

Drainage Work Group Meeting Notes March 12, 2009

Attendance

Craig Austinson, Blue Earth Co.; Annalee Garletz, AMC; Greg Eggers, DNR; Jerry Amiot, MACO; Les Everett, UMN WRC; Larry Gunderson, MPCA; Ron Harnack, RRWMB; Rick Moore, MSU-M WRC; Warren Seykora, MAWD, WRWD; Dan Wilkens, MADI, RRWMB/SHRWD; Mark Dittrich, MDA; Andy Ranaivoson, UMN; Joel Peterson, BWSR; Al Kean, BWSR

Handouts Prior to or During Meeting:

1. DWG – Meeting Agenda for 3-12-09
2. DWG – Meeting Notes for 1-8-09
3. Copy of 2-26-09 version of SF364 – Senate bill carrying DWG 2008 Consensus Recommendations, as amended

Introductions and Agenda Overview

All in attendance introduced themselves and Al Kean provided an overview of the agenda.

Approval of 1-8-09 Meeting Notes

Extra copies of the subject meeting notes were distributed. Al asked if there were any comments or corrections. No comments or corrections were offered.

Status of HF162 / SF364

Al provided copies of the 2-26-09 version of SF364 and noted that the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee had voted in favor of the bill on 2-23-09, including a technical amendment by Senator Dan Sparks, chief author, to make the bill correspond to the DWG recommendations and HF162. The committee also approved a verbal amendment by Senator Frederickson to modify language in proposed 103E.806 Partial Abandonment of a Drainage System, Subd. 3 Hearing. (a) - - to be more specific about the hearing notice requirements. Following is the DWG proposed language (not underlined) and the deletions and additions of the Senator Frederickson amendment via strikethrough and underline.

103E.806, Subd. 3 Hearing. (a) When the petition is filed, the drainage authority, in consultation with the auditor or the secretary, shall set a time and location for a hearing on the petition and shall give notice of the hearing by mail to the owners of all property benefited by the drainage system and by publication ~~to all other persons interested in the drainage system~~ on a website and in a newspaper of general circulation within the affected drainage area.

DWG members present discussed this amendment and noted that some drainage authorities do not have their own website at this time and that some rural property owners do not have computers or seek information via websites. The general consensus was concern about the amendment. Annalee indicated that she would communicate with Sen. Frederickson and Rep. Hansen to seek change of “and” to “or” after “website” in the Sen. Frederickson amendment.

Discussion of Other Drainage Related Bills before the Legislature

Some discussion about SF1112 / HF1182 (Public service corporation easement discharge exemption repeal) and SF0756 / HF0880 (Watershed districts and watershed management organizations required to submit information to counties, and county approval of levies and fees required). It was noted that these bills did not appear to be moving forward at the time.

Bioreactors on Tile Drainage for Water Quality

Mark Dittrich, MDA, and Andry Ranaivoson, UMN, provided a PowerPoint presentation about woodchip bioreactor research and demonstration projects in Minnesota and elsewhere. The design involves a woodchip filled trench with a drainage tile inlet and outlet, typically with flow control and monitoring structures near each end of the bioreactor. The purpose is water quality improvement, primarily through denitrification, for which bioreactors can achieve reductions of 30% up to 100%. Relatively uniform hardwood chips work much better than softwood in terms of life span, porosity and effectiveness. Bioreactors are typically constructed along field edges, because they should not be driven across or tilled across and so that control and monitoring structures are located to be least susceptible to damage by farming operations. Mark also provided information about drainage system surge pond demonstrations in Mower County.

LiDAR Digital Elevation Data

Les Everett, UMN Water Resources Center, provided a PowerPoint presentation describing LiDAR collected digital elevation data, the status of digital elevation data in Minnesota and current efforts to seek legislative support for statewide digital elevation data. The Digital Elevation Committee of the Governor's Council on GIS has been advocating for statewide digital elevation data for some time, because this data has numerous uses from watershed analysis and planning to infrastructure improvement and precision farming. The beginning of 25 years of constitutional amendment funding for clean water, habitat and trails is a great time to develop statewide digital elevation data. A Red River Basin partnership is currently in the process of collecting and processing LiDAR data to develop digital topographic information for the Red River Basin in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Manitoba has previously collected LiDAR data for the Red River Basin in Canada. Nine counties in the southeast corner of Minnesota are also being collected and processed, funded by state and local flood response funding. A number of counties in the Metro area and outstate have previously collected LiDAR data and developed digital elevation data.

Tiered Aquatic Life Use Classification System

Discussion was very brief. Stakeholder meetings were held recently at which several DWG members were present. It was mentioned that MPCA is also looking at water quality standards and updating some aspects (e.g. turbidity and NTUs). The biannual Section 305b report to EPA (which measures attainment of standards for fishable and swimmable waters) is in process.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the DWG would occur after the 2009 legislative session. Al Kean agreed to query DWG members via email after the legislative session to find a workable date for the next meeting.