

A public scoping meeting was held by the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District for the Judicial Ditch #19 (JD19) Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) planning process on September 26, 2016 at 10am at the Strandquist, MN Community Center. The meeting was held to inform the public within the watershed area of the study tasks and schedule, and allow for public input to be gathered about problems and concerns within the watershed.

Below is a list of attendees, taken from the sign-in sheet. Please submit any corrections to brent.silvis@mstrwd.org

Elroy Aune, landowner
Jerry Strandberg, resident
Arllys Strandberg, resident
Gula Stromgren, resident
Peter Kostrzloski, landowner
Danielle Kvasager, MPCA
Denise Oakes, MPCA
Kenneth Borowicz, Marshall County Commissioner
Neil Widner, landowner
Craig Mowry, USFWS
Lon Aune, Marshall County
Gary Kiesow, Marshall County
Bill Petersen, landowner
Dan Bert, resident
Lloyd Fagerston, resident
Bob Fagerston, resident
Ben Kleinwachter, MSTRWD
Jerry Grochowski, landowner
Keith Weston, NRCS
Theresa Olson, DNR
Ruth Anne Franke, DNR
Tony Nordby, Houston Engineering
Brent Silvis, MSTRWD

Brent gave an overview of the agenda and attendees introduced themselves. Agendas and comment forms were distributed.

Tony began a PowerPoint presentation. He gave some brief history of the past Tamarac River Project Team (PT) which had been formed to consider problems within the entire Tamarac River Watershed. In the 2014 farm bill, RCPP funding became available for watershed planning efforts and the MSTRWD shifted their focus to the JD19 watershed area, the upstream sub-watershed of the Tamarac River. He also mentioned that landowners who were involved in the previous PWT and have an interest in the JD19 system should become involved in this new watershed planning effort.

Tony did an overview of the study area and the Tamarac River watershed, showing the delineated watershed along with two existing impoundment sites within the Tamarac River watershed area, East Park (Nelson Slough) and Florian Park. These sites have been developed and management primarily for wildlife habitat and recreation.

Tony gave an overview of the RCPP program and reviewed the seven steps of the RCPP planning process. The process follows National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines. This watershed planning effort will be paid for at a 70% federal to 30% local cost share for this watershed planning effort available by following the PL-566 process through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). An upcoming step is the development of a Purpose and Need Statement.

Tony then reviewed some of the known problems the MSTRWD has been made aware of in the watershed area. The primary concern is flooding, but there are also natural resource and water quality concerns. There are concerns with the East Park (Nelson Slough) site and many portions of the JD19 system.

A timeline for the RCPP planning process was provided by Tony. Surveying, H&H modeling, and the development of the Purpose and Need Statement are the next important steps that must be completed to move the watershed planning process forward.

A comment and question and answer session was then held. Some of the input from attendees included:

- Theresa stated that, in addition to NEPA, the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act needs to be considered. Applicable regulations will depend on the size of the project.
- There are concerns that, if an impoundment is proposed, there will be loss of wetlands, no actual impact on downstream flooding, no true wildlife enhancements and protected species will be harmed. The comment was made that no study has been produced which has shown that these impoundments provide wildlife enhancements.
- Keith mentioned that, once constructed, the impoundments are monitored for environmental impacts.
- An attendee made the comment that downstream landowners do appreciate impoundments.
- Management of impoundment drainage needs to be addressed.
- MSTRWD should solicit public comment on their website.
- A landowner asked how much agencies are working together. Why do landowners need to initiate ditch cleaning? Lon answered that the county takes a reactive approach since there is not enough staff to regularly inspect ditches.
- Lon asked if an impoundment was built, would the cost be borne by the landowners in the benefited area or the drainage area? Ben and Brent explained that it would have an entirely new funding source.
- Ruth Anne stated that she would be available to consult regarding natural resource implications of any proposed project.
- Tony stated that the MSTRWD and Houston Engineering would be responsible for the surveying.
- The question was asked whether the state paid into JD19, since there is a large portion of DNR land in the benefited area. Gary responded that the state does pay some money into the system.
- A landowner stated that he didn't believe upstream impoundments reduced flooding in the Red River much, they should be closer to the river. Keith alluded to a study which showed the ideal position is upstream. A copy of that study will accompany this report at mstrwd.com.
- A landowner indicated that he felt that the benefits of CRP land on flood reduction were underappreciated and understudied.

- It was asked what types of works were allowed under the RCPP program. Keith said that most water management projects would be allowed. One type of work which would not be allowed would be the rehabilitation of existing structures.
- It was commented that there are areas on JD19 which are not compliant with buffers.

Tony indicated that some surveying would be done this fall by the MSTRWD and Houston Engineering and another meeting would be held, the place, date and time of which would be announced at a later date.