

# Green Meadow Project Team

Regular Meeting  
December 11, 2013

A meeting of the Green Meadow Project Team was held on Wednesday, December 11, 2013, at the Wild Rice Watershed District Office. Project Team Members in attendance: Brian Dwight, Board of Water and Soil Resources; Curt Johannsen, Wild Rice Watershed District Manager; Duane Erickson, Wild Rice Watershed District Manager; Mike Christensen, Wild Rice Watershed District Manager, Shawnn Balstad, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Steve Bommersbach, Norman County Commissioner; Emily Siira, Department of Natural Resources; Diane Ista, Landowner; Mark Chisholm, Landowner; Dave Vilmo, Landowner; Mark Christianson, Soil and Water Conservation District. Others in attendance included: Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute; Henry Van Offelen, Department of Natural Resources; Jerry Bents, Houston Engineering; Kevin Ruud, Wild Rice Watershed District Administrator; Nathan Olson Department of Natural Resources Fisheries; Ryan Frohling, Fish and Wildlife Services; Jessie Heitman, Natural Resources Conservation Service; and Tara Jensen, Wild Rice Watershed District Bookkeeper.

Fritz began conducting the meeting at 12:00 pm by introducing those in attendance, also stating that his presence was requested by the Wild Rice Watershed Board to manage the process. The goal of a Project Team is to develop viable strategy options to solve known problems within a subwatershed. Dependent on the decisions of the project team, and those formed by the Board, up to six meetings are anticipated for this Project Team with a goal of completion for Spring 2014. The goal for this meeting was to determine if there was a problem severe enough to warrant action in the Green Meadow subwatershed.

Van Offelen presented the Project Team with history regarding the MN Mediation Agreement which established a watershed based approach to flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement.

The five step plan that would be used by the Project Team was set forth as:

- 1) Identify Problem
- 2) Access watershed conditions
- 3) Develop goals, purpose, and need
- 4) Evaluate alternative strategies
- 5) Select and site alternatives

The Board determined the area of concern, followed by identifying stakeholders who would be invited to serve on the Project Team. The Board holds statutory authority over the decisions that are made by the Project Team. Meeting coordination, facilitation, communication, and record keeping are duties held by the Wild Rice Watershed District office. The Project Team's duties include representing their stakeholder constituency and communicating with those whom they represent. A general consensus will be developed. Everyone's end result cannot logically be met, but an "I can live with it" attitude towards the decision of the group should be felt.

Three different kinds of thinkers exist.

- Vulger thinkers – Those who only associate with thoughts in which they can egotistically relate. Their own way of thinking is always right and it is impossible to change their view.

- Sophisticated Thinkers – Those who are educated and well read, ready to defend their own view of a situation. This group consists of the majority of the population.
- Critical Thinkers – Those who are willing to sympathetically enter into other's views.

Project Team members enter the process knowingly willing to consider other's views, even though they may not align with their own. Each member is required to participate with the precedence that no single answer is the right answer. While disagreement will occur and is part of the process, each member should carry an open mind, asking questions, and understanding the views of others.

Assigned authorities:

- Stakeholder communication – Project Team members communicate with their constituents and report comments back to the Project Team meetings.
- Media/Press communication – The Wild Rice Watershed District Administrator will communicate with the media and press regarding all issues surrounding the project. Project Team members should refer all press and media questions to the Administrator.
- Board Communication – The Wild Rice Watershed District Administrator will communicate with the Wild Rice Watershed Board regarding the progress of the Project Team.

If an agreement cannot be reached, a majority recommendation and a minority recommendation may be presented to the Board. Dwight commented that with a limited minority, it may be ideal to have the minority state their reasons for disagreement with the majority recommendation.

Fritz clearly stated that in order to have your opinion heard; meeting attendance is required. In the interest of timely progression, revisiting topics from prior meetings will not occur unless they directly affect the issue at hand. The decision of those in attendance will determine the direction of the Project Team at each meeting.

