Sunrise River
Watershed Management Organization

4th Generation Watershed Management Plan
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting

Meeting Notes

Wed, Dec 19, 2018 at 9:00am to Noon
Columbus City Hall

Attendees:

Leon Mager, SRWMO Board
Sandy Flaherty, SRWMO Board
Tim Harrington, East Bethel City Council and SRWMO Board
Denny Peterson, Columbus city council and SRWMO Board
Jason Spiegel, MN DNR Area Hydrologist
Jen Kostrzewski, Metropolitan Council
Dan Fabian, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources
Eric Alms, MN Pollution Control Agency
Dennis Postler, TKDA for the City of Columbus
Elizabeth Mursko, City of Columbus
Karen Blaska, Anoka County
Becky Wozney, Anoka Conservation District
Jamie Schurbon, SRWMO Planner and Anoka Conservation District

1. **Watershed plan update status**

   Schurbon described that the SRWMO plan process is approximately 60% complete. Completed work includes a public kickoff meeting, public officials tour, citizen and technical advisory committee meetings, and numerous SRWMO board work sessions. An issue prioritization is complete, as well as goals, actions and policies for most priority issues. A full draft plan is anticipated by May 2019. Final approval is anticipated by December 2019.

   Timing of local water plan updates and the WMO plan updates were discussed. Cities are required to update their comprehensive plans, of which local water plans are part, by December 31, 2018. However, city local water plans must also be updated within two years of update of the WMO plan, expected in December 2019. This is a problematic timeline that leads to additional expense for the communities. Fabian suggested that over the next 10 years WMO plans should be regularly

amended or updated as "living documents," and thereby reduce the amount of change that occurs during major plan updates. Schurbon noted that WMO's may allow some consideration of the poor timing and expense of revising plans when approving city local water plans. Kostrzewski stated she would find out Met Council's official position. After the meeting, Kostrzewski informed Schurbon that Met Council requires that local water plans be written to be consistent with current WMO plans and when WMO plans are revised an update to the city local water plan may be needed.

2. **Review SRWMO draft issue prioritization**

Schurbon reviewed the SRWMO's process for identifying priority issues, which included considering the prioritizations discussed in agency input letters, stakeholder events, SRWMO review of its current plan, priorities in neighboring watershed organizations, and city local water plans. The SRWMO's priority issues are:

<u>High Priority Issues</u>

1. Lake and stream water quality
2. Water monitoring
3. Funding
4. Communications with member communities
5. Outreach and education

<u>Medium Priority Issues</u>

6. Aquatic invasive species (AIS)
7. Septic systems
8. Development
9. Multi-partner coordination
10. Stormwater management
11. Groundwater
12. Administrative efficiencies
13. Chlorides

<u>Lower Priority Issues</u>

14. Ditching/Drainage
15. Climate change
16. Water quantity
17. Fisheries
18. Wildlife habitat

Mager noted that Coon Lake was referred to as "near impaired" in one plan section and "impaired" (for mercury) in another section. Clarification is warranted.

Flaherty noted that while wildlife habitat is low on the list, actions in many other areas will have secondary benefits for wildlife habitat. The SRWMO is focusing on protection of wildlife habitat through a variety of actions.

3. **Review SRWMO draft goals, policies and actions**

The group reviewed draft goals, policies and actions for the priority issues. Discussion included:

- Lake and stream water quality

- Fabian suggested adding an indicator, such as clarity, to the goal of maintaining water quality in smaller lakes.
- Fabian suggested some discussion or a relative ranking of how far listed projects will move the WMO toward stated goals.
- Fabian suggested adding discussion of how much delisting each impaired water may cost. A typical cost per pound of pollutant reduction could be used.
- The WMO should consider mentioning that a SWAT model is available for the watershed, and may be able to help identify priority subwatersheds.
- City, county and other projects will likely only be eligible for Watershed Based Funding in the future if they are in the SRWMO. Each community's representatives are asked to provide projects to Schurbon. Projects must have a water quality benefit.
- Columbus favors ditch cleaning, but this can sometimes be at odds with water quality goals and would not be eligible for Watershed Based Funding. It was discussed that projects that clean ditches, but add treatment might be eligible. For example, in-line settling ponds might be used, or two-stage ditch design.

