A Judicial Ditch #19 Project Work Team meeting was held by the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District at 10:00 a.m., at the Strandquist Community Center on July 26, 2017. The purpose of this meeting was to review NRCS-RCPP guidelines, provide an update on where the process is at, review preliminary hydraulics and hydrology modeling results, and to review the draft purpose and need statement.

Below is a list of meeting attendees, taken from the sign-in sheet.

Paul Anderson, Lincoln Twp
Gula Stromgren, City of Strandquist
Dave Jones, NRCS
Lon Aune, Marshall County Highway Department
Danielle Kvasager, MPCA
Chuck Edgar, Lincoln Twp
David Bakke, MSTRWD
Gary Kiesow, Marshall County Commissioner
Matt Fischer, BWSR
Ruth Anne Franke, MNDNR
Kevin Roppe, Landowner
Darren Carlson, Marshall County SWCD
Lyle Braff, Lincoln Twp

Tony Nordby of Houston Engineering Inc. called the meeting to order and had everyone present, at the time, introduce themselves. An agenda, a draft purpose and need statement, and the minutes summarizing the public meeting held in September were distributed before the meeting.

Tony went over the Project Work Team (PWT) ground rules of conversation. Which are as follows:

1. Everyone participates; no one dominates.
2. There is not one “right” answer.
3. Keep an open mind.
4. Listen carefully to others.
5. Help keep the discussion on track.
6. Try hard to understand the views of those with whom you disagree.
7. Ask questions if you are uncertain of the meaning of someone else’s comments.
8. It is okay to have friendly disagreements – everyone has a right to his/her own views.
9. To help bring closure to a discussion, use the “I can live with it” rule.

Some background information was provided on the Tamarac Sub-watershed Project Work Team, which was initially established to address water resource related problems within the Tamarac River Watershed. The focus was shifted to the JD-19 Study Area when federal funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program became available, since the past focus of the PWT was around the Nelson Slough area.

The funding distribution for this project planning effort is 70% federal and 30% state/local. Tony commented that it is generally difficult to accrue funding in the early stages of planning and project development for large scale projects.

Tony began his Power Point presentation by going over the agenda and giving an overview of the JD-19 drainage area. A comment was made that Marshall County is the drainage authority that currently holds jurisdiction over Judical Ditch #19 system.

Tony reviewed the PL83-566 planning process. The RCPP study process consists of seven review points, some of which correlate with four USACE concurrence points: Project Purpose and Need, Array of Alternatives and Alternative Carried Forward, Identification of Selected Alternative, and Design Phase Impact Minimalization. To get federal funding for a project through RCPP, a cost/benefit analysis must show that the benefits equal or exceed the costs. RCPP Review Point #1: Project Feasibility and Plan of Work was completed, submitted, and accepted on August of 2016.

A public scoping meeting was held by the MSTRWD back in September 2016. At that time, comment forms were distributed to landowners within the JD-19 Sub-watershed. The purpose of these forms was to gain feedback from landowners about their water related concerns, and to identify the locations of problem areas within the JD-19 drainage area. Landowners were asked to rate their water resource concerns on a scale of 0-5, with a rating of 0 being no concern and a rating of 5 being severe concern. Tony summarized that only 10 comment forms had been submitted for review. The average rating for each area of concern were as follows:

- Flooding/Flood Damage 4.4
- Water Quality/Erosion and Sedimentation 3.4
- Wildlife and Habitat 3.2
- Others 2.6

Tony proceeded to give an update on hydrology/hydraulic modeling, stating that it was 90% complete. The purpose of these models is to assess and quantify damages from certain rainfall/flood events. HEI is using a HEC-HMS model for hydrology analysis, and a HEC-RAS model for unsteady hydraulic analysis. The models use NOAA precipitation estimates for 2 to 100-year rainfall events for durations of 24 hours, 3 days, and 10 days. Preliminary inundation maps for 10 year, 25 year, and 100 year 24-hour rainfall events were presented. Tony stated that the preliminary maps were consistent with the landowner feedback he received.