Engineer Bents gave a description of the Green Meadow project, containing approximately 70 square miles, separated by the Green Meadow Dam with 30 square miles lying about the dam and 40 square miles lying below. An overview of the historical projects that have been completed within the Green Meadow subwatershed was given with a detailed Google Earth tour of the area. Balstad inquired regarding the location of the original designs from the Green Meadow Dam. Bents stated that the Wild Rice Watershed is in possession of them. Manager Erickson asked how many days it takes to draw the dam down. Vilmo stated that it is approximately a 10 day draw down. Bents continued, highlighting ditch sloughing, erosion on setback levees, and bank erosion on the dam. Recently the ditch sloughing was addressed by changing the backslope of the affected area from 4:1 to 5:1, the majority of which was financed by FEMA.

Van Offelen offered that the loss of connectivity of upland, aquatic, and riparian habitats decreases their effectiveness, also pointing out that altered hydrology has caused high sediments downstream. The Department of Natural Resources and state agencies seek to create healthier watersheds by improving hydrologic conditions; protecting and enhancing existing upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitats; and improving the design and management of artificial watercourses, reducing sediment and nutrient loading from upland sources. Dwight clarified by asking Van Offelen if sediment and nutrient loading is an existing problem or an assumption that was formed. Van Offelen clarified that it is an assumption that it will become a problem in the near future.

In reviewing topological maps, Administrator Ruud provided that the Wild Rice Watershed District is 97% cultivated with one small Wild Life Management area and the Gary Pines contained within the

Green Meadow subwatershed. In reviewing 2007 private CRP mapping it was noted that the majority of the acres contained in CRP at that time were located along the edges of the subwatershed.

It was cautioned that when viewing areas for project consideration, the location of biodiversity and rare features must be viewed. By viewing priority maps for grassland and wetland conservation it can be determined where a focus can be placed for acquiring land and easements using the assistance of natural resource agencies.

Upon the completion of the previous presentations Fritz noted that in this process a lack of information would not be an issue, noting that Engineer Bents and Van Offelen have information readily available. Fritz asked the Project Team for input regarding the presentations. Have all of the issues been addressed? Ista felt that not all of the problems within the subwatershed had been addressed, but there is enough severity to warrant action by a Project Team. Ista commented that many areas of the Green Meadow subwatershed are overcapacitated. Vilmo agreed with Ista's comment that there is a need for more storage capacity within the Green Meadow Dam, defining a problem that is severe enough to warrant action. Balstad and Commissioner Bommersbach also felt that there are problems within the subwatershed that warrant corrective action, and expressed that there is a need for problem identification in other areas of the Watershed as well. Siira said that connectivity assessments are being completed, but she was not sure if there was a problem severe enough to warrant corrective action. Siira also noted that this area has many opportunities for enhancements which would be beneficial to incorporate. From a soil and water conservation point of view, Christianson felt that there are problems which are not rare to the area in question. He did feel that the solution to the problem is unclear at this point. Commissioner Bommersbach felt that problems exist in this area, as well as county wide. Concern was expressed regarding finding landowners who are willing to participate in the solution. The increasing value of land, along with maintenance and funding, will all be hurdles that he feels need to be overcome to reach any solution.

Dwight questioned if all stakeholders are adequately represented by the Project Team, expressing question on the Department of Agriculture and its possible need for representation. Ista suggested that herself, Vilmo, and Chisholm meet with their constituents to ensure that their voices are being properly heard. The possibility of meeting with those above the Green Meadow dam and those below in separate sessions was considered. Fritz encouraged Project Team members to meet with the stakeholders they represent in which ever fashion they deem effective.

Following the previous discussion it was determined collectively that there are problems within the Green Meadow subwatershed which are severe enough to warrant action by the Wild Rice Watershed Board. The decision of the Project Team will be brought to the Board whom will determine if the Project Team continuance will occur.

Pending the decision of the Board, Fritz, Van Offelen, Ruud, and Bents will collectively draft a problem statement. The next Project Team meeting will focus on completion of the problem statement, assessing watershed conditions, establishing a project purpose, and beginning to seek goals and identify appropriate strategies. In consideration of those who may sit on multiple project teams it was decided to schedule the next Project Team meetings on the same day, with the Green Meadow Project Team tentatively scheduled January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from 12pm – 4pm.