

Drainage Work Group Meeting Notes

August 18, 2011

12:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Minnesota Farm Bureau Building, Eagan, MN

Attendance

Tom Loveall, Faribault Co., BWSR Brd.; John Thompson, Faribault Co., MACO; Craig Austinson, Blue Earth Co.; Larry Gunderson, MPCA; Adam Birr, MDA; Rob Sip, MDA; Larry Kuseske, MAWD; Greg Eggers, DNR; Rick Moore, MSU-Mankato WRC; Wayne Anderson, MPCA; Mark Zabel, MASWCD; Alan Perish, MFU, MVA; Harlan Madsen, Kandiyohi Co., AMC; Loren Engelby, Kandiyohi Co.; Allan Kuseske, MADI; Chris Radatz, MFB; Ray Bohn, MAWD; Jerome Deal, MAWD; Dan Wilkens, RRWMB; Ron Harnack, RRWMB; Dave Luethe, DNR; Sid Cornelius, NRCS; Sonia Jacobsen, NRCS; Jeremy Maul, BWSR; Al Kean, BWSR

Handouts Prior to or During Meeting:

1. DWG – Meeting Logistics and Agenda for 8-18-11.doc
2. DWG – Meeting Notes for 6-9-11.doc
3. Multipurpose Drainage Synopsis, 4-17-11

Introductions and Agenda Overview

All in attendance introduced themselves. Al Kean provided copies and an overview of the agenda and mentioned that the Smith Partners LCCMR project final report came out on 8-15-11. Al will plan to put the report on the BWSR website Drainage page after consulting with Smith Partners.

Approval of 6-9-11 Meeting Notes

Extra copies of the subject meeting notes were distributed. Comments or corrections were requested. None were offered.

Summary and discussion of MDA drainage research projects, recent past and present

Adam Birr, Impaired Waters Technical Coordinator, MDA, provided a Powerpoint presentation about Clean Water Fund (CWF) research activities that MDA has funded in whole or in part in recent years, with a focus on drainage related activities. To help advise the definition of research priorities, MDA utilizes an ad-hoc impaired waters advisory committee, CWF interagency research team, internal MDA water team, and information from the February 2008 UMN Impaired Waters Research Symposium. Key research goals include: 1) Identify underlying processes that affect water quality; 2) Evaluate the effectiveness of agricultural BMPs; and 3) Develop technologies to target critical areas. In recent years, MDA has used an annual Request for Proposals (RFP) to competitively seek and identify CWF research projects. Recent research projects involve:

- Field-scale evaluations of controlled subsurface drainage, surface drainage, and woodchip bioreactors for water quantity and quality
- Evaluate nutrient retention basins, including constructed wetlands
- Evaluate Acetochlor losses to tile drainage
- Develop an updated Agricultural BMP Handbook for Minnesota
- Assessment and Selection of Sentinel Watersheds for addressing impaired waters

- Discovery Farms research and demonstration (currently involves farms in Goodhue, Stearns, Blue Earth, Kandiyohi and Chisago Counties, with more farms coming in the Minnesota River Basin and Cedar River Basin in the near future).

MDA sponsors substantial outreach and education via brochures and factsheets, MDA website, field days, videos, displays at various venues, newsletters, etc. Drainage Work Group members had good discussion about these research activities and related topics. Several ideas emerged from these discussions, including:

- It was suggested that Adam’s presentation be put on the BWSR website, Drainage page.
- Could some MDA research funding be coordinated with BWSR Conservation Drainage grant funds for monitoring?
- How is, or might, monitoring and research be better coordinated with multipurpose drainage planning on a subwatershed or drainage-shed scale?
- Need to know more about how many of what kind of BMPs, where, it takes to result in measurable water quality improvement.

Overview and discussion of Multipurpose Drainage Synopsis

The subject synopsis, dated 4-17-11, was prepared by Al Kean initially for the Agricultural Leadership Dialogue project that is being facilitated by the Environmental Initiative, with funding assistance through DNR, MPCA, BWSR and MDA. Al plans to present regarding these concepts and practices at the UMN Water Resources Conference in October. Although there was limited time for this agenda item, in order to get to the next agenda item, two key issues were discussed, including: 1) use of the terminology “multipurpose drainage” vs. “conservation drainage” (some like and some dislike the terminology “conservation drainage”); and 2) concerns about expectations of “multipurpose drainage”. Perspectives reflected both comfort and discomfort with the term “multipurpose”. Al will bring this agenda item back to a future DWG meeting for further discussion.

Overview of NRCS Swampbuster administration initiative and associated NRCS-BWSR-SWCD Swampbuster and WCA coordination

Sid Cornelius, NRCS Resource Conservationist, and Jeremy Maul, BWSR Sr. Wetland Specialist, provided an overview of the subject initiative and associated partnerships. Since 2006, NRCS Minnesota has had a policy waiver regarding NRCS national protocol to provide certified wetland determinations to farmers when they submit a form AD 1026 for new drainage. In order to bring Minnesota NRCS procedures in line with national procedures, a certified wetland determination is now required when new drainage is proposed. This has/will create a substantial NRCS workload for certified wetland determinations, due to increasing tile drainage. NRCS has sought and will receive assistance from about 30 SWCDs and BWSR to do the homework necessary for NRCS to make certified wetland determinations in many prairie pothole counties where new drainage work is occurring. This wetland determination work will also assist WCA review. The associated contribution agreements will include training and coordination to enhance Swampbuster and WCA coordination. Due to Swampbuster workload, farmers and drainage contractors are being encouraged to request wetland determinations well ahead of planned drainage work. There are also efforts developing to establish agricultural wetland mitigation banks (to be used exclusively for ag wetland impact mitigation). The DWG will stay tuned to these initiatives.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that Al Kean would Doodle DWG members to identify the best Thursdays for DWG meetings in the fall.