- Water monitoring
  - Monitoring through the CAMP volunteer program will allow Met Council to provide lake letter grades.
- Funding
  - The SRWMO is moving toward budgeting that remains consistent across years to minimize levy variation. Actual expenses vary amongst years, so unspent funds are carried forward to future years. The SRWMO will also build a contingency fund capped at 15% of annual local funds budgeted.
  - Watershed Based Funding method of distribution will likely change in the coming years. Through discussion the consensus seemed to be that the SRWMO should be:
    - Priorities for Watershed Based Funding should be in the SRWMO Plan.
    - The SRWMO should lead the process of selecting projects for Watershed Based Funding, but those discussions should include convening a meeting with the communities, county and other stakeholders who may have projects for consideration.
    - The SRWMO and its communities should be talking early and often about favored projects. An annual meeting may be appropriate.
- Communications with member communities
  - No comments.

- Outreach and education
    - No comments.
- Aquatic invasive species
    - The SRWMO is electing to no get involved in maintenance treatments for AIS, as others are doing this. It can be a major expense; Coon Lake's budget for AIS treatment exceeds $80,000 for 2019.
    - The SRWMO will be involved in common carp management. Unlike invasive plants, controlling carp requires both working in the lake and satellite waterbodies.
    - The county has a strong AIS prevention program.
- Septic systems
    - Schurbon described a Chisago County program wherein all septic systems >10 years old or without a compliance inspection during that time were inspected for surface discharge only. It's been successful, but requires having substantial resources in place to help homeowners correct problems. It also requires a substantial amount of time from building inspectors or contracted help.
    - Columbus has point of sale septic system inspections. The cost for these inspections is $300-$400. If a system is not up to current standards (75-80% are not) it is fixed before sale or an escrow is held if the sale is during winter when work cannot be done.
    - It's believed that East Bethel requires a septic inspection for any building permit in the shoreland district. The owner must pay for any fixes.
    - All communities have systems that remind owners to maintain their septic every three years.
    - Building inspectors do have the authority to follow-up on septic system complaints.
    - Anoka County and the Anoka Conservation District offer loans and grants for septic system fix ups. The grants are limited to 2-3 systems per year for low income households.
    - After discussion, the group favored:
        - Jamie will contact staff at each city to learn more about their current triggers for septic system inspections. Prepare SRWMO plan content that is largely consistent with these requirements, or the requirements of most. Point of sale inspections seen particularly favored by the group at the meeting because when problems are detected the sale provides the funds to fix the problem, and this process helps protect buyers.
        - The SRWMO should ensure community building inspectors follow up on septic system complaints, and have the time to do so.

        - The SRWMO plan should have short and long term goals for this topic. Short term goals may include triggers for inspections. Long term goals, or goals that require grant funding, may include inspections throughout priority areas like the shoreland district or doing community septic systems in shoreland areas.
        - The SRWMO should include the concept of doing inspections in targeted areas (shoreland district) if grant funded.
    - Development
        - It was discussed whether the SRWMO should provide review of development sketch plans with an eye toward natural resources. Some areas like Linwood expect upcoming development. Developers need to hear input early in the planning process. The SRWMO does not intend to add a permitting program, but might provide comments for city permit consideration. This process may also result in the SRWMO ensuring that its standards are being implemented. After discussion is was decided that Schurbon should ask each community's staff how/if they would like the SRWMO involved in development sketch reviews.

4. **SRWMO Stormwater Standards**

    - Schurbon described that the SRWMO's current stormwater standards seem to need updating. In particular they:
        - Require 0.5" of infiltration while most communities require 1" or 1.1".
        - Require off site infiltration if it cannot be achieved on site, and this is often impractical.

      Schurbon provided a table (copied at the end of these meeting notes) which compares the SRWMO standards to MS4 standards for treatement and Minimum Impact Development Standards (MIDS). MS4 is aimed at maintaining water quality while MIDS aims to improve it.

