

Leech Lake River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan
Policy Committee Meeting and Public Hearing
Friday, February 15, 2019 9AM
Cass County Courthouse Walker, MN

Attendees:

Lynn Goodrich, Hubbard SWCD Supervisor and Chair of Policy Committee
Tom Kuschel, Cass SWCD and Policy Committee Member
Neil Gaalswyk, Cass County and Policy Committee Member
Ted Van Kempen, Hubbard County
Tom Krueger, Hubbard County
Jim Ballenthin, Cass SWCD
John Ringle, Cass SWCD and ESD
Julie Kingsley, Hubbard SWCD
Chris Pence, BWSR
Jeff Hrubes, BWSR
Julie Blackburn, RESPEC
Sharon Natzel, HC Cola
John Eaton, Leech Lake Association

Chair Goodrich convened the meeting at 9:00 am with the pledge of allegiance. John Ringle then explained the details of the plan. Items discussed were watershed boundary and location, planning process and mission statement. Ringle then went on to discuss this plan was a first of its kind protection plan with limited restoration issues. Ringle then explained that the Counties and SWCD's were going to enter into a joint planning agreement to implement the plan. Ringle explained the major intent of the plan was to protect existing forests and reduce phosphorous inputs by 5% into lakes with a declining water quality trend. It was mentioned that the cost to implement the plan was \$45 million dollars. As a note, it was mentioned that a restoration watershed like the Yellow Medicine in southern Minnesota has a cost to implement of \$60 million with the goal of reducing pollution by 10-25%. Protection is easier and much more cost effective.

Commissioner Gaalswyk made a motion with as second from Supervisor Kuschel to open the public hearing – approved

Commissioner Van Kempen addressed the policy committee with the following comments: Hubbard is debating if they want to join back into the process. Van Kempen noted that management of natural resources is important but the cost of \$45 million for this watershed seemed high. Concerns were also raised that Hubbard has 3 watersheds and the additional work needed to administer those plans and the potential hidden costs of new staff and potential plan implementation from local tax dollars. Van Kempen wanted to see if there was a way to lower the overall costs of the plan. A concern was also voiced about no net loss of private land, private land acquisitions to become public land and eroding away the tax base, essentially raising taxes to the citizens of Hubbard County. There were also concerns that the 75% forest protection goal was bit lofty and the potential impacts on the forest industry and limiting agriculture uses. Another concern was the process of withdrawing from the JPA in the future if needed. Commissioner Krueger also addressed the Policy Committee. He stated that he agreed with

everything Commissioner Van Kempen mentioned. He also discussed that he was concerned about the plan requiring Hubbard County to change its shoreland or other related ordinances. No one else spoke at the public hearing. Motion by Commissioner Gaalswyk and seconded by Supervisor Kuschel to close the public hearing – approved.

Staff and the Policy Committee responded to both public hearing testimony and written comments submitted by State Agencies and stakeholders.

Julie Kingsley explained to the Policy Committee changes made to the draft plan based on comments from State Agencies and stakeholders. The Policy Committee accepted these changes.

Commissioner Gaalswyk proposed the following changes to Section 7 of the Plan: “Maintain a healthy and economically stable mix of public and private land ownership within the watershed.” The Policy Committee accepted these changes.

Motion by Commissioner Gaalswyk and second by Supervisor Kuschel to submit the draft plan with amendments to the BWSR Northern Region Committee for review– approved.

Chair Goodrich reviewed the following timeline:

- February 20, 2019 – Deadline to submit Public Hearing Record, Comments/Responses and Leech Lake River Comprehensive Watershed Management to BWSR and State Agencies for final review
- March 6, 2019 – 11:00 am – BWSR Northern Region Committee Meeting Walker
- March 27, 2019 – BWSR Board Meeting St Paul
- July 27, 2019 – Deadline for Local Adoption of Plan (120 Days after BWSR Adoption of Plan)

Adjournment 11:06 am