

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
CASS COUNTY JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
JANUARY 12, 2016

The Cass County Joint Water Resource District met on January 12, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Present were Rodger Olson and Jurgen Suhr, Maple River Water Resource District; Richard Sundberg; Rush River Water Resource District; Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Michelle Anderson, Administrative Assistant; Mike Opat and Josh Hassell, Engineers for the Board; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Mike Hargiss, North Dakota Department of Health; Randy Gjestvang, Red River Retention Authority and State Water Commission; Jeffrey Miller and Eric Dahl, Cass County Soil Conservation District; Pat McQueary and Patsy Crooke, Corps of Engineers (by phone); Jason Benson, Cass County Engineer and those whose names appear on the attached roster.

Rush River and Upper Maple River Watersheds

Pat Downs welcomed everyone and introductions were made. The purpose of the meeting was for the Watershed Planning Teams (Teams) to begin work on development of flood damage reduction projects within the Rush River and Upper Maple River Watersheds.

The Teams will be following the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) planning process. Funding will be available through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program to assist with the cost of the Small Watershed Planning Process (PL-566). Mr. Downs explained the Teams bring a local perspective, guide the decision making process, will review the comments from agencies and the public, and make a recommendation to the Water Resource District on desired goals and outcomes.

Mr. Downs gave a presentation and reviewed flood damage events that occurred in the Rush River and Upper Maple River Watersheds. He reviewed comments received through the public meetings held in April and June of 2014, but stated all options are now open for discussion. Advisory agencies were contacted and asked to partner in the development of flood risk reduction measures. Mr. Downs explained as potential solutions are narrowed down, the advisory agencies may address specific concerns on specific areas within the watersheds.

Goals and objectives will be discussed at each meeting. The first step in the process is to discuss and identify the purpose and need for potential flood risk reduction measures.

The Teams reviewed comments made by property owners and communities who ranked their concerns and listed specific watershed goals.

The Rush River and Upper Maple River Watershed Teams separated to discuss and identify specific watershed concerns, needs and goals.

Rush River Watershed

Harvey Morken asked if obtaining a permit would be a difficult process for watershed projects. Mr. Downs explained following the NRCS planning process will make it easier to obtain permits.

Mr. Downs stated the State Water Commission has an online MapService geographic information systems (GIS) tool that could be helpful. MapService provides access to the agency's data resources. It contains precise elevation data, water levels, water chemistry, water structures and well drilling records. The state does not have all of the water quality information loaded yet.

David Stand stated the Rush River channel has shifted over the years, but there is minimal stream bank erosion. He stated the field practices used by the farmers prevent crop land erosion. Discussion was held on Drain #52, sediment at Erie Dam, water flow during flood events and the change in the soil type through the Rush River Watershed.

The Team reviewed the comments made by property owners and communities. The Amenia Mayor submitted concerns and a request for a dike on the north end of the city. Discussion was held on alternatives to a dike, such as clearing the snow in front of the railroad bridge so water does not flow into the north end of town.

The Team stated damage to the roads and crop loss from delayed planting at the lower end of the Rush River are concerns. Mr. Morken said when the legal drain is packed with snow, and melting begins in the spring, the water will spread out across the fields instead of flowing into the drain. A suggestion was made to make the legal drains bigger to hold more water. Discussion was held on which fields hold water, impacts to those downstream, soil conservation practices, drain tile, cover crops, planting organic and alternative crops to improve soil health.

Upper Maple River Watershed

Mike Opat reviewed the NRCS 3-year planning process and stated the Team's first step is to discuss the concerns and problems in the Upper Maple River Watershed.

The Team focused on road washouts, culverts, and overland flooding. Jurgen Suhr stated washouts are the biggest problem. He said there is a 15' drop near the Barnes County and Cass County line, but only a 2' drop at Drain #46, where water stops and pools.

Discussion was held on water drainage and potential storage on Goose and Willow Lakes. The water flow near Pillsbury takes out roads, causes field erosion and cannot flow through the area fast enough. Detention north of Minnie Lake Creek was previously considered and discussed as a possible solution.

Jerry Garrany said summer floods are a bigger problem than spring floods for agriculture. Jeff Miller suggested using buffers to help prevent top soil erosion, which is a substantial impact to agricultural land.

The importance of water quality was discussed. Rodger Olson said the possible improvement to water quality that detention can provide should be acknowledged. Slowing the water down to reduce volume would also be beneficial.

Jason Benson pointed out various transportation benefits as a result of detention, such as the ability to reduce structure sizes, which reduces costs.

Mr. Olson asked those present for input on how to approach and involve property owners with regard to property needed for potential detention sites.

The Rush River and Upper Maple River Watershed Planning Teams reconvened and Mr. Downs gave a brief overview of the agenda for the next planning meeting. Each Team will discuss and review alternatives to find the most viable options to meet the purpose and need for action. Mr. Downs asked the Teams to continue research and communication with property owners and communities for goals and outcomes needed within the watersheds. Mr. Downs stated the purpose and need statement adopted by the Teams will be reported to NRCS by April of 2016.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection.

APPROVED:

Mark Brodshaug
Chairman

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Secretary-Treasurer