Tony gave an updated watershed planning timeline, indicating what has been accomplished so far, where the planning process is currently at, and what needs to be done moving forward.

Tony summarized the topics of discussion at NRCS workshops: update schedules, purpose and need statement, economics, and federal funding compared to local funding.

A draft purpose and need statement was presented to the project work team. In the context of this planning process, need defines why the existing condition is inadequate and needs to be changed. Purpose defines the specific goal or objective obtained by the project. Tony indicated that the need bullet point statements were based on landowner feedback, the MSTRWD's 10 year plan, and problems that were identified by the Tamarac Project Work Team. The purpose and need statement is to guide the project work team through the planning process.

At this point in the meeting, the floor was open for discussion:

Lon Aune of Marshall County Highway Department commented that Nelson Slough was a major topic of discussion among the Tamarac Project Work Team. Lon asked if anything had resulted from those previous discussions. Tony stated that the DNR had developed a report that listed several alternatives with regards to modifying Nelson Slough or changing the operation of the impoundment.

Ruth Anne Franke of the MN DNR provided some clarification about the document, stating that it was prepared under the assumption that the project would only focus on Nelson Slough. It stated that raising the levees and increasing the size of the impoundment were not viable alternatives. It did suggest considering other alternatives outside of modifying Nelson Slough. Ruth Anne Franke also explained the DNR's role in the operation and maintenance of the impoundment, stating that they do manipulate and lower the water surface elevation to pool level before freeze-up in late fall.

Matt Fischer of BWSR stated that the purpose and need statement is important, not just because it is a required step in this planning process, but because it defines the reason we have these meetings and why the project work team exists. It was suggested to narrow the focus of the project, i.e. reducing flood damages to what extent? Tony proposed amending the purpose statement to reduce flood damages for a 10 year 24 hour event.

Lon Aune mentioned the importance of maintaining a stable ditch grade and side slopes within the channel.

Landowner, Kevin Roppe, commented that water slows down and backs up once it gets to Nelson Slough. Flow restrictions such as beaver dams and cattails cause high water levels within Nelson Slough, placing a burden on upstream landowners during large rain events. He also expressed some concern with the erosion that is happening around the outlet structure.

Lyle Braff asked if there was a project planned for Nelson Slough. Tony answered that there was no project planned for Nelson Slough at this time. The project work team might consider a new operation and maintenance plan, but that would be down the road in the planning process when alternatives would be analyzed.

Dave Jones of the NRCS stated that Nelson Slough was a PL-566 project, and that no rehab work is allowed. Any alterations or modifications to the structure would have to be approved by the NRCS. He also mentioned that Nelson Slough is approaching its design life expectancy, though it may still fall under NRCS jurisdiction due to its dam classification. Nelson Slough was built as a multipurpose structure, to provide habitat for wildlife and to mitigate flooding. The DNR is currently in charge of the operation and maintenance of the impoundment.

Dave also mentioned that the design of Nelson Slough accounts for 50 years of sediment deposition. If the sediment in the impoundment meets or exceeds this threshold within its design life, then the DNR would be responsible for cleaning the impoundment.

Dave suggested adding more detail to the need bullet point statements, and putting emphasis on why these are needs.

Ruth Anne Franke suggested combining the last 2 need bullet point statements into a single bullet point: Operation of Nelson Slough causes downstream flow during freezing conditions, and operation of

Nelson Slough can cause immediate upstream flooding to landowners. The DNR may consider revising the operating plan.
Dave Jones explained the differences between retention and detention. Retention is storing or retaining water until it is intended to be released, and detention is greatly reducing the flow rate through a certain control volume. Dave also mentioned that it is important to consider the burden that an operating plan places on protection.

Tony outlined what the next steps in the planning process are: finalize purpose and need statement, scope environmental assessment, finalize hydrology and hydraulic models, and submit review point #2.

Meeting adjourned. The date and time for the next JD 19 Project Work Team Meeting will be announced at a later date.