor Township; Ramona Hooper, McGregor Township; Dianne Knoblen, SWHIM; Brian Napstad, Aitkin County Commissioner; Dake Olson, City of McGregor; Gary Peterson, Carlton County Commissioner; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Tamarack Round Lake; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Bill Zelazny, Island Lake Cromwell; Sharon Zelazny, Island Lake Cromwell.

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 pm by Vice Chairperson Ray Gurske. Chairperson Barb Dahl later took over running the meeting.

1. 2020-2021 Financial & Activity Summary: Janet Smude shared a summary of activities completed in the past year. Two Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Grants were worked on. The first ended in December 2020. This grant supported a watershed wide newsletter, AIS themed fly swatters, and information bags distributed in the Tamarack River Watershed. The second grant began in the spring of 2021. Grant funds have been used to support a watershed wide newsletter and the Cromwell-Wright 4th and 5th Grade AIS Education Event .

Work was also conducted on a Clean Water Fund Grant managed by the Carlton SWCD. Funds have been allocated for one stormwater management project on South Island Lake.

Additional activities included hosting guest speakers, providing input on the EPA 9 Key Element Plan for the Tamarack River watershed and Lake Minnewawa watershed, and participating in the Starry Trek event.

The Covid 19 pandemic made our work a challenge. The group was thanked for working on all of these initiatives.

2. Election of Officers: Ray Gurske currently serves as the Vice Chairperson of the BSALWMP. The 2 year term of this appointment is expiring. Brian Napstad nominated Ray Gurske for this position again. This was seconded by Jack Hooper. The group unanimously re-elected Ray Gurske to the position of Vice Chairperson. Ray was thanked for his service to the BSALWMP.

3. Monthly Business Updates:

3.1. AIS Grant Materials – Youth Tackle Boxes: Carmen Rinta has looked into purchasing youth tackle boxes. The tackle boxes ordered last time included the BSALWMP and AIS logos on the front. An information card was taped to the back of the boxes. \$ 1,500 is available for purchasing these boxes through the AIS Education Grant. This will allow us to order approximately 96 boxes. These would be distributed to 4th grade students in the McGregor and Cromwell schools. Gary Peterson shared that the Carlton Co AIS program may be willing to provide tackle boxes for the Cromwell students. Sharon Zelazny offered to check how many boxes would be needed for the Cromwell students. The group decided to wait until next month to order these boxes.

3.2. Cromwell Stormwater Runoff Management Projects: Melanie Bomier shared that the Hedin project on South Island Lake has been installed, however no invoice has been submitted yet. A failing culvert was replaced with a vegetated swale. Stormwater runoff will be slowed and filtered by the vegetation before it reaches the lake.

Sharon Zelazny shared that the City of Cromwell was awarded a DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant. This grant will support a riverwalk, toilets, and enhancements to the playground near the Pavilion. The grant will contribute \$ 177,000 toward the \$ 355,000 project. Many partners are cooperating to make this project a success. Sharon was congratulated for receiving this grant.

3.3. MPCA / EPA Section 319 Small Watersheds Focus Program: Janet Smude and Melanie Bomier reported that work is progressing on this 9 Key Element Plan. Copies of information that has been developed for the Tamarack River was shared. The plan will be based on the TMDL that was developed for the river. A portion of the river is impaired for E. coli bacteria.

Strategies identified to bring this river back to meeting the standards include livestock & manure management, exclusion and pasture fencing, heavy use protection, and SSTS upgrades. Work will focus on the farms in this subwatershed. Identifying the sources of E.coli was discussed. The cost of this analysis was unknown.

Work on the Plan will continue. MPCA staff has taken the lead on this effort. Information will be shared as it becomes available.

3.4. Starry Trek – August 21st : Everyone was invited to participate in Starry Trek on August 21st. This event monitors for AIS, especially Starry Stonewort, by teaching monitoring techniques, identification tips, and visiting area lakes. The event was held in the Lake Minnewawa area in 2020. In 2021 it will be based at the Ripple Lake public access, just southeast of Aitkin. More information can be found at www.StarryTrek.org. The event is free, however registration is required.

4. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

4.1. SWHIM: No update was shared.

4.2. Sandy Lake: No update was shared.

4.3. Sandy River: Jack Hooper shared that the Sandy River is low. McGregor Township has no ditching/cleanout plans for the rest of the year. They have implemented a beaver bounty. Trappers are paid \$ 20 per beaver tail.

Dake Olson and Jeff Budnick talked about the effect of a plugged Ditch 5 on the City of McGregor. The Ditch holds back 4 feet of water, which is detrimental to the City. It is choked with vegetation. They have been talking with John Welle about equipment that may be available from the DNR for cleanout of straight line ditches. Wastewater treatment ponds are discharged into Ditch 5 in the spring and fall. Recent discharges have been well below the MPCA required phosphorus limit. They have also been looking into a product called Poseidon Pellets which can treat effluent. They are continuing to work on this issue.

4.4. Tamarack River: Ray Gurske shared that the level of Tamarack Lake is low. Rocks are exposed and there is a lot of weed growth. Water levels are also low in the Tamarack River. The DNR is conducting a survey of fish in Tamarack Lake.

Sharon Zelazny reported that 53 bags of educational materials have been assembled for property owners on North Island Lake.

4.5. Prairie Lake / River: Joe Beaupre noted that the water is clear on Prairie Lake. With the drought conditions there is no input to the lake from watershed bogs. A new bridge at the outlet of the lake is planned. A fish ladder is included in these plans. The lake level won't be changed, but this will hopefully keep the lake level more stable.

5. Agenda Additions: The status of the Minnewawa outlet project was questioned. No update was available.

It was noted that there was no representation in the BSALWMP from Eagle Lake. Members who used to attend have either passed away or moved from the area. Outreach to encourage involvement will be done.

6. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, August 11th at 2:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the Cromwell Park Pavilion if it is available. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm. M/S/ Joe Beaupre / Jack Hooper.