

MISSISSIPPI MAKEOVER

A Plan for Restoration, Just Around the Bend

Citizen Advisory Group
Meeting Minutes from
Wednesday April 22, 2009
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Red Wing, MN

Please note: Presentations referenced below are available on Mississippi Makeover website at www.dakotaswcd.org/wshd_missmak.html.

A. Welcome and Introductions: Laura Jester welcomed the group; introductions were made around the table. Participants included:

1. Katie Himanga, Lake City Resident
2. Don Kern, Flint Hills Resources
3. Kevin Smith, Hastings Environmental Protectors; City of Hastings
4. Phil Vieth, Hastings Environmental Protectors
5. Mike McKay, Red Wing Resident
6. Joe Beattie, Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission
7. Mark Swanson, Wacouta Resident
8. Laura Jester, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District
9. Norm Senjem, MN Pollution Control Agency
10. Jennifer Ender, MN Pollution Control Agency
11. Tim Schlagenhaft, MN Department of Natural Resources
12. Jeff Janvrin, WI Department of Natural Resources
13. Steve Johnson, National Park Service
14. Jeff Luehrs, Dakota County Water Resources Department
15. Jon Hendrickson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
16. Paul Drotos, City of Red Wing
17. Kyle Herdina, Prairie Island Indian Community
18. Carl Reuter, Ravenna Township

B. Mississippi Makeover Update: Laura Jester gave brief refresher on the Project objectives and an update on progress thus far. (See *"Update and Historical Accounts"* presentation.)

C. Historic Conditions in the Mississippi River: Laura Jester gave a presentation on the historic (pre-settlement) conditions in this region of the Mississippi River and Lake Pepin. Most reports were anecdotal accounts from travelers and early residents. Some historic data were available on water clarity. Overall, reports were of crystal clear water with abundant aquatic plants, fish and wildlife before settlers became established. (See *"Update and Historical Accounts"* presentation.)

D. Current Conditions and Suggested Targets from Technical Experts: Tim Schlagenhaft gave a presentation on the development of various metrics for each of the indicators chosen by the CAG at the December meeting (sedimentation, water clarity, aquatic vegetation, invertebrates, fish). He recounted how technical experts from several agencies convened to discuss historical, current, and possible future conditions and metrics used to measure the indicators. (See *"Indicator Metrics" presentation.*) (See *Fact Sheets* on website under 4/22/09 meeting for more info on indicator metrics.)

E. Group Discussion of Targets for Indicators: The group discussed the metrics for each indicator (fact sheets were sent ahead of the meeting for review by the CAG) and the suggested restoration targets recommended by the technical experts. The group agreed that an interim goal at the halfway point (8 years) to the longer-range goal (15 years) is essential for assessing progress.

The group agreed that fish and invertebrates would take a longer time to respond to restoration efforts and that targets should be set at 10 and 20 years for interim and long-term, respectively. While recommended targets for fish metrics were not finalized by the technical experts, the group agreed that a fish assemblage, moving from a rough fish dominated assemblage to an assemblage with more native game fish and panfish species, was the appropriate metric. The group also thought this "assemblage" approach had applications to mussels and aquatic vegetation as a way to visualize what changes might take place from a community perspective.

The group decided that a sixth indicator, waterfowl, should be added. Tim will work with wildlife experts to determine possible metrics and recommend targets for waterfowl.

There were questions regarding the use of these Mississippi targets for the backwater areas of Spring Lake and the Lower Vermillion River. It was decided that working toward the established targets for the Mississippi main channel would also result in improvements in the backwaters. However, separate targets and metrics for these areas could be established in the future. Separate backwater metrics will be developed for fish assemblages.

The point was made that indicators/targets should be presented in a manner that appeals to the public and a marketing campaign should include images for each indicator. It was suggested that we add a column to the target table to include "ideal" conditions so that policy makers and the public know that we don't wish to settle for just getting part of the way to complete restoration. A cultural shift in thinking about runoff and water quality is necessary. This project is a small step down that road.

There was some discussion on how much the Mississippi Makeover Project and the CAG can actually make a difference in this area. Agency staff in the room commented that recommendations made by a citizens group and included in an Implementation Plan carry much more weight than agency staff alone. Adding to this project's credibility is the cooperation among several key agencies using this project as an umbrella to several other programs.

F. Group Recommendation on Final Set of Indicators: While much progress was made, there are a few targets and metrics that were not finalized at the meeting including fish and waterfowl. The CAG members will weigh in with comments via email in the coming weeks. A final table with all metrics, interim targets and long-range targets should be available and distributed in June.

G. Future Steps:

- a. CAG to finalize metrics and targets for fish and waterfowl via email
- b. Tech agencies to develop potential restoration activities to achieve indicator targets
- c. CAG to convene (July?) to discuss restoration activities and recommend future actions