- Columbus staff discussed the difficulty of achieving infiltration in areas with a high water table, which are common. Road right of ways, particularly those adjacent to large wetlands, are also common and problematic. These same conditions also limit stormwater filters. Therefore, treatment ends up being accomplished through ponds which consume a substantial amount of the available upland.
- The MS4-like requirement to keep post-development volumes, rate and pollutants that same as pre-development or pre-settlement conditions was considered. If water quality is the SRWMO's primary concern, this may address that concern.
- After discussion, the consensus seemed to be to modify the current SRWMO stormwater standards. Schurbon will add a fourth option to the comparison table of SRWMO standards, MS4 and MIDs and will email that back to the committee for email review. This new option can include:

- Have an explicit goal of maintaining current runoff volumes and water quality. In other words, the stormwater standards are a water quality protection strategy. Due to the nature of the watershed, stormwater is likely a minor contributor to water quality problems in lakes and streams, except in denser development in the shoreland district.
- A MS4-like requirement to keep post-development volumes, rate and pollutants the same as pre-development.
- A requirement that stormwater treatment follow an order of preference including 1) Site design that reduces stormwater generation, 2) infiltration, and 3) others.
- Keep the threshold of applying the standards to projects with one acre or more of disturbance.
- Allow special considerations for road and other linear projects.

5. **SRWMO Wetland Standards**

- Schurbon described concerns with the current SRWMO wetland standards including:
    - They require a MNRAM functions and values assessment of impacted wetlands to classify the wetlands. This can be onerous.
    - The standards for the different wetland classes are largely the same.
    - The standards are very similar to the neighboring Upper Rum River WMO standards, but still different.
    - Buffers must have signage and be maintained by the community.
- The primary goal of the standards was discussed to be mostly water quality protection. If the goal were wildlife, more and bigger buffers would be needed. For water quality, smaller buffers (up to 50+ ft based on science, but often <25 ft based on social acceptability) can achieve the goal.
- Mursko mentioned that Columbus requires 16.5 ft buffers and puts signage at line of sight. This buffer area overlaps with building setbacks. Because many homes are walk-outs, the buffer and setback is necessary separation on a steep vertical drop.
- After discussion, the consensus seemed to be to revise the SRWMO wetland standards including:
    - Delete the MNRAM functional value assessment requirement.
    - Require a 16.5 ft area around wetlands to not be disturbed during the development process to protect the wetland edge and ensure a vegetated buffer is present after construction.

- Require a minimum 16.5 ft buffer. It needs to be unmowed vegetation with good stem density, but not necessarily native plants. Native vegetation should be encouraged.
- The buffer should overlap with building setbacks and drainage/utility easements. The easement overlap helps prevent fences, sheds and similar work in the buffer, as these are already prohibited in the easements.
- The buffer should have signage at line of sight intervals to prohibit future disturbance.
- The city would implement the standards, as they do now.
- Cities are encouraged to require developers to maintain the buffer for the first few years, particularly if it is seeded.
- Schurbon will prepare the revised standards for email review by the committee.

Prepared by Jamie Schurbon

Summary of some stormwater standards

For consideration in SRWMO 4th Generation Planning

	Current SRWMO Standards	State requirements for MS4 Communities	Minimum Impact Development Standards (MIDS)
Already applies to…	All SRWMO communities	Ham Lake, East Bethel	None
Goal	Promote infiltration	Maintain water quality	Improve water quality
Triggered by…	>1 acre disturbance development & redevelopment (*most restrictive*)	>1ac new impervious for new development only, not redevelopment	>1ac new impervious (new or redevelopment)
Volume control	0.5" from new impervious surfaces (*least restrictive*)	1" from impervious surfaces In 2019 permit PCA is proposing 1" for both new development and redevelopment.	1.1" from impervious surfaces For linear (road) projects retain the larger of (a) 0.55" from new and reconstructed surfaces or (b) 1.1" from net impervious increase.
Pollutant control		<u>New development</u> – no increase in vol, TP or TSS <u>Redevelopment</u> – Net decrease in vol, TP, TSS	
Rate control	May not exceed pre-development rates for 2-, 10-, & 100-yr storm.		
What to do if infiltration is difficult or not advised	Meet requirement off site.	Requirements may be reduced or waived by permitting agency.	Follow flow chart of options resulting in options: (a) 0.55" + 75% P reduc (b) MEP vol + 60% P reduc (c) offsite 1.1" in vol reduc.
Credit toward TMDLs	Could be, if documented	Could be, if documented. Not aimed at improvement.	Included using MIDS calculator
Other			Meets stormwater minimum control measure for MS4 communities.

DRAFT compiled by J. Schurbon 12/17/2018