Drainage Work Group Meeting Notes

November 30, 2023

1:00PM -3:00PM

Virtual Teams Meeting

*Attendees (online): Tom Gile, Travis Germundson, and Rita Weaver BWSR, Randall Doneen, Tim Gieseke DNR, Alex Trunnell Corn Growers Assoc., Britta Torkelson MRC, Chuck Brandel ISG, Mark Dittrich MDA, Paul Gardner MPCA, Greg Holmvik, Joe Smentek Soybean Assoc, Kale Van Bruggen Rinke Noonan, Lukas W. Croaker BSWD, Brian Martinson AMC, Rob Sip RRWMB, Ron Staples and Neil Peterson BWSR Board Member, and Stu Frazeur, Suzanne Jiwani IWL, Ray Bohm MNW, and Brian Martinson AMC.*

Outlet Adequacy Subcommittee Topics

Discussion on concerns and interest associated with bank flow events (1.5 to2 year events). The report does a good job on managing for peak flow events. Interest at looking at the Red River Valley though the mediation agreement which has a basin wide approach driven by snow melt. Through that process they manage flows with holding and storage. The Idea is to manage water and flows. To do this you have to think about the basin on a whole. Managing flows with a specific purpose is missing in the Minnesota River basin.

Question, would the DWG consider having a similar approach to Red River Basin? This is the question that keeps coming up in decisions. Rita Weaver mentioned that adding storage will change bank flow. These bank flow events are something we should consider. This will help with prioritization for where we want to put storage on Minnesota River. Tom G. shared language from the outlet adequate report and asked folks to read through this report and see if there are concerns. This issue might be bigger than the DWG can tackle at this time. Tom G. read the proposal of the evaluation on low flow events (less than 5-year recurrence). Encouraged the DWG to consider a recommendation for funding of a pilot assessment for the MN River basin and to prioritize areas of the basin which should be managed for peak flows versus low flow. Rita W. clarified that we are talking about bank flow not low flow events. Need to manage all three events. There are cases where you are balancing. Regarding a study/polit program the lead should not be someone from a state agency or entity with a specific interest. There should be no bias in a report. Rita W. The approach is to support sediment reduction strategy and identify where we can make changes, so we are not affecting bank flow. Tom G. some level of hydrologic modeling and some geology of the landscape. If we can show this works in the MN River Basin, it could work elsewhere with similar issues. It would be foundational for other areas. Concern regarding the process, the report was completed and now there are changes being proposed. There was a request to have the subcommittee to review changes again. Rita W. stated that the subcommittee agreed on the language that was proposed and suggested putting together a smaller group to scope out and not convene the entire subcommittee. The language is from the report and is not intended to change the intent of the report. How would applying this assessment look different to management of the system. Rita W. This is for an understanding where we are going to focus efforts. Not at the scale where it will affect drainage projects. Rita W. this should be our first goal to decrease the number of days that peak flow is exceeded. This is really going to focus on where we are going to put our next level of effort. This is not going to conflict with the WRAPS and 1W1P. This should be supplement and supportive approach. This could be helpful for certain drainage projects and could add cost to projects as well. Just be mindful, it’s a balancing act. The hope is to have informed processes. This could lead to other funding sources (target funding). This does have impact beyond 103E, like storage, wetland mitigation to direct funding. Tom G. want to make sure we are during things with a purpose and tied together in a meaningful way. Does this seem like a reasonable idea? Board study may be inconclusive, proceed on a case by case.

Difficult to do on a project by project, it works better on bigger scope watershed basis, watershed scale not project scale. Not sure we would be able to give direction to a third party to have a study useful enough to use. Tom G. should focus specifically on hydrologic regimes. There are conflicting drivers and want to do good things. Rita W. agrees that we should pick one goal and move forward. This is an assessment that may have some value and may put together a polit project. It’s just a generic recommendation to the DWG.

Next steps- Consider establishing a small scoping group. Tom G. will work with Rita W. on scoping document.

Outlet Adequacy Subcommittee Report

If the DWG will support additional research and education with regard to conservation drainage to help with messaging on best approaches for conservation drainage and conservation practices. Consider putting examples of good reports out there so we can reference what is a good report is. Maybe someone could pull together that information.

Not sure there is anything the DWG needs to do, no action item. Just wanting making people informed. Tom G. asked if it would it be worthwhile to work with other drainage engineers to broaden education outreach, maybe able to develop an idea, like a grant for other ideas to make those determination. Could build in education in the project/grant. Look at how others are doing outreach. Make sure you get the right people to do the education. If we had time or opportunities to unitize captive audiences already in play. The DWG is to inform others as to what we are doing, collaboration. Success stories would be good. Finding ways to do outreach, this may not a policy thing but finding opportunities to drainage outreach and helping out at drainage related events would be beneficial. This could show that there are some beneficial outcomes to drainage. Along with being purposeful about terminology.

Taking recommendation on research to show that there are resources to support this effort. There are struggles to added capacity for education for events/conferences. Have just a distribution point to share information would be good.

Next Steps: Tom G. is going to take a stab at making some changes/recommendations for consideration to put this into monition. There is value to expand on this.

Next Meeting – 11AM-2PM Thursday December 14, 2023 in St. Paul and 11AM-2PM January 11, 2024 in St. Cloud.

Adjourned 2:29PM