The meeting opened with a welcome by Laura Jester and introductions around the room. Residents representing all four lakes were present. Approximately 25 residents attended including 11 from Pickerel, 5 from Rogers, 3 from Sunfish, 4 from Thompson, and 2 for all lakes. Additionally, Carmen Hauck with Townsquare Television was there filming some of the conversations. Laura gave a short interview on the project. A short news segment ran on Insight 7 the following week with some nice footage of the event (available online).

Janna Kieffer gave a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation on the WRAP study along with results from the survey of subwatershed residents (available online). There were a few questions from the audience including one about how lakes are deemed “impaired.” Janna described the process for listing a waterbody as impaired. Some audience members wondered if all available data (including citizen collected data) were being used in the study. Janna indicated it that all data that was submitted to agencies and/or cities were being used.

Laura then described the structure of the remainder of the meeting (which was a World Café discussion style). Participants were asked to break out into small groups at designated tables according to the lake they came to represent. Each small group had a facilitator that took notes and kept the discussion “on topic.” Participants were asked to answer/discuss a particular question for 20 minutes. After that time, groups were to “mix up” and sit at a different table to answer and discuss the next question for 20 minutes. After mixing up and joining a different table, a third round with a different question completed the evening. Following are notes from discussions at various tables for the 3 questions asked:

**Question #1: Share your favorite memory or your favorite aspect of the lake in your community.**

**THOMPSON LAKE** (notes by Barb Peichel)

(Note that folks where mostly neighbors, a public official, & a WHEP volunteer)

- Like seeing the wildlife (coyote, mink, turkeys, owls, red squirrels, hawks)...have seen the coyote 3 times in one week in the late morning
- Value diversity and variety – soccer fields, lake walk, playground (new), outdoor weddings, lodge...great to see investments in the park
- Park wasn’t very nice in past (playground upgrade a big improvement)
- Walk in early morning and see the mist on the lake, ducks landing, and deer
- Great to see wildlife in city
• Lake quality has improved with the rain garden and how it drains through the marsh...used to be goose poop all over in the past and people fed the ducks and geese with bread and the parking lot used to be right up to the lake...used to be stinky ("goose poop sidewalk") and oil film on water
• Interested in wetland health (conducts this type of monitoring through WHEP) – vegetation and macroinvertebrate study to see pollutant intolerant versus tolerant species (mn.whep.org)
• That trails connect to Kaposia
• Luxury to walk to park with kids and see turtles and deer and not have to cross roads
• Playground
• Seems like the cattails are dying off – can that be due to muskrats?
• Area under the bridge gets green and gross
• See baby ducks
• Meet interesting people (such as someone collecting fungus for a class)
• Path around the lake

Favorite memory of Thompson Lake

• Fell into Thompson Lake with waders on
• Turtle was laying eggs
• Family of ducks that stay in the courtyard of dormitory of school
• Taking kids fishing
• Question – are the fish safe to eat from Thompson Lake?
• Senior pictures taken by lake and family portrait
• Had wedding reception here

Pickerel Lake (notes by Laura Jester and Janna Kieffer)

• It’s in a great park with a National draw of visitors
• Friends of Lilydale Park guides hikes and snowshoe hiked in park
• Have visited in winter – hiked to Ivy Falls – falls were encased in ice, half blue in color and half brown
• Watched a hummingbird take a “shower” in the small falls
• Loved watching herons fly through early morning fog
• The area is in the Mississippi River flyway and has many birds
• Apparently, the resident Bald Eagle left, however. Possibly chased out by geese
• Blanding’s turtle known to be there
• River otter inhabit the lake
• Brickyard Trail is an amazing trail
• Many cultural and historical features throughout the park
• Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP) monitoring occurred in wetland adjacent to Pickerel in 2012.
• Much fun on that WHEP sampling trip: watched damselflies and dragonflies hatch and watched an otter. Large watershield plants are in the lake.
• In 1960’s – had big adventures to collect fossils in brickyard and behind the ice of Ivy Falls.
• Park has improved greatly – it once was a “dump” and had many transient people there. It’s much more natural now.
• Supposedly have big northern pike in the lake but haven’t been able to catch them (may be stocked by DNR)
• Lake doesn’t necessarily flood when the river floods.
• Kids birthday parties center around the lake
• Cliff Timm (now deceased) loved Pickerel Lake and wanted it preserved for fishing (particularly for kids), and for teaching about nature. It was an important component to his legacy.
• Wonder if fish are safe to eat
• Have seen carp left on the shore to rot

