

Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project
Executive Council & Technical Team Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2021

Attendance: Lynn Anderson, Round Lake; Richard Beatty, Big Sandy Lake Association; Jeff Budnick, City of McGregor; John Cyrus, City of Tamarack; Barb Dahl, Carlton County SWCD Supervisor; Jim Deming, Eagle Lake Carlton Co.; Ray Gurske, Tamarack River Watershed Team; Ramona Hooper, McGregor Township; Dianne Knoblen, SWHIM; Brian Napstad, Aitkin County; Gary Peterson, Carlton County; Al Rinta, Tamarack Sno-Flyers; Carmen Rinta, Round Lake, Tamarack; Bill Reed, Big Sandy Lake; Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD; Frank Turnock, Aitkin County SWCD Supervisor; Rod Walli, Tamarack River; Elijah Wencil, City of McGregor; Norbert Wollack, North Island Lake; Bill Zelazny, Island Lake; Sharon Zelazny, Island Lake.

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm. The agenda was approved as presented. M/S/C Carmen Rinta / Bill Reed.
2. The August 2021 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as presented. M/S/C Frank Turnock/ Ray Gurske.
3. A financial report for the month of August 2021 was shared. There were no expenses to report. The financial report was approved as presented. M/S/C Brian Napstad / Ray Gurske. It was noted that the deadline for spending the Aitkin County AIS Grant is December 31, 2021.

4. Old Business:

4.1. City of McGregor Wastewater Treatment System: Jeff Budnick introduced Eli Wencil to the group. Eli is the wastewater operator for the City of McGregor. The City operates 4 cells/ponds covering 11.3 acres. 73,000 gallons of effluent can be treated each day. The ponds are outletted to Aitkin County Ditch 5. Three discharges are allowed in the spring and three in the fall. There are 7 lift stations in McGregor.

This system is permitted until 2024 by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. They have been fully compliant with this 5 year permit. Monitoring is required to document nutrient levels in the discharge. Ferric chloride is used to reduce phosphorus levels before discharge. The average discharge is 4.869 million gallons over an 8 day period.

Eli and Jeff were thanked for sharing this information with the Group.

4.2. Cromwell Stormwater Runoff Management Projects Update: Melanie Bomier shared a report via email. Alyssa Alsness from the Carlton SWCD has been working with several landowners on shoreline restoration projects. There is a likely project on Eagle Lake. Lower Island and Upper Island Lakes each have a shoreline buffer project that will be installed. There is also a potential project on Tamarack Lake.

Sharon Zelazny reported that the City of Cromwell is working on the required Cost Share Contract for their stormwater management project.

4.3. AIS Education / Prevention Grant Materials – Youth Tackle Boxes: Carmen Rinta shared that she was able to connect with McGregor Printing and Graphics. 169 tackle boxes were ordered. With the shipping and set-up charges, this will spend all but \$ 2.55 of the budget. Carmen was thanked for placing this order. The tackle boxes will be the last item ordered to complete the AIS grant.

4.4. MPCA / EPA Section 319 Small Watersheds Focus Program: Janet Smude reported that the 9 Key Element Plan for this project has been submitted to the EPA for review and approval. They have a 30 day review period. The MPCA has warned us that changes / adjustments are usually suggested by the EPA. Once this is approved we can develop the workplan and a request for the first round of funding. In preparation for the workplan, it

was noted that this project includes Eagle, South Island, North Island, Horseshoe, Minnewawa, and Island Lake (Aitkin Co.). On these lakes we will be looking for sites in need of SSTS upgrades, shoreline buffers, rain gardens, and shoreline restoration projects. If members know of anyone who may be interested in this, please have them contact either the Carlton or Aitkin SWCDs. We would like to have some projects in the works so we can accurately request funding as part of this project.

5. New Business:

5.1. Tamarack Sulfide Mine Threat Public Meeting, August 21st: Water Legacy hosted a public meeting on August 21st to discuss the threats posed by sulfide mines. Lynn Anderson shared that we live in a water rich area. There are several concerns with a sulfate releasing mines including water pollution, impacts to wild rice growth, ground water, mercury, and treaty rights. This advocate group encourages local residents to make informed decisions and ensure that mining activity follows required environmental standards. Water Legacy will be invited to join a future meeting and share information.

6. Working Session:

6.1. Sub Watershed Project Reports:

6.1.1. SWHIM: Janet Smude shared that progress is being made on the Minnewawa Outlet Fish Passage project. Bid packets are being sent out. Ten contractors have been contacted.

6.1.2. Sandy Lake: Bill Reed and Dick Beatty reported that lake levels are approximately 9" – 10" below normal. Many boats are already in storage for the winter. Big Sandy Lake did not have much for boat traffic over Labor Day weekend. The USACOE Dam is still under construction. Plans were to complete the lock chambers in 2021 and the gates in 2022.

6.1.3. Sandy River: Ramona Hooper shared that the Sandy River is very dry and has little water in it.

6.1.4. Tamarack River: Water levels in the River are very low. Locals were not able to gather wild rice this year. Waterfowl have enjoyed the river and rice this fall. The Tamarack River Watershed Team will not meet again until spring.

6.1.5. Prairie Lake / River: No report

8. The next meeting was scheduled for either October or November. The date will depend on the availability of Water Legacy and agenda items needing attention. Watch for further information as this is confirmed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm. M/S/ Rod Walli / John Cyrus.