

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project  
Executive Council & Technical Team Meeting Minutes  
June 9, 2021

Attendance: Richard Beatty, Big Sandy Lake Association; Melanie Bomier, Carlton SWCD; Barb Dahl, Carlton Co SWCD Supervisor; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; Ramona Hooper, McGregor Township; Dianne Knoben, SWHIM; Pat McGinn, Lake Minnewawa; Brian Napstad, Aitkin County Commissioner; Gary Peterson, Carlton County Commissioner; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Tamarack Round Lake; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Franklin Turnock, Aitkin Co. SWCD Supervisor; Rod Walli, Tamarack River; Bill Zelazny, Island Lake; Sharon Zelazny, Island Lake Cromwell.

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:10 pm. The agenda was approved with the addition of Youth Fishing Tackle Packages. M/S/C Pat McGinn / Rod Walli.
2. The May 2021 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as presented. M/S/C Frank Turnock / Al Rinta.
3. A financial report for the month of May 2021 was shared. Expenses were related to the Cromwell-Wright 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Education Event. A total of \$ 616.33 was spent. The report was approved as presented. M/S/C Rod Walli / Dianne Knoben.

4. Special Presentation: Big Mouth Buffalo Fish with Dr. Alec Lackman: Dr. Lackman from the U of M Duluth joined the group to share information on the Big Mouth Buffalo Fish. Life size paintings of the fish were shared. This large fish is native to Minnesota. It resembles a carp, but is related to suckers. These fish have an incredible longevity – living 80+ years. Warmer water temperatures are preferred. There is a small commercial fishing industry in Minnesota. Bowfishing for this species has grown in popularity. There is currently no limit as it is considered a rough fish. Political and environmental ramifications to changing the fishing regulations need to be considered.

Dr. Lackman is studying this fish on Big Sandy Lake. The Big Mouth Buffalo Fish is a filter feeder that may feed on Zebra Mussel Veligers. The study will also look at the ages of sampled fish. Intestinal tracks of the fish will be examined for veligers. Since these large fish eat a lot, could they suppress zebra mussel populations? This research will continue through the summer of 2021. Dr. Lackman was thanked for sharing this interesting information with the group.

5. Old Business:

5.1. MPCA / EPA Section 319 Small Watersheds Focus Program: Janet Smude and Melanie Bomier reported that this project remains stalled. MPCA staff have assured us that we are not being forgotten and the 9 Key Element Plan for this area will be completed. Copies of information that has been developed for Eagle Lake was shared. The plan will be based on the TMDL that was developed for the lake. The fact sheet for Eagle Lake that was developed through the WRAPS project was shared. The existing Phosphorus load was good, however Chlorophyll a, and clarity were not quite meeting the standards.

The MPCA has run different models for the lake. These highlighted that the cropland load seemed high for the percent of the watershed that is comprised of this. The septic load should be addressed by updating the failing septic systems. The internal phosphorus load was noted, however staff would like to avoid having to deal with this as it is expensive. If landuse improvements can make the needed improvements, that would be a better way to reach the goal.

Portions of the draft 9 Key Element Plan relating to Eagle Lake were shared. This lists required components of the plan including sources of pollutants, BMPs needed, costs, estimated timeline, and monitoring plan. This is just a draft and is still being worked on.

Work on the Plan is expected to resume soon. Information will be shared as it becomes available.

5.2. Cromwell Stormwater Runoff Management Projects Update: Melanie Bomier informed the group that the Hedin project on South Island Lake has just been installed. A failing culvert was replaced with a vegetated swale. Stormwater runoff will be slowed and filtered by the vegetation before it reaches the lake. Alyssa Alsness from the Carlton SWCD has been visiting with other landowners interested in runoff management projects. Sharon Zelazny shared that the City of Cromwell will hear in late June if the DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant for improvements to the City Park is received.

5.3. Youth Fishing Tackle Packages: It was noted that there is funding in the AIS Education / Prevention Grant for these. An example of what was ordered last time was shared. Janet Smude commented that the graphic on the lid was good – it included the BSALWMP logo, website, and AIS logo. An information card was taped to the back of the boxes. A small supply of these was found in storage. Carmen Rinta shared that the tackle in the boxes can be used for summer or winter fishing. She also has a small quantity of boxes stored at her home. Carmen agreed to head up this effort. She will contact McGregor Printing and Graphics.

## 6. New Business:

6.1. July 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting – Election of Vice President: The BSALWMP Annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the July meeting. The position of Vice Chairperson is open for election. Ray Gurske currently serves as the Vice Chairperson.

## 7. Working Session:

### 7.1. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

7.1.1. SWHIM: No update was shared.

7.1.2. Sandy Lake: Dick Beatty reported that wake boats and shoreline erosion resulting from them continue to be a concern on Big Sandy Lake. The Big Sandy Lake Association has not taken a position on this issue, but is gathering additional information. The St. Anthony Falls Laboratory has been researching the energy being generated by these waves. The complete report is anticipated before the end of the year. Dick also shared that the BSLA President Bruce Johnson was severely burned in an accident. He is wished a speedy recovery.

7.1.3. Sandy River: Ramona Hooper shared that McGregor Township continues to battle beaver problems. 30+ beaver have been trapped in the township. Drones have been used to fly over ditches / streams and inspect for beaver dams. They are interested in continuing to use this tool. Information on this service from the Aitkin County SWCD was shared. There is a charge for this and staff time is somewhat limited, however the camera and picture quality is good. It has proven to be a useful tool.

7.1.4. Tamarack River: Ray Gurske shared that Tamarack Lake is slowly warming and fishing is improving. Water levels are low in the Tamarack River right now. The Tamarack River Watershed Team will hold their first meeting of the season on Tuesday at 9 am.

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

8. Agenda Additions: There were no other additions to the agenda.

9. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the Tamarack Sno-Flyers Clubhouse. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm. M/S/ Frank Turnock / Dianne Knoben.