Second Table of Pickerel Lake Residents:

Participant #1

- Grew up on the “West Side” (born in 1950s). He fondly recalls learning to swim in Pickerel Lake and swimming in the lake with his buddies
- Felt the Pickerel Lake area was a “good place to grow up”, but is disappointed in the current quality of the lake and the extent of aquatic plant coverage
- Indicated the lake has been a pretty good fishery in the past (bass, sunfish), but feels the quality of the fishery has gone done (too many carp now)
- Would like to be able to take his grandson fishing at Pickerel Lake

Participant #2

- Lives in the “West Side” and views Pickerel Lake (and park) as a regional gem.
- Wonders whether the lake has actually changed, or just users’ perceptions of the lake
- Favorite memory is eating fish caught in Pickerel Lake by Cliff Timm. Cliff Timm was a strong advocate and financial supporter of several area lakes, including Pickerel. Mr. Timm was responsible for funding several local fishing piers/docks to make fishing accessible to local children.

Participant #3

- Bought a house on the bluff above Pickerel Lake about 13 years ago
- Has enjoyed exploring the nearby trails, especially in the winter
- She is “delighted by” the recreational opportunities that the lake provides, including cross country skiing, snow shoeing, providing a location for gathering/events, and general exploring.
- She would like Pickerel Lake (and park) to become a greater “destination”, including additional awareness of the park, more recreational opportunities, and a generally nice, attractive, and clean place to visit
- Observed ice fishing on the lake in the past, but not in recent years

Participant #4

- Has lived in the area for many years and fondly recalls taking his children down to the lake when they were young (about 50 years ago). He now hikes down the bluff to the lake with his grandchildren.

Participant #5 (also employee of St. Paul Parks)

- Grew up on “West Side”, but didn’t recall hanging out at the lake when he was young
- His experience with Pickerel Lake as a child was family drives around the park
- He believes the lake is likely cleaner than it was in the past, since the illegal dumping has been significantly reduced (dumping from the adjacent brick yard, amongst other dumping)
- His biggest issues are 1) the quality of the water coming down from the top of the bluff and the lack of local control to improve the quality coming to the lake, and 2) the build-up of nutrients in the lake sediments
ROGERS LAKE (notes by Jill Smith)

- Wildlife including turtles, waterfowl, muskrats, eagles, hawks, raccoons, coyotes, turkeys, deer, possum
- Peacefulness and sunsets
- Fishing – largemouth bass 5.5 lbs and Northern pike – 32”
- Boating
- Ice fishing
- Swimming – although muddy
- Ice skating and hockey

SUNFISH LAKE (notes by Rachel Walker)

- “Swimming after dinner each night with the kids”
- “Fishing and catching lots of fish – sunfish;” “watching the kids fish”
- “Many years ago there used to be a regatta on the lake.” All day event from morning to night. It was the highlight of the summer and how families really came together as a community around the lake, socialized around the water.
- At one time, the lake had no fish. The MDNR stocked the lake at some point.
- Lots of folks who do not live on the lake come to recreate on the lake. Some come and access the lake without permission. Several residents expressed some dismay about trespassing on their property by persons who wanted lake access but did not ask for it. One resident said that he gave access to some non-residents as he thought it might be a deterrent to the City pass ordinance requiring public access. In other words, if non-residents felt they could get access to the lake, they might not complain to the city and require that public access be established.
- Unusually warm year this year (2012), seems more weeds and algae, water clarity is compromised
- Island appears to be getting bigger in the middle of the lake; in 1964, the island was the size of a small room and now much bigger.
- Residents/ lake users should not be concerned about size of lake, rather about its water quality. Efforts should be made to educate lake users about lawn care practices that harm or, alternatively, protect the lake.
- “Green Guardian?”

[Participants were asked to “mix up” their groups and move to different tables for the next question.]

