

Watershed Management Plan Workshop  
Wednesday, July 6, 2011 10:30 a.m.  
Senior Citizens Room, Heron Lake Community Center, Heron Lake, MN

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### **Attendance**

Mark Deutschman, HEI; John Giese, Murray County; Ron Kuecker, Cottonwood Commissioner; Bill Sauer, Murray County; Dave Henkels, Jackson County; Ed Lenz, Nobles SWCD; Dale Bartosh, HLWD; Mike McCarvel, HLWD; Brian Nyborg, Jackson SWCD; LeRoy Peterson; Dennis Daberkow, Jackson SWCD; Jan Voit, HLWD; Ross Behrends, HLWD; Lauren Michelsen, HLWD; and Margaret Peeters, HLWD

### **Minutes**

- Jan Voit welcomed everyone and introduced Mark Deutschman, the consultant from Houston Engineering (HEI) in Minneapolis. Mark Deutschman was here to describe the details of the Water Management Plan (WMP).
- Mark Deutschman provided information regarding the revised WMP and the proposed funding mechanism. Discussion followed on the presented proposal. Mark Deutschman explained the WMP and the legal requirements. The mission statement, goals, and policies of the WMP are focused on water quality and quantity management and projects the district plans to undertake to address those issues. The definition of the plan was laid out as well, including the purpose and reasoning behind it.
- Mark Deutschman explained that the Water Management District (WMD) is a means of generating revenue to pay for projects. The revenue is to help fund and implement programs within the WMD. This is how the HLWD will fund projects into the future.
- Mark Deutschman described the main focus of the plan, including projects that would address the impairments identified in the West Fork Des Moines River and Heron Lake Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation Plan (TMDL). It was also brought to everyone's attention that TMDL is not a new focus, but a continued effort of the HLWD.
- The HLWD has identified funding as a key issue. Current funding outlets are being exhausted and this is a way for the district to generate revenue inside the boundaries on a stable basis; the parameters of the boundary will be the Heron Lake WMD.
- Mark Deutschman expressed to the attendees to look at the revenue interests of the WMP, including what the plan has to identify, the mechanism to receive the funds, and a description of how the funds will be used.
  - To charge fees for all landowners within the water management district.
  - Capping the maximum charge, this charge will never go above \$25/parcel /year.
  - The amount of revenue collected is set by the board and is required by statute.
- Ron Kuecker, Mike McCarvel, and Dave Henkels questioned about the WMD location and were curious if it was going to include the area of the watershed downstream from Heron Lake. They had concern about the benefits for people not included in the WMD. Mark Deutschman explained that to increase the size of the WMD, to include the area below the outlet of the lake would not be beneficial in trying to get the plan passed and is arbitrary to the problem area, which is above the lake outlet.

- Dave Henkels expressed concern that this water management plan will directly increase taxes by 80 percent. Dave Henkels also recommended this be a county-wide level of application so not just those within the WMD will have to pay. Mark Deutschman stressed that it would not increase the taxes by 80 percent. And that it is a charge, not a tax. This charge will be proportional to the amount of water that an individual parcel will contribute to the outlet of Heron Lake. The Board of Water and Soil Resources doesn't want the charge to be perceived as a district-wide charge, but a focused charge to those in the problem area. The idea is that water quality is a benefit to the public.
- Ron Kuecker raised concerns about the county losing money for taking care of assessing the fee. Jan Voit explained that the HWLD does get billed from Nobles and Murray counties for assessing the septic system loans.
- Mark Deutschman went on to explain that other watershed districts have successfully implemented this type of plan within their areas.
- Ross Behrends pointed out that the district is unable to go forward with any storage projects that would greatly benefit the area because of the lack of funding. This WMD, he explained, would give the HLWD the opportunity to move forward to get large projects put into place.
- Projects within the plan are defined at Best Management Practices and the Flood Damage Reduction Program. These are two aspects that the generated revenue can be used for.
- Dale Bartosh and LeRoy Peterson voiced concern about the watershed district overlapping duties. Mark Deutschman explained that the watershed district and soil and water conservation districts are not mutually exclusive. Mark Deutschman went on to explain that more projects are completed when these entities work together. If one entity does not have the mechanics to implement a project they could pass it over and vice versa.
- Mike McCarvel asked if there would be reimbursement funds spent for engineering and pre-project work. Mark Deutschman explained that typically funders will not reimburse you for the efforts and investment expended in getting a project that far along. The language in the WMD right now would allow the district to use the funds for prior investment for a project, including engineering. Mark Deutschman continued by pointing out that if a project is good, the HLWD will have no problem finding the money to fund it.
- Brian Nyborg questioned the eight step process each property would go through to determine the fee. Mark Deutschman explained by using computer programs like GIS this process can be done fairly rapidly and would take around a week's time for a technician.
- Dave Henkels brought attention to the district's authority to exclude certain areas. Mark Deutschman explained that typically, the WMP does not assess county right-of-ways, county roads, township parks, county parks, public works buildings, and school districts. Dave Henkels went on to say that all land should be assessed including that of the Department of Natural Resources.

### **Conclusion**

Mark Deutschman finished by saying the whole concept of the plan is to have money specifically for feasibility studies and projects. The WMP would allow projects to be implemented on the ground. Jan Voit thanked everyone for coming and thanked Mark Deutschman for presenting information about the WMP.