

**MEETING OF THE ELK RIVER
LAKE ORONO WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE ELK RIVER CITY HALL
WEDNESDAY, October 18, 2006**

Members Present: Mark Basiletti, Ed Buttweiler, Cindi Edwards-Plant, Patrick Plant, John Weicht

Staff Present: Rebecca Haug, Nicki Blake-Bradley

Members Absent: Vance Zehringer, James Tacheny, Ed Bury

1) Approve 10/18/06 Agenda

Patrick requested the addition of one item under Other: Feedback on an Environmental Educator article. The agenda was approved with the addition of this item.

2) County Water Plan Advisory Committee

John Weicht stated that the County Water Plan is being updated. Mark Basiletti added that they are drafting a new plan and making storm water a key issue. One initiative that he is proposing is requiring that all new development runoff not exceed pre-development volume. Mark will be requesting comments from the City sometime prior to the Water Plan's completion... maybe by February.

3) Elk River Watershed (ERWA) Board Report

Vance Zehringer was not available for an update. Mark Basiletti commented that he wrote an article for the Environmental Educator. There is funding available until 2010. Mark stated that he would like to fund other projects (rather than only funding rain gardens). Stream monitoring was discussed. Mark added that a mass balance study is being done on the Briggs Lake Chain. He discussed the possibility of the District adding another employee as a "watershed coordinator." The Clean Water Legacy is offering grant money for a 2 ½ year period (there was approximately two weeks to apply)... both Mark and Nicki applied for a portion of the grant funds.

Discussion followed regarding applying for a monitoring grant, which would potentially allow the City funds to be re-allocated elsewhere. Report potential was also discussed if monitoring is conducted. The Elk River is on the impaired waters list from Rice Creek to Lake Orono.

A comment was made that the City Council will be happy if a monitoring grant was obtained. Topics such as shoreline buffers, septic systems, fertilizers, pet waste, and curly-leaf pondweed could be educational pieces/articles.

Ed Buttweiler entered the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

The Elk River Watershed may help with funding the education-oriented projects. John recommended contacting the school districts and getting the message to the kids. A comment was made that Marv Ziner is running for school board and would be a welcome addition if elected.

4) Meeting Dates for 2007

It was determined that meetings will continue to be held on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. for 2007.

5) Goals for 2007

Goals were discussed. Education, reach tests (and results), continuing stream fecal coliform monitoring (and lake level monitoring), as well as setting a threshold for curly-leaf pondweed were all identified as goals for the new year.

Discussion followed regarding offering a rebate on zero phosphorus fertilizers to all city residents through an Initiative Foundation grant (if awarded) with a maximum number of rebates available. Ed commented that one dollar per bag would likely be reasonable. If offered, the rebate will be available to all city residents and will be advertised in all available areas... website, cable, newspaper, City newsletter, etc.

6) Results from Braun and Reach tests

Mark commented that he has not had time to summarize the results yet. He has to turn in the data by November 15th so he hopes to have it for the next meeting. Some reach results were partially supporting, while others were supporting half the time. Mark added that there were no real “flushes” this year due to the drought conditions. The ERWA paid for the testing this year.

Patrick questioned whether some time should be taken off from this testing. Mark suggested waiting to see if the Elk is on the Impaired Waters list for anything other than mercury and added that they may decide that we need more data. The preliminary list should be ready in early 2008. Ed commented that three data sets would be better than two. Mark added that this was a very dry year so it would probably be good to do the testing. He concluded by saying that more than 50% of the time, the tests are supporting water quality standards.

7) Action Plan for Curly-leaf pondweed

Education was identified as a key component of the action plan for this invasive. There is a short window of opportunity before the plant is actively reproducing (once it has grown enough to be visible). The education plan would include distribution of information in March or April and assessment in early June with the DNR (for whether a drawdown is necessary or not).

Discussion followed regarding who is going to do the removal. Sentenced to Serve (STS) or the Boy Scouts were suggested. Problems to be addressed are the public areas, residents who are gone during the critical removal time, and old residents who cannot physically do the removal themselves.

The last drawdown was done in 2003. Ed questioned whether the DNR (Wendy Crowell) can be at the next meeting to discuss density questions, a drawdown threshold... and anything else that she may be able to answer questions about (i.e. turtles).

John commented that the removal could be discussed at the Lake Orono Improvement Association annual meeting. He added that pulling the weed could be promoted for a five-year period and then have a drawdown.

Rebecca and Nicki will apply for the removal permit for the public areas early (March) so that it will be available when mechanical removal can occur.

Discussion of purchasing a GPS unit and maps followed. A comment was made that the Initiative grant for Healthy Lakes could be a source of funding for the GPS unit (if it's still available). Patrick will check into the potential for applying for this grant.

8) Possible drawdown (1 ½ to 2')

This was not discussed since it is likely too late to get the permit from the DNR. It will be discussed with Wendy if she is able to attend the next meeting. The decision was to lay the groundwork now for future drawdowns. This one was potentially for cleaning up the shoreline.

9) Silting measurements

Rebecca doesn't have any measurements at this time. The lake is filling in faster than hoped. The hole that was dug deeper than other places as a sediment trap is the most affected. Measurements are taken in January. Mark questioned whether the data is available for outside use--he'd like the data sent to him.

John commented that the GPS unit could be used for this data collection. Discussion followed regarding tracking the dredged areas. This item will be brought back for discussion at later meetings.

10) Other Updates

The article in the Environmental Educator discussed the Elk River Watershed Association's water quality improvement projects and cost share program. Mark Basiletti wrote the article and is the contact person for any new proposals.

The Plants will request information from Don Hickman of the Initiative Foundation on the potential for water quality grants to be issued yet. If available, they will request a new application.

Nicki will forward the minutes of the meeting to Cindi Edwards-Plant for publication on the Lake Orono Improvement Association website.

11) Decide Agenda Items and Time for Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting for the Lake Orono Water Quality Committee will be held on November 15th at 5:30 p.m. There will be NO meeting in December.

12) Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.