**Question #2: What concerns you most about the quality of waterbodies in your community?**

Table 1 (notes by Barb Peichel)

- Need to keep lakes clean and healthy and fresh
- What I have been told about results from the survey just presented
- Keep water clean and healthy and aquatic life healthy
- Without clear water and healthy vegetation, Rogers Lake builds up a lot of weeds and then if we don’t control them it turns into a swamp
- Can’t hardly get out to fish with all the weeds growing (Rogers)...we formed an association and the city pays for half of the cost of treatment. What chemical is it? Don’t know, but 15 acres are treated (Rogers) and it works well...algae there is from phosphorus...the chemical is safe for fish and swimming
- Pickerel- in the past, the lake has been pea soup and weeds so dense that ducks could walk across the lake
- Have they tried barley straw on any of these lakes? They stake them along shorelines or in lakes to reduce algae
- My understanding is that algae builds up at bottom of the lake and needs oxygen in hot sunny weather and then the algae floats to the top of the lake
• Steve McComas treated Northwoods Lake with barely straw and it worked since it was like pea soup. Did it work? Seemed too, but DNR did also did a shoreline planting and education too. How long did it last? Don’t know.
• Concern that most folks have a lack of knowledge about where the stormwater goes. I didn’t even know I was in the Pickerel watershed.
• Most people haven’t even heard of Pickerel lake or knows where it is which is a huge issue
• Need a slogan such as “Green foam forms from grass clippings” – real issue is education since most people would do the right thing if they knew what it was
• Make everyone aware of what goes on in the street.
• Rogers Lake Assn. sent out a mailing about what do with grass clippings and leaves 2-3 times per year
• It is really simple for people to take actions to improve water quality
• Men like to look at maps so make that part of an educational effort
• Surprised how wide the area draining to Thompson Lake is
• Some people don’t understand, but some people don’t care so we need to get the kids to care
• Concern if the wildlife is healthy
• Novice in this area and don’t want to contribute to the problem so need to know what to do
• Lawn care is a problem – pesticides wash into lakes and a lot of people don’t know watershed of lakes
• Lawn care companies have to comply with state phosphorus ban and there are tight guidelines for certification and licensing, but individuals don’t know or fertilize on their driveways or use too much.
• But I’ve seen a condo lawn care company using bad practices on lawns – spraying pesticides in high wind, etc.
• Need a scoreboard on Butler Road that says if the lake is better or worse than the year before
• Pickerel – hard to know what people are doing because they don’t even know they are in the watershed
• Need educational signs in the park or by the lake…something like the air quality index that is in the newspaper
• Somehow shine a light on the house that needs help with leaf management, etc.
• Put sign up showing a big green slime pile that is from leaves – something visual to get people’s attention

Table 2 (notes by Laura Jester)

• Runoff from Mendota Heights into Pickerel Lake
• Loss of biofunction and biodiversity
• “As the lakes go, so do our communities.” Need to protect and improve them for the future
• Looking at runoff maps – many people don’t realize they live in the watershed of a particular waterbody
• Degradation affects the whole community
• The garbage in Thompson Lake turns people off. Signal Hills shopping center drains to this lake with horrible amount of garbage.
• Garbage could stem from being closely connected with parking lot and the park itself
• Natural debris of sediment, phosphorus and leaves
• At Powderhorn Lake – they installed a water quality improvement system that really made a difference in water quality. Along with shoreline restoration – the lake was removed from impaired waters list.
• Lately there have been more aquatic plants
• West St. Paul is paying for sins of the past as they are an early ring suburb. Now they are starting to look at redevelopment.
• Easier to “go after” residential property owners rather than increase fees and regulations for commercial development
• Stormwater management is the most expensive piece of development
• Hard to cities to require strict regulations for stormwater management because they want to increase tax revenue and entice development
• Does West St. Paul have swap or exchange program for parking lot space requirements?
• What policies changes can come out of these conversations? What can be recommended to city councils?
• As Robert Street redevelops and transit is incorporated, then less of a need for parking
• Difficult to retrofit stormwater best practices

Table 3 (notes by Jill Smith)

• Weed and algae growth in 2006 and 2007 – herbicide has helped (Rogers)
• Bad smells in July and August (Rogers)
• Lack of buffer (Rogers)
• Grass clippings and leaves in the street and lake (Rogers)
• Thompson is much improved with park improvements, including more wildlife
• Cliff Tim was anti geese. He provided funding for Pickerel Lake
• Rogers has turned into more of a swamp
• Sediment coming from Ivy Falls is a concern for Pickerel – perhaps need to control the flow
• The water temperature in Rogers in 2012 was 95° which killed the northern pike. Could this be due to drainage from the new road?
• Motors on Rogers Lake are a concern
• What is the long term life of Rogers? 100 years?

