

ERWSA TMDL: Phase III Public Meeting Summary

DATE: 12/1 & 12/3/10

Attendance:

Dec. 1st, Palmer Town Hall, Clear Lake (Sherburne County)

6:00 PM: 25 landowners

Dec. 3rd, Annunciation Church, Mayhew TWP (Benton County)

1:00 PM: 14 landowners

On December 1st and 3rd the final set of public meetings were held to inform watershed residents of the TMDL results and proposed best management practice priorities in Sherburne and Benton Counties respectively. During each meeting a short summary presentation was followed by small group discussions on Best Management Practice (BMP) strategy topics.

Presentation Summary

The presentation covered a background on the projects and also detailed the primary pollutant sources and key best management practices by impairment. For Mayhew Lake the primary nutrient loading period was identified as spring runoff. Practices focused on would include those which keep nutrients on the land in the spring focusing on the primary land use within that area (agricultural). Priority management strategies will need to target those that can reduce spring time loads. Recommended practices include:

- Manure should be applied after the spring melt to reduce the amount of runoff loading.
- Cover crops should be used to stabilize agricultural land and prevent spring erosion.
- Riparian grazing should be managed to protect shoreline areas as part of a buffer management plan.

The Big Elk Nutrient impairment and resulting turbidity impairment in the Elk River are driven by late summer phosphorus loads from the watershed. Load reductions must be achieved by reducing watershed loads from the direct tributary watersheds and by achieving state standards in upstream water bodies such as the Briggs-Julia Chain of Lakes as well as Mayhew Lake. Priority BMPs will include management of livestock in riparian areas, buffer strips and lakeshore management (septic systems, lawn runoff management, rain gardens, etc). Federal grant dollars directed through the SWCDs will be targeted to priority BMPs in priority areas.

Finally, for the Elk River (bacteria) impairment the primary focus time is late summer through fall under low flow conditions. To achieve the state standard for bacteria in the Elk River, it will be necessary to manage grazing in riparian areas and to focus on replacing failing septic systems in the priority management zones. Priority management zones are those located adjacent to the main stem, and direct tributaries to the Elk River.

Participants learned that the TMDL is scheduled for completion by March 2011 upon approval by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The corresponding implementation plan will also need to be approved by the MPCA (est. winter 2010-11).

Small Group Discussion Summary

Following the presentation participants moved to one of three discussion topics including agricultural, residential and education based BMPs where they discussed the potential barriers to adopting the related BMPs and methods to overcome those barriers. The information will be used to assist in developing successful restoration plans and grant applications. Below I have summarized the key points from each discussion group. A full listing of conversation points can be viewed online at www.sherburneswcd.org or www.soilandwater.org.

Summary of Residential/ Urban Discussions

1. **Education** is a major factor in whether or not a certain practice would be adopted. This should be done through a combination of methods including but not limited to newsletters, videos (on DVDs and the internet), demonstration sites, newspaper articles, and various other methods. We will need to use creative thinking!
2. **Ordinances**; there is a need for stricter Shoreland ordinances and a need for policy changes for septic system codes.
3. **Increased funding** assistance. Landowners should be compensated for losses or provided assistance for changing procedures.

Summary of Agricultural Discussions

1. **Education** is a major factor in whether or not a certain practice would be adopted. This should be done through a variety of methods including: farmer-to-farmer (small group meetings), demonstration plots, tours, newsletters, workshops. We will also need to be creative and develop new strategies of education.
2. **Ordinances**/changes in **government policy**; i.e. require wider easements along waterways/ditches or policy changes for septic system codes.
3. **Increased funding** assistance. Landowners should be compensated for losses or provided assistance for changing procedures.

Summary of Education Discussions

1. Methods need to be **grouped or paired** to have the greatest impact. Alone they're not nearly as effective.
2. Since a number of these methods are generational and/or require constant updating, we should be sure to bring in the experienced **staff** to help create, produce and deliver the methods.
3. Since cost is a factor, work to establish consistent, long term **funding** to keep the outreach methods consistent.