Table 4 (notes by Janna Keiffer)

Participant #1

- Rogers Lake resident and shoreline owner (8-9 years)
- Most concerned about shoreline neighbors not using buffer strips and throwing their clippings into the lake
- Participant unsure of joining new lake association, as there is concern that the group will be “self-serving” and only want to address the aquatic plant issue
- Participant indicated disagreement among neighbors/community members regarding lake use (desire for a recreational lakes versus aesthetic viewing) and the relevant management strategies (natural management vs recreational management)

Participant #2

- Pickerel Lake watershed resident.
- Feels the lake is likely cleaner than it used to be, given less dumping and more rules.
- Recognizes that lake is floodplain lake and will be influence by Mississippi River water quality

Participant #3

- Most concerned about residents’ ignorance regarding proper lawn care practices (clippings, fertilizer)
- Works for St. Paul Parks, and mentioned that most of the watershed to Pickerel Lake is out of their jurisdiction/control
- Noted many nice properties in Pickerel Lake watershed that probably use lawn services. Suggested many of these properties probably aren’t aware that their runoff drains to Pickerel Lake
- Mentioned remnants of the clay mining operation along the bluff nearby Pickerel Lake- brick yard mined the hills and walked away without restoring the bluffs. He indicated these un-restored areas are likely a major source of erosion and sediment deposition to the lake.
Table 5 (notes by Rachel Walker)

- Pickerel L. – Roads are of concern. New roads will increase run-off/nutrients to the lake.
- Geese. In 1953 geese did not stop over; they would fly over the lake.
- Phosphorus run-off
- Large houses affect “Ivy Falls” – run-off goes into the lake.
- “Anything that goes into the street winds up in the lake.”
- How can people be reached to know best practices for lake care? Wish residents/users had a sense of urgency to address lake problems – sense of urgency seems to be missing.
- Want to spread word about how valuable are these lakes, how unique and how critical it is to protect their water quality.
- Many people enjoy biking through this area, particularly on road to Mendota Heights (Lilydale Road and County Road 5?). The road is very narrow and dangerous. Good to address that.
- Friends of Lilydale do not want Pickerel Lake to become like Harriet Island – want to keep it more natural. Do not want park developed.
- 9 acre dog park is a big problem – do not want that next to the river.

[Participants were asked to “mix up” their groups and move to different tables for the next question.]

Question #3: How is water quality connected to other important issues in your community?

Some people left the meeting as it was 8:00.

Table 1 (notes by Barb Peichel)

- Garlough school incorporates environmental education in the area for families
- We treat everything as disposable, but want wildlife, streams, lakes, freshwater good for kids
- Taxes – if we don’t take care of water then the government is going to have to clean it up...all takes personal efforts
- Sunfish – only 35 homes around the lake and all have wells and septic systems (open pit septic grandfathered in) so this could be interrelated to water quality
- Q: Is there public access on Sunfish? A: No. Q: Can you invite us over to see the lake? Can do a fundraiser and fish in the lake.
- Had a nephew that used to turtle hunt and sold meat from Sunfish Lake so he had lake access somehow – lots of snapping turtles.
- Pickerel – lake is a draw for people so don’t want it to smell. Trail is important
- All lakes have a sense of community and need to preserve it for the economic base (example of what is happening to White Bear Lake with water levels).
- People need to take responsibility about how they are impacting the community
- Not as many churches talking about nature and environment
- People have to clean it up and be able to touch the water and experience it where in the past some of these lakes were treated as dumps
- People are more independent now, but it would be nice to be more of a community with neighbors
- Sunfish Lake – we have a Halloween party to get people together and water quality does get talked about
- Peer pressure – lot of people are surprised and want to maintain water quality
- Pay to have them (city?) spray weeds – lake associations want to expand that
- Last couple of years Sunfish Lake was worse...could walk on the milfoil
Q: Can Eurasian water milfoil be carried by waterfowl? How else could it get to Sunfish Lake?
Rogers – we don’t have any invasive weeds (except purple loosestrife)
Worry if kids will drown (Sunfish) because Eurasian Watermilfoil is so thick. They cut a square out by the dock so the kids can swim...scary for kids to swim

Table 2 (notes by Laura Jester)

Answers focus on Thompson Lake

- Connect with Parks and Recreation
- Thompson Park improvements draw people to the water – people didn’t know lake was there until there was a park around it.
- Should compare before and after photos of Thompson Lake
- The more available the waterbody, the more interested people become and education about the waterbody follows. They want to use the waterbody so they want it to be clean.
- Dakota County website is helpful. Signage in the area is helpful – especially with children.
- There is a sector of the public that do not understand basics of water quality and do not care about water quality. We will never reach them.
- Organizations already doing community outreach: Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Lions, Youth Groups, Scouts, churches, Garlough Elementary, St. Thomas Academy, Dodge Nature Center
- Dakota County Parks – possible Earth Day activities, other activities to be moved out of Lebanon Hills into other County Parks.
- Need to reach people that don’t currently know about water quality issues but would be willing to change behavior.
- Are punitive measures needed?
- Need to push information to people rather than making them seek it out.
- Rainbarrels and compost bins sales in spring are very helpful
- Lack of funding is probably at the root of the issue.

Table 3 (notes by Jill Smith)

- Boy Scouts clean up parks
- Volunteer Parks and Rec cleanup programs
- Adopt a Lake
- St. Thomas students
- Basic education
- Raingardens, downspouts and barrels
- People say water is important but there is a disconnection with what they actually do
- Long term monitoring is needed in Pickerel – by city (?)
- Road building in Lilydale Park may be counter to improving lake conditions (?)
- Water should be treated before it reaches Pickerel Lake
- No one knows where storm sewers go
Table 4 (notes by Janna Kieffer)

Participant #1 (Pickerel Lake watershed resident)

- Indicated that awareness is an issue and that it’s difficult to motivate people to be respectful in their lawn practices if they don’t know about the importance
- Indicated that whether residents want to think about it or not, they affect downstream water quality
- Feels that how we treat our resources shows who we are.
- In his experience working at Rosemount Parks Dept, found that it’s easier to keep parks clean than to make a clean park
- Ideas to encourage others- spread the concept that although we’re just individuals, our actions do make a difference
- Suggested that education of Pickerel Lake residents is important- estimated that 2/3 of people in his area don’t know that their runoff goes to Pickerel Lake.

Participant #2 (Thompson Lake watershed resident)

- Feels Thompson Lake is “a big part of our community”
- Feels community members feel more pride in the lake and their community following the County’s investments/improvements in the park
- Recognized that lakes are a free amenity, and it is residents’ responsibility to take care of them
- Suggested importance of educating by example (e.g. rainwater garden demonstration project in her neighborhood)

Participant #3 (interested resident from Inver Grove Heights)

- Indicated education is important to help people care about water quality

Table 5 (notes by Rachel Walker)

- Rogers L. – In 1978 ordinance was passed of no motor use. Many people like to use boats but no electric trolling motors allowed. Resident wants to change that. At fishing opener, saw 10 boats. Really fun! Wants to see more boats and boat use!
- Treat weeds in Rogers L. Like in Eden Prairie, figure out good time and appropriate spraying of the lake to control weeds.
- Control ducks/ geese.
- Pickerel L. – 11’ in the deepest parts. Put in a bubbler in the winter (also put in Rogers). Most of the time the water flows out of Pickerel. Directly in flow path when major flooding occurs. Problem.
- Lilydale Regional Park - park has a reputation as a dump or floodplain. Water quality affects regional population (folks living nearby).
- Get rid of invasive species. Lake quality may be different than Rogers or Sunfish L.
- Park is a good thing. If the park improves, the lake will also improve as will the water quality. $1.5 million is being spent in improvements.
- Ivy Falls upstream should be controlled. Need to address flooding issues. Sediment is coming from Ivy Falls.
- Need more native shoreline plants. If improve shoreline and lake water quality, will affect the